



Submission for the UNSG's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

FROM THE WBG-UNHCR JOINT DATA CENTER ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT

May 2020

This paper contains a submission from the WBG-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement for the consideration of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. As such it focuses on the topic of data for improving policy and response to internal displacement, especially in protracted displacement situations. This submission reflects perspectives from the Joint Data Center, but should not be taken as reflecting the positions, views, or policies of the World Bank, UNHCR, or any member of its Management Committee.

The submission is informed by several key documents and processes, including:

- The 2016 report '*Forcibly Displaced: Towards a development approach to support refugees, IDPs, and their hosts*'¹ and an upcoming WBG approach paper on IDPs,
- The 2019 '*Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement*'² and the internal operational and population data management approaches (PDMA) reviews that preceded it,
- GP20 Plan of Action³ and its data working group
- Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS) and their 2018 '*Technical Report on Statistics of IDPs*'⁴
- The Charter of the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement and its current work program


Overall, it is grounded in the '*UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*', the '*IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*' and the '*International Recommendations on IDP Statistics*'.

¹ See: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/104161500277314152/Forcibly-displaced-toward-a-development-approach-supporting-refugees-the-internally-displaced-and-their-hosts>

² See: <https://www.unhcr.org/50f951df9>

³ See: <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/gp20/>

⁴ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-18-003>



It is structured in three sections. The first two outline our **observations** and **recommendations** for the Panel. The third **introduces the Joint Data Center** and briefly outlines **how we intend to engage** in this area of work moving forward.

The JDC is a relatively new player in this field without historical investments in IDP data but with the ambition to work with others to make a difference. We therefore share with this submission an opinion that is on the one hand neutral (*vis a vis* historical investments/current practice) and on the other biased (*vis a vis* our commitment to prioritize data needs in *protracted* internal displacement situations). We have an ambition to support the work of the Panel but also an expectation to benefit from the recommendations of the Panel to help shape our future investments and prioritization in support of data initiatives in IDP situations.

Observations on current status of data on internal displacement

Internal displacement is often presented as a 'data poor' issue. Whilst this may be true relatively speaking, as there are significant gaps in the data, there is in fact **a lot of data on internal displacement** out there. This data, however, is far from harmonized or complete, has mixed quality standards, and is not readily accessible. Moreover, given the challenging reality in which data on internal displacement is often collected, it is understandably difficult to produce adequately representative data on IDPs.⁵ Altogether this creates critical limitations for the utilization of existing data on IDPs to shape sound policy development and large-scale development interventions.


Broadly speaking there are **two main groups** of data on internal displacement:

- 1) Data collected by humanitarian actors (national and international) that is intended to inform humanitarian response and is often collected as part of pre-existing programmatic engagements. This data includes a range of systems and tools including movement tracking, protection monitoring, registries/enrollment, quantitative and qualitative surveys and assessments.⁶
- 2) Data collected by Governments (local and national) to identify IDPs, assess their needs and inform IDP-specific assistance programs or (more rarely) include them in regular social protection mechanisms.

Whilst there are exceptions and critical improvements have been made in recent years, several key observations can be made about current practice and available data on internal displacement. These include challenges and limitations but also under-utilized/missed

⁵ Natalia Baal and Laura Ronkainen, Obtaining representative data on IDPs: Challenges and recommendations, UNHCR Technical Series, 2017: <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/598088104/obtaining-representative-data-idps-challenges-recommendations.html>

⁶ See Protection Information Management Framework for useful overview and definitions of common data systems used by humanitarian agencies: <http://pim.guide/guidance-and-products/product/pim-matrix-cover-page/>




opportunities that taken together underpin the recommendations shaped at the end of this submission.

- **Definitions and methods are not consistently used impacting the quality and comparability of IDP data and statistics.** Precisely which events trigger internal displacement? How far or for how long must you be displaced to count? Are children born to IDP parents also to be considered IDPs? Can refugees and forced migrants become IDPs when they return to their country of origin? When should IDPs no longer be defined as IDPs? Answers to these questions vary considerably in practice and cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of existing IDP data.⁷ In recent years, the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (consisting of refugee and IDP affected countries alongside a number of international and regional organisations) has made a significant analytical and normative contribution to addressing these challenges through producing the *Technical Report on the Statistics of IDPs* and the first internationally recognized internal displacement statistical framework as part of the *International Recommendations on IDP Statistics* (IRIS). However, work still needs to be done to complete and operationalize it, in particular the two proposed measures that relate to solutions.
- **Data on internal displacement are often produced in challenging contexts** where political sensitivities are high and operational constraints are very tangible, which often results in reduced quality of data, including a lack of representativity.⁸ Populations can be highly mobile, capacity of staff on the ground can be low, and security and access can be limited. Urban contexts, where the vast majority of IDPs reside but the largest data gaps exist, can exaggerate many of these challenges and bring their own.⁹ Due to political sensitivities it can be difficult to identify IDPs and there are plenty of incentives to inaccurately inflate or deflate the population figures. However not all IDP contexts are the same and the various types have very different data realities. As the WBG submission to the HLP has noted “In fact, the stock of IDPs can be roughly

⁷ UN Technical Report on the Statistics of IDPs, Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics, 2018: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-18-003>). This issue is also underlined in WBG’s submission to the HLP. Specifically, the challenge of inconsistent definitions on durable solutions was described here: Chaloka Beyani, Natalia Krynsky Baal and Martina Caterina, 2016, ‘Conceptual challenges and practical solutions in situations of internal displacement’, Forced Migration Review: <https://www.fmreview.org/solutions/beyani-baal-caterina>

⁸ Natalia Baal and Laura Ronkainen, Obtaining representative data on IDPs: Challenges and recommendations, UNHCR Technical Series, 2017: <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/598088104/obtaining-representative-data-idps-challenges-recommendations.html>


⁹ Melissa Weihmayer, Margharita Lundkvist-Houndoumadi and Laura Kivelä (Joint IDP Profiling Service), ‘Displacement Profiling in Urban Areas: Methodological approaches for collecting and analysing data on internal displacement in cities’ Background paper to IDMC’s 2019 Global Report on Internal Displacement: https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/downloads/background_papers/JIPS_GRID2019_UrbanProfiling_FinalPaper.pdf



broken down into three groups– people living in the midst of conflict (e.g., Syria); people fleeing part of their countries to stable regions and still in a situation of flux (e.g., Northeast Nigeria); and people who have been settled as IDPs in stable environments for years or decades (e.g., Colombia). Some countries may have a combination in the same or different geographic areas, reflecting different waves of conflict or violence and their resulting displacement.” To identify opportunities to improve data on internal displacement, strategies that differentiate these typologies and their different data production constraints should be explored.

- Besides the recognition of the primary responsibility of states, the **rules of engagement of IASC members and related bodies with regards to IDP data remains under-developed or unclear**. This results in gaps and/or duplicative efforts with regards to the production and sharing of data on IDPs (especially population data) and creates a competitive environment which leads to a further duplication of efforts, wasted resources and unnecessary burden on affected populations to partake in numerous overlapping assessment efforts. Whilst awareness of this has become more and more explicit and efforts have been made recently to make improvements at the global/strategic level (e.g. work of the IASC’s Information Management Working Group and in discussions that take place under the Grand Bargain Needs Assessment workstream or the data working group of the GP20 Plan of Action)¹⁰, further clarity on the rules of engagement and associated responsibilities with regards to IDP data is needed to improve predictability and coordination around the production and sharing of IDP data that builds on comparative advantage of different institutions and entities.
- **Data on internal displacement are primarily resourced through humanitarian financing mechanisms and collected for humanitarian purposes** and therefore tend to focus on immediate data needs rather than longer-term analytical goals. Whilst this is understandable due to the urgency of these needs in many contexts and the traditional perspective that internal displacement is viewed as a purely humanitarian crisis, it has resulted in a reality where most available data on internal displacement and existing efforts have a very limited focus on sustainability and longer-term analytical goals. Central to this data gap is the availability of rigorous socio-economic analysis of IDP populations and an understanding of their specific vulnerabilities, including how these compare to the host/local populations and how they can be understood in their surrounding environment. Data to enable visibility of IDP populations within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals is also often lacking. Although notable examples can be found, in particular in efforts to support durable solutions through analysis of the criteria laid out in the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions, the possibilities of advancing the collection and analysis of socio-

¹⁰ Grand Bargain Needs Assessment workstream (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/improve-joint-and-impartial-needs-assessments>) and GP20 Plan of Action (<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/gp20/>)



economic profiles and displacement-specific vulnerabilities of IDPs should be further explored.¹¹

- As with other areas of development data, **advances in modern technologies and data management systems are opening new possibilities for internal displacement data**. Characterized here as an under-utilized opportunity, these include uses of big data, data linking and modelling, satellite and geo-spatial data capture tools, online/phone-based surveys, as well as data anonymization and artificial intelligence that enable safe sharing and responsible open data. Whilst there is already ongoing work to test and further refine these innovative data collection and management tools, in the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic, there is significant momentum in this area.
- Moving beyond the operational realm, the **academic research community has had limited engagement on internal displacement, and this has declined in recent years** as was observed in the conclusions from the JDC's first annual research conference. Although scholars from different fields have focused much attention on refugee studies and forced international migration, the level of engagement on the specific issue of internal displacement has been much more limited. Efforts have recently been made to stimulate new academic work in this field.¹² However, the production of high-quality research on internal displacement has not proceeded at the same pace as for other forcibly displaced persons and related-thematic issues. This could be caused by a number of factors, including availability of research funding, accessibility of data and collaboration/encouragement from key stakeholders. The lack of a rich independent academic debate on internal displacement dampens global understanding and weakens policy progress.

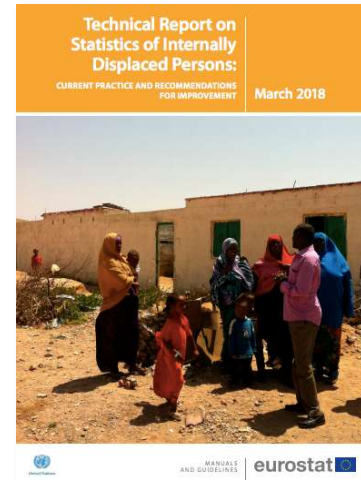
¹¹ A recent example comes from Sudan where stakeholders collaborated on a profiling exercise that helped to underpin the durable solutions strategy and related interventions from both the humanitarian and development communities. An interactive story map showing results can be accessed here: <https://www.jips.org/jips-country/sudan/>. The work is closely associated with a multi-year process that developed a library of indicators to measure durable solutions based on the IASC framework, see: (<https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/>) and to the work of JIPS more broadly (www.jips.org) that has supported similar processes in various contexts. The Sudan example was co-lead by the World Bank and was included in a multi-country analysis recently published here: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/publication/informing-durable-solutions-for-internal-displacement>

¹² See, for example, Al-Mahaidi, Gross and Cantor, 2019, "Revitalising IDP research", Refugee Law Initiative:

https://rli.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/Revitalising%20IDP%20Research_RLI%20Review.pdf

Key recommendations for improving data on internal displacement to strengthen response to protracted crises

- **Promote adherence to common definitions and statistical standards through the implementation of the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics by countries and organizations.** Continued political and financial support to the third phase of the Expert Group whose mandate runs until 2025 will also be important to further refine the recommendations and test newer elements particularly concerning the statistical measurement for progress towards durable solutions and overcoming key displacement-related vulnerabilities. The latter is especially important to ensure a consistent approach for when countries should no longer be including groups in their IDP statistics.



- **Scale up efforts to produce rigorous and high-quality socio-economic data and analysis of IDPs, including as to how they compare to other population groups such as refugees, economic migrants and local/host populations in rural, camp and urban contexts.** This will enable policy and programming to focus on displacement-specific vulnerabilities and discrimination, in line with the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs to help inform solutions and underpin targeted development interventions. Ensuring the population and socio-economic data are well contextualized is also critical to facilitate its usage, for example by urban development specialists and to ensure area-based interventions are displacement-sensitive. Producing more systematic socio-economic analysis should necessarily include enhanced engagement of development actors in IDP data production, management and analysis.

Work undertaken collectively by UNHCR, OCHA, UNDP, NRC-IDMC, DRC and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDP through the Joint IDP Profiling Service over the last decade should be recognized here and could be used as a basis for scaling up this work. As suggested in the submission by the WBG to the HLP, surveys of this type could be prioritized in countries with large protracted IDP populations with the aim of producing results in a two-year period to help target both humanitarian and development interventions. In the current context, such surveys should also include a focus on the socio-economic impact of Covid-19.

- **Inclusion of IDPs in national data collection systems, as proposed in the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics, can be important to ensure more sustainability of investments in data and stronger national ownership of**

results.¹³ This will allow for a stronger connection to national policymaking. Analytically it would also open possibilities for comparison with other vulnerable population groups. Adherence to protection principles – in particular ‘do no harm’ – will be vital, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states. Capacity building for national statistical offices and other relevant stakeholders should also be prioritized.

- **Create better linkages between internal displacement and existing internationally agreed frameworks, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to enhance development engagement in IDP policy and response.**


Working with affected states as well as relevant SDG custodian agencies to improve methods and tools to enable inclusion and/or data disaggregation will be an important step in this regard. The twelve SDG indicators submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2019 by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDG Indicators as priorities for forced displacement, provide a strong starting point for engaging in this area of work.¹⁴



- **Clarify rules of engagement amongst IASC members and related bodies with regards to IDP population data when national authorities are unwilling or unable to take the lead.** In determining these roles and responsibilities it will be important to ensure a close relationship to protection principles and informing protection outcomes.
- **Promote the inclusion of IDPs – and other vulnerable groups – in data innovation efforts** that are growing/expanding with technological advances and with increased momentum due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on traditional data collection approaches. It will often be the case that specific attention will need to be paid to ensure vulnerable groups can be included in these new approaches.
- **Promote safe data sharing and responsible open data where possible to enhance policymaking and programing.** This will reduce duplicate data collection, wasted resources and over-burdening affected populations. Ensuring, as far as possible, inter-operability of data sources through the use of common norms and standards, will add significant value to the positive impact of data sharing. Over time, increased data accessibility will also enhance collaboration and increase the positive

¹³ The 2020 work program of the JDC prioritizes these types of interventions in it country-level activities. An early example comes from Central African Republic where IDPs are being included in a national household survey.

¹⁴ The 12 priority SDG indicators are 1.2.1, 1.4.2, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 4.1.1, 6.1.1, 7.1.1, 8.3.1, 8.5.2, 11.1.1, 16.1.4 and 16.9.1. The report submitted to the UN Statistics Commission can be accessed here: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/BG-Item3a-Data-Disaggregation-E.pdf>



operational impact of data shared, as well as improve our collective understanding and global discourse on the phenomenon by enabling independent academic data-based research. Existing platforms, including UNHCR's recently launched Microdata Library, the World Bank's Microdata Library and HDX provide an enabling environment for these efforts to build upon.¹⁵

- **Support academic research on internal displacement across all relevant disciplines** with a focus on researchers from displacement-affected countries and communities. Encouraging regular dialogue between the research community and both operational and policy development practitioners can be important to ensure topical relevance and more immediate uptake of research findings.

A final word on the JDC and how we intend to engage

On April 20, 2018, the World Bank and UNHCR agreed to establish the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC). This came in response to a call at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul 2016 for increased investments in data and analysis to inform decision-making. This call was reiterated, within the context of forced displacement, in the Global Compact on Refugees and elsewhere.

With a focus on population and socioeconomic data, the JDC works with partners to enhance the collection, analysis and sharing of quality data on forced displacement in line with international standards. It has five thematic areas of work:

- Strengthening data systems
- Filling data collection gaps
- Filling data analysis gaps
- Responsible open data
- Knowledge sharing

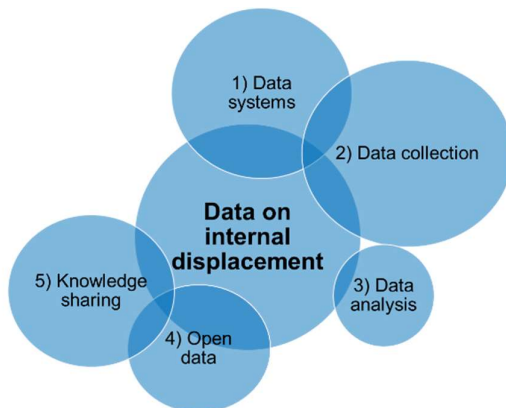
The JDC is overseen by a Management Committee that includes representatives from the World Bank, the UNHCR, donor countries and countries affected by forced displacement. It benefits from input of its Strategic Advisory Council, a network of ~100 experts from government, development, humanitarian and civil society organizations.¹⁶

Mission of the Joint Data Center

*The JDC aims to enhance the ability of stakeholders, including governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to make timely and evidence informed decisions that can improve the lives of refugees, **internally displaced persons**, stateless people, returnees, asylum-seekers, and host populations. It focuses on the collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant, socio-economic microdata.*

¹⁵ UNHCR's Microdata Library (<https://microdata.unhcr.org/index.php/home>), WB Microdata library (<https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/home>) and HDX (<https://data.humdata.org/>)

¹⁶ See JDC Charter and Terms of Reference for the Management Committee



As part of the JDC's 2020 work program there is a strong emphasis on internal displacement that cuts across all our thematic areas of work (although some more than others as visualized here) and includes both IDP-specific activities as well as broader initiatives that encompass in one way or another an IDP dimension.

As mentioned above, the JDC fully intends to engage with countries and partners to contribute to the improvement of IDP data, particularly as it pertains to protracted

displacement crises. The visual below provides a summary of activities included in the current work program that are either IDP-specific or encompass in one way or another an IDP dimension. All of these activities aim to contribute to the realization of the recommendations outlined above. Close attention will be paid to the work of the Panel in shaping our work on data in internal displacement situations moving forward.

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|--------------------------|---|
| Data Systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing & refining international statistical recommendations with EGRIS (including capacity building of NSOs) • Enhancing digital data collection solutions • Promoting & enabling SDG disaggregation • Producing forced displacement-sensitive methods |
| Data Collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 (out of 14) country/regional level commitments either fully focused on internal displacement or including/pursuing an IDP dimension |
| Data Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country/region specific analytical projects including an IDP dimension • Poverty estimation methods for vulnerable groups, incl. forcibly displaced persons • Promoting & exploring innovative methods & techniques |
| Open Data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling open access to data through UNHCR/WB's micro data libraries • Supporting responsible data sharing and building an open data framework |
| Knowledge Sharing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual research conference (2021 edition to focus primarily on internal displacement) • Regular seminar series including IDP-related research • Literature reviews including IDP-related content and research |