The Center for Development Data (C4D2) is a Rome-based hub for fostering methodological innovation and strengthening capacity in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of household surveys in low- and middle-income countries. It is coordinated by the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) team in the World Bank’s Development Data Group (DECDG).

The Center’s mission is to facilitate the production of high-quality, timely, relevant microdata for evidence-based policymaking and investment decisions to achieve poverty reduction, food security, and growth. Building on DECDG’s reputation and technical expertise, the Center achieves its mission through strategic partnerships and tactical fundraising, facilitated by geographic proximity to its clients and development partners. The Center spearheads a rigorous program of methodological research to increase the accuracy and cost effectiveness of household and other types of survey data for sustainable development.
Connecting with Clients and Partners: Geography Is Key

The Center’s strategic location in the Mediterranean facilitates its work with countries in Africa and the Middle East and cements stronger partnerships with Italian and European institutions, including the United Nations’ Rome-based agencies on food, agriculture, and rural development, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP).

C4D2’s presence in Rome uniquely positions it to support countries and regions affected by fragility, conflict, and violence—many of which border the Mediterranean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East/North Africa region.

Implementing a New Model for Capacity Development in Household Surveys

Household surveys are one of the primary sources of socioeconomic data used by decision makers in low- and middle-income countries to monitor national development plans. But statisticians in developing countries have limited access to specialized training in the collection, analysis, and use of household surveys and other microdata.

The Center for Development Data is working to fill this gap via the C4D2-Training initiative, which aims to improve and harmonize the curricula of regional statistical training centers, facilitate the uptake of global standards and best practices in household survey design, create a network of household survey experts at the regional level, and promote harmonization across countries.

One of the first initiatives of its kind, C4D2-Training is the result of a collaboration among the World Bank, Italian partners (Bank of Italy, the Agency for Development Cooperation, the National Institute of Statistics, and the National Institute of Health), and African institutions (the African Center for Statistics of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Center in Dar es Salaam, and the École Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d’Economie Appliquée in Abidjan).

Supporting Countries Affected by Fragility, Conflict, and Violence through Better Data

Fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) in many parts of the world have led to a crisis that has become one of today’s most critical development challenges. Two billion people currently live in countries affected by FCV, and the share of extreme poor living in conflict-affected situations is expected to triple by 2030.

It will not be possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals or the World Bank’s goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity without taking refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other marginal populations into account. But relevant microdata are scarce, and analytical evidence on successful strategies is even scarcer.

A strong evidence base built upon rich, multipurpose surveys is essential to understand the experiences and welfare of these populations; target support where it is most needed, inform decision making, and monitor progress. As part of an extended team that offers technical expertise in the administration of household surveys and the measurement of poverty worldwide, C4D2 works with client countries and development partners to support the production and improvement of surveys of refugees, migrants, and IDPs.

Pushing the Methodological Frontier

To improve quality, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness of household survey data, C4D2 houses a substantial program of applied research on survey methodology, largely based on randomized survey experiments. C4D2 conducts its research in partnership with national, international, and academic institutions. In addition to publishing this work in scientific journals, C4D2 measures its success by the extent to which its results are adopted and scaled up. To that end, research results are consolidated in detailed methodological guidebooks for survey practitioners on the use of validated, improved survey methodologies.

Data integration is a central theme of these activities. This includes integration of objective measurement methods (such as sensors or other technological devices) into household survey operations, as well as integration of household survey data with other data sources such as earth observation, administrative records, and Big Data.

Designing and conducting research in tandem with large-scale, country-owned survey operations helps C4D2 focus on issues of importance to National Statistical Offices, and ensures that its country clients adopt and mainstream new methods into their regular survey operations.

Partnering for Results

The global data agenda requires a shared vision and concerted effort to support household surveys. Building on the World Bank’s technical strengths and convening capabilities, C4D2 adds value by partnering with Italian, regional, and international stakeholders, including academic institutions and research organizations worldwide, to deliver technical assistance and training in a coordinated and effective fashion. Through its strong partnerships, the Center serves as a global platform for methodological innovation, survey integration, and capacity development.

C4D2 is home to the Global Rural and Agricultural Integrated Surveys (GRAInS) Partnership. GRAInS scales up the production of innovative survey data to better understand how agriculture can reduce poverty and food insecurity while supporting processes of rural transformation. The Partnership builds on the work of different survey initiatives, including the LSMS–Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA), FAO’s Agricultural and Rural Integrated Survey (AGRIS), the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Core Agricultural and Rural Data Surveys (CARDS), and technical support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.