



# Costed Implementation Plan Performance Monitoring: Lessons from a Four-Country Assessment

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HP+ POLICY *Brief*

## Introduction

Since the launch of the Ouagadougou Partnership in 2011 and the launch of FP2020 in 2012 (now FP2030), many countries have sought to align their national family planning goals and objectives to meet their commitments to these initiatives. To guide achievement of their goals and objectives, countries have developed costed implementation plans (CIP) for family planning. These operational plans are developed by stakeholders who agree upon a strategic roadmap with identified resource needs. Following official launching of the CIPs, countries move into the execution phase, which includes performance monitoring. Countries need a strong performance monitoring mechanism to assess progress toward CIP goals and across the six thematic areas generally included in CIPs (i.e., demand creation, services, commodity security, coordination and monitoring, policy, and financing).

To aid in the essential performance monitoring, the [FP2030 CIP Toolkit](#) describes how to set up a CIP [performance monitoring mechanism](#) and [create a dashboard](#) to capture key results. Performance monitoring is intended to be an ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, and reviewing data that documents the progress made in implementation and toward achievement of CIP goals and the resources mobilized, or needed, for CIP execution. The CIP dashboard displays key results from the CIP indicators being tracked. These key results align with the CIP map—a one-page summary of key objectives displayed by thematic area—and the priority results achievement chart (PRAC) that defines indicators and targets for each objective, along with corresponding activities. Using the data in the dashboard, CIP stakeholders

can make informed decisions to guide CIP execution, adjusting strategies and interventions and shifting resources as needed.

The Health Policy Plus (HP+) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), conducted an assessment of CIP performance monitoring to support improved execution. The purpose of the assessment was to: (1) provide an appraisal of the relevance, ease of use, and utility of the tools and processes for supporting CIP performance monitoring; and (2) inform understanding of the extent to which performance monitoring has facilitated decision making for improved coordination and resource mobilization or allocation.

## Methodology

The qualitative assessment was conducted in 2020 and 2021, collecting information from 27 family planning stakeholders from government, development partners, implementing partners, and civil society organizations in Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, and Tanzania. Using an in-depth interview guide, consultants conducted interviews with stakeholders in Ghana, Malawi, and Tanzania. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via phone and virtual meetings over Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Interviews were recorded with the permission of respondents. In Madagascar, data was collected from stakeholders via an open-ended survey, administered online.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the organizations and individuals for the interviews (listed in Table 1). The interview guide was developed based on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and

**Table 1. Participants Interviewed**

Stakeholder Group	Tanzania: 9	Ghana: 7	Malawi: 6	Madagascar: 5
Government	Reproductive and Child Health Section	Family Health Division; Ghana Health Service	Ministry of Health's Central Monitoring and Evaluation Division and Reproductive Health Directorate	Ministry of Population and Social Welfare and Advancement of Women; Ministry of Public Health, Directorate of Family Health
Development Partner	USAID; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	USAID; UNFPA		World Health Organization
Implementing Partner	FHI 360; Deloitte; EngenderHealth	Population Council	Palladium; CARE; PSI; MSI (Banja La Mtsogolo)	WISH2ACTION
Civil Society Organization	UMATI; Tanzania Communication and Development Center	Muslim Family Council		African Youth and Adolescent Network (AfriYAN)

Development (OECD) evaluation framework.<sup>1</sup> Five evaluation criteria—relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability—were used to assess countries' utilization of a CIP performance monitoring system, particularly the performance monitoring dashboard (Excel-based and web-based versions). For each criterion, the following question was posed:



**Relevance:** Are the CIP performance monitoring process and tools relevant to the process of executing a country's CIP and the family planning program as a whole?



**Effectiveness:** To what extent have the benefits expected to be gained from the CIP performance monitoring process actually been achieved (e.g., questions on progress are answered, more regular reviews are conducted, the dashboard guides decisions)?



**Efficiency:** To what extent has the CIP dashboard made the monitoring of CIP performance more efficient in terms of time and financial resources?



**Impact:** To what extent have major results been achieved by using CIP performance monitoring?



**Sustainability:** To what extent can CIP performance monitoring be sustained over time?

Interviews were transcribed by the consultants; transcripts were consolidated into an Excel file to aid coding and analysis. Transcripts from Madagascar were translated from French to English before being added to the Excel file. Responses were analyzed using a deductive approach to identify themes and develop recommendations for strengthening the CIP monitoring process and the dashboard tool.

## Results



**Relevance: Are the CIP performance monitoring process and tools relevant to the process of executing a country's CIP and the family planning program as a whole?**

**Holistic and inclusive process:** Generally positive, most stakeholders agreed that the monitoring process and tools are very relevant to executing a CIP. Government stakeholders appreciated the importance of having a strong performance monitoring process to enable them to identify progress realized and solutions to challenges encountered. All groups of respondents cited the importance of having all family planning stakeholders involved in CIP performance monitoring. Wide involvement, they said, strengthens CIP execution and makes the process consequently

<sup>1</sup> OECD. "Evaluation of Development Programmes, Evaluation Criteria." Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

more holistic and yet focused—leading to a stronger program. Most respondents indicated that with the performance monitoring process and tools, they have evidence needed to make informed decisions, shift resources, refocus interventions, or conduct advocacy. Most respondents described the dashboard as very relevant and contributing to their CIP monitoring process.

The dashboard is relevant and I will recommend it for any country that wants to do an assessment of their progress. I will really recommend it.

– Ghana government interviewee

Generally, the CIP is like a master plan for the FP2020 commitments. As a country, we are supposed to be specific on which priority areas we [are] going to focus [on] in order to achieve our FP2020 commitments. So now, having prioritized our focus in terms of prioritized interventions in family planning, we are supposed to come up with a tool which now will help us to monitor if we are on track in terms of striving to achieve our commitments or not. The CIP performance dashboard was deemed to be a perfect tool that can be used to track the execution of [the] CIP document.

– Malawi partner interviewee

**Comprehensive tool:** Government stakeholders mentioned that the CIP dashboard is relevant to support performance monitoring because it is comprehensive and includes partner data, thereby facilitating data verification and increasing confidence that family planning program data is complete. While government stakeholders rely on the DHIS2 (or similar health management information systems) to monitor their family planning programs, they appreciated the inclusion in the dashboard of indicators specific to all CIP thematic areas (e.g., monitoring, coordination, policy environment) that go beyond only routine service statistics. Similarly, an implementing partner in Ghana emphasized this importance, stating that the inclusion of public and private sectors along with nongovernmental organizations means data is more complete and facilitates improved data verification. Partners in Ghana and Tanzania noted that use of the dashboard has invited new partners into the process. Respondents stated that knowing all partners are contributing to the dashboard increases trust in the data and encourages diligence on the part of those entering data.

Sometimes you would find out that within the systems or in the DHIS, there is some data which is not making sense, like the spiking [of] certain data sets like, for example, modern contraception or a certain type of method is just recorded highly. In this way, we are able to track—like maybe for example in Nsanje—they are recording a huge consumption of a method [but] what really happened was there [was] a program that was being campaigned around the method. We have been able to dig deep using the performance dashboards to say I think [in] district X these are the stats and is it a true reflection of what is happening on the ground or is the data genuine? ... So annually, eventually, we have been able to provide credible data under family planning because of [the] dashboard.

– Malawi partner interviewee

... because [the] dashboard is like an aggregation of what is coming on the ground so it's easy to pick anomalies and track the source of those data sets. So, yes, it has been really important in terms of how we are able to go back and track and “vet” data, if it is relevant or correct.

– Malawi partner interviewee

**Easy to use:** One reason respondents liked the CIP dashboard for performance monitoring is its ease of use. Respondents appreciated data visualization features (see also Effectiveness), which they felt aids data interpretation, providing quick understanding on the progress of interventions and strategies as well as on tracking partner performance. Having access to graphs and tables also introduced a more systematic process of reviewing CIP data—using prioritized core indicators corresponding to the CIP map and PRAC. An interviewee from the Tanzanian government felt that the process to prioritize the strategies to include in the CIP map and PRAC was important for streamlining monitoring and avoiding a focus on too many priorities and indicators. Other stakeholders from Ghana and Tanzania expressed that the dashboard allows a view into progress on core indicators, year after year.

It gives us a holistic view on the specific core indicators we are monitoring. And this alone creates the ownership for us to own up with the data and really monitor the progress of these key indicators in the FP2020 agenda.

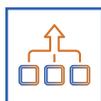
– Ghana government interviewee

... when you look at the way that data are displayed, you know, it comes with [set indicators], set targets, and then performance percentage achieved. And also it comes with this color-coded bar. So at least at the end of the quarter, you are able to monitor—or able to view—your progress with respect to your set targets.

– Ghana government interviewee

**Financial data:** Respondents from two countries, Madagascar and Tanzania, mentioned the benefit of including financing data in the dashboard. This information has helped them reallocate resources and modify priorities using evidence collected and visible through the CIP dashboard.

**Areas for improvement:** According to respondents, areas needing improvement included making it easier to collect and validate financial information in the dashboard and explaining the tool more fully so that everyone understands what it is, how to use it, what data goes in it, and trusts that the data are reliable. While there was appreciation for the inclusion of all partners, some respondents commented that contributions from partners aren't easily visible and that dashboard users are required to drill down to see individual contributions. They also recommended that greater alignment with the DHIS2 and private sector data platforms (e.g., from MSI and DKT International) could further streamline the data entry effort.



**Effectiveness: To what extent have the benefits expected to be gained from the CIP performance monitoring process actually been achieved (e.g., questions on progress are answered, more regular reviews are conducted, the dashboard guides decisions)?**

Overall, responses indicated that the CIP performance monitoring process was effective and that the dashboard supported the process. Respondents indicated that holding regular CIP review meetings with partners and having a tool that visually displayed progress assisted them to monitor achievements and challenges encountered and to make decisions intended to improve CIP execution.

**Focused indicators:** Respondents agreed that the process of selecting the indicators helped them focus

on priorities for CIP execution and choosing the right indicators for the CIP.

We have the right indicators. Again, you know, coming up with indicators, we sat down together with all our partners. We all agreed that these are the indicators we were going to [use to] measure the implementation of the CIP. So we have it; indicators were not set up only by the public sector.

– Ghana government interviewee

... we had to sit down and take some out and keep the relevant ones.

– Ghana partner interviewee

We don't need a million indicators to know we are on track. A few key indicators to give us an idea of where we are. So that's fine.

– Ghana government interviewee

**An argument for more indicators:** Agreeing upon indicators is always challenging; thus, not surprisingly, there were some implementing partners who offered suggestions to include additional indicators—such as financial data of higher quality that would allow for tracking of sub-activities; data on specific interventions considered to be a priority (e.g., comprehensive sexuality education); and data that capture other efforts such as facility renovation, research, and the efforts of smaller organizations. Respondents commented on the importance of verifying that data for all indicators are available and also noted that the process of determining measurability helped improve the overall data collection and selection process.

Overall, the dashboard is effective in visualizing the country's progress. However, for the next CIP, it would be necessary to revise the indicators because there are indicators for which data sources are difficult to find. There are also ad hoc project-dependent indicators that have a limited operationalization time.

– Madagascar government interviewee

**Value of partner data:** Information sharing is an important aspect of an effective CIP performance monitoring process. Respondents in Ghana agreed that inclusion of partner data offered additional insights into CIP progress, noting that having all the data helps provide a more holistic view of CIP

execution (see also Relevance). Respondents also agreed that meetings were more effective because all stakeholders—public and private—were included.

The tool brings [together] broad-based stakeholders in this sector: government, regulatory bodies, development partners. You know, everybody is [at] that table ... Then after the PowerPoint, there is open discussion. People are able to make inputs.

– Ghana partner interviewee

Respondents also felt that including partners in the data collection for the dashboard and having them participate in meetings increased accountability and transparency and increased the rigor of the data review process.

I think it is very useful because [data] is communicated during the annual and semi-annual family planning technical meeting on the CIP. This information is shared and all the partners that are engaged with family planning are there, so I believe it is a good practice and very helpful in terms of increasing our accountability for family planning.

– Tanzania development partner interviewee

It looks like because we are many partners spread out across the districts and the country, we are seeing that we have a full snapshot of what is happening and we are able to review and look at how we are doing.

– Malawi partner interviewee

**Concerns about partner data quality:** While respondents recognized the contributions of partners, they also voiced some skepticism about data quality from implementing partners. These concerns may relate to the ability of partners to access the system, an issue raised by several respondents. Data quality was affected by partner ability to obtain the correct login details, participate in trainings, and have access to technical support to problem-solve data entry challenges.

A challenge from the partner side is that they could not really get the data that we critically needed in the system. If we had gotten those data from the partners, it would have been a perfect system where we wouldn't have to struggle. But because of those challenges, sometimes you have to go outside the CIP to get that relevant information.

– Ghana government interviewee

**Data-driven decisions:** Responses were more mixed about use of the dashboard and how well it guided decisions on CIP execution. On the positive side, the value of the dashboard in monitoring targets was mentioned by government, development, and implementing partners. Also mentioned was the ability to use the dashboard to recognize trends, which helped stakeholders assess the realism of targets across years, as reflected by a government respondent in Malawi: “As we prepare targets for the next five years, the tool has assisted [us] to know whether we were very ambitious or not.”

The benefit of data visualization (see also Relevance) was cited as a key attribute of the tool. The colors and CIP map permit busy decisionmakers and stakeholders to quickly understand the CIP execution status, thereby facilitating decision making. The graphs that are automatically generated save time and provide insight into year-by-year progress or roadblocks, another example of how the tool supports transparency.

There were several examples given of how the tool helped improve CIP execution. For example, a Ghanaian respondent felt use of the dashboard tool improved data quantification and fostered an attitude to “get the job done.” A Ghanaian government respondent shared an example of how information-sharing led the review committee to make a decision to implement task-sharing and to conduct training of midwives in post-abortion and postpartum family planning. And a Tanzanian development partner provided an example of how the CIP review meetings and inclusion of partner data in the dashboard helped reveal a challenge with postpartum family planning—a priority in the CIP.

In contrast, the ability to use the dashboard information for decision making followed by action was referenced as an ongoing weakness in performance monitoring. A partner from Tanzania emphasized the importance of not only learning to use the dashboard as a tool to view data but also how to make decisions based on the data.

**Areas for improvement:** Respondents had specific suggestions for improving effectiveness of the tool, including improving user-friendliness of the process for granting access or login permissions, building in

data quality checks, adding more automation for data entry to reduce the magnitude of manual entry, and more flexibility to include community organizations, small organizations, and faith-based organizations in trainings.



### Efficiency: To what extent has the CIP dashboard made the monitoring of CIP performance more efficient in terms of time and financial resources?

**Saves time and resources:** The CIP performance monitoring dashboard is generally regarded as an efficient use of time and resources. Respondents noted that the dashboard allows stakeholders to see all data at one time, providing a snapshot of progress without significant investment of time and resources. Examples of time and resource efficiency include:

- Automatically generated graphs, which saves time compared to manually configuring graphs for use in presentations
- No need for staff to travel to subnational areas to collect data, particularly useful during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Ability of partners to directly enter data into the web-based dashboard

... it's very useful in terms of resources, in terms of time, because at least you can easily view your data quickly. And the way the data presents itself is it's concise and straightforward to what you're looking for, unlike the other forms where you have to filter and take out certain things before you really get the relevant data you're looking for.

– Ghana government interviewee

**Guides investments:** The tool helps development partners know where to invest their resources and/or determine how to realign investments if needed. For example, in Ghana, a review of the data showed the tool helped stakeholders make more efficient use of provider trainings. A Malawi implementing partner shared that the tool has streamlined discussions at CIP review meetings about resource investments because all data is visible to everyone. In Tanzania, use of the dashboard resulted in a change in strategy and improved efficiency by shifting away from resource-intensive mobile clinics for conducting outreach to offer long-acting reversible family planning methods. Instead, resources would focus on

having providers from higher-level facilities conduct outreach at lower-level facilities.

**Areas for improvement:** Respondents raised two challenges about efficiency. In some countries, unreliable internet services can be frustrating and lead to lost effort. One suggestion was to incorporate an offline version of the tool to use when there is no or low connectivity. The required human resources to continue use of the tool was also mentioned as a factor for efficiency and sustainability. As noted by a respondent in Tanzania, the government needs to have a well-capacitated and available staff member who can use the tool and navigate its functions in relation to other data systems (e.g., DHIS2, e-LMIS) rather than relying on a project-funded secondee.



### Impact: To what extent have major results been achieved by using CIP performance monitoring?

**Positive impact:** Respondents noted that the CIP performance monitoring process and dashboard have had a positive impact on overall CIP execution, particularly for improving partner coordination, mobilizing resources, and fostering a united vision. As a result, ministries of health and implementing partners have a better understanding of where resources are being invested, geographically and technically. This view is summed up by a partner respondent in Madagascar: “The evidence provided by the dashboard helped stakeholders to have the same vision and level of information.”

**Improved coordination:** Several respondents in Ghana emphasized how CIP coordination can help them with future commitments.

So I think it has improved coordination in that when we share the entire dashboard with everyone, it sort of gives an idea of what everyone is doing. And already Ghana has a very good coordination system between FP [family planning] partners because of the interagency coordination committee. Adding this dashboard to it sort of just beefed [it] up ... In assessing the overall progress of this CIP—because we are supposed to be making new FP2030 commitments, which should align with the CIP—we go back to the dashboard, look at that, and use that as a basis for what we are going to do for 2030. I think for the coordination, it has definitely contributed to the coordination that we already enjoy.

– Ghana government interviewee

**Priorities/trends made visible:** For resource mobilization, respondents cited examples of how the dashboard revealed priorities that needed more attention or had gaps in funding. The visibility of data trends has been a challenge in the past but, using the dashboard, countries are able to see trends, identify gaps, make more realistic forecasts, and thus mobilize resources across CIP thematic areas. Madagascar has used the tool over several years along with an annual financial gap analysis to mobilize and manage CIP resources, and adapt interventions based on this data.

The dashboard for Madagascar showed a gap for demand creation. Indeed, for the next national strategic plan, this thematic area, in particular, should be strengthened.

– Madagascar government interviewee

The CIP dashboard shows the effectiveness of the portion of funding spent under each strategic area and recommendations could be made for realigning the allocations for the next CIP.

– Madagascar government interviewee

**Increased funding:** Two partners described how the dashboard contributed to funding proposals. In Ghana, an implementing partner received funds from Amplify Change and, in Tanzania, a development partner was able to use dashboard data for an internal funding request.

For me and for us as an organization it did really help us to increase our funding. We have the grant from Amplify Change that went from minimal cedis [Ghana's currency] to very good cedis. As I am speaking, our program with Amplify Change has been extended. We told them that now we can capture performance very well and accurately.

– Ghana partner interviewee



### Sustainability: To what extent can CIP performance monitoring be sustained over time?

**Risk to sustainability:** Ongoing CIP performance monitoring is essential to quality CIP execution and achievement of country family planning goals and commitments. Respondents voiced mixed opinions

on the extent to which benefits of the CIP approach will continue or are likely to continue. They also had mixed opinions on the ability of the ministry of health to continue CIP development and execution with minimal external support.

Government respondents, particularly in Ghana, believe CIP performance monitoring and use of the dashboard will continue:

We have sort of incorporated the discussions on the progress that the tool gives us and all of that into our interagency coordination committee meetings ... We don't need to have any specific funding.

– Ghana government interviewee

**Government ownership is critical:** While government respondents were positive, other stakeholders commented that sustainability of CIP performance monitoring—particularly use of the dashboard—is hindered by governments' lack of ownership. Thus far, the tool is well appreciated, as reflected in this assessment, but it has been introduced and supported by a donor-funded project. Full adoption by government of the tool and an attendant requirement for partners to use it for data entry and CIP review meetings, remains an important challenge. Respondents believe that without such direct government ownership, use of the tool will be lost. A civil society respondent in Madagascar noted that unless the government institutionalizes the practice of inviting partners to be part of the monitoring process and to enter their data into the dashboard, the holistic understanding of family planning data (including on social behavior change, commodities, and advocacy) will be incomplete. Relying on projects that come and go (such as HP+) doesn't foster sustainability, according to respondents.

Besides government ownership, respondents indicated that capacity building of monitoring and evaluation and technical staff is critical for sustainability.

So I think moving forward, I believe that we need to build capacity of technical staff and also build capacity of our partners so that they can be able to enter the data anywhere they are because the platform can be accessed anywhere, anytime.

– Ghana government interviewee

## Conclusion

Findings from the four-country assessment indicate that the CIP performance monitoring process and dashboard are considered relevant, effective, efficient, and, to some extent, impactful in the execution of the CIP and family planning program. The CIP-specific indicators and inclusion of implementing partner data helped provide all stakeholders with a holistic understanding of the status of the CIP and family planning program. Stakeholders repeatedly referenced the benefits of the data visualization aspect of the dashboard, particularly how the CIP map provides a snapshot of progress without significant investment of their time. In the FP2030 era—where accountability for commitments and progress on CIPs is more prominent in the global, regional, and national discourse—it's essential to have a sustainable CIP performance process with easy-to-use functionality and an intuitive, user-friendly interface.

Execution of any tool or process can be a challenge and government ownership and engagement are critical to advancing progress on CIPs. When that is present, the CIP dashboard has the potential to help countries remain accountable for their family planning programs and provide partners with evidence of progress and incentives to work together to find solutions. Sustainability remains a challenge because the tool was introduced mid-CIP cycle (e.g., in Ghana and Malawi) when many systems were already established and because most countries still rely significantly on donor-funded projects for CIP and family planning program execution.

## Recommendations

The following are key recommendations for sustainable and impactful CIP performance monitoring and tool use:

- Introduction of the dashboard tool will benefit from planning for sustainability from the outset. Attention to government buy-in, ownership, and dedication of monitoring and evaluation and human resources are critical to the long-term use of the tool. Not all countries may be ready for use of the dashboard, but all need to have a strong performance monitoring system in place moving into the FP2030 era, and all need to focus on CIP execution, not solely on CIP development.
- As part of the dashboard introduction process, countries need to carefully plan for training on the CIP dashboard tool, both at the ministry of health and among implementing partners. Adopting a cascade and or peer training approach can help reduce costs, improve uptake, and contribute to sustainability.
- To further increase efficiency, effectiveness, and impact, even greater alignment with the DHIS2 is needed to facilitate data entry, interoperability, and tool relevance.
- Internet connectivity will remain a challenge for some time. Building user capacity on how to maximize use of offline functionality will increase dashboard adoption and efficiency.

With a focus on subnational CIPs, consideration is needed for how well the CIP dashboard functions at this level (e.g., consideration of skills, connectivity, capacity building/reinforcement, and how to link with national-level efforts).

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