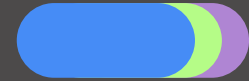


JAN 2024



- # GFF Data and Evidence Use Guidance

Guidance on GFF's approach to strengthening data and evidence use for decision-making in GFF-supported countries



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About this guidance

The Global Financing Facility (GFF) is strongly committed to promoting data use for improved reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N) programming. We believe that increased use of data and evidence in decision-making at all levels of the health system can contribute to improved RMNCAH-N outcomes. This can occur by enabling stronger design and implementation of policies, strategies, and interventions based on an improved understanding of the context, knowledge of what is and is not working well on the ground, evidence-based prioritization, and learning from best practice.

This guidance note is intended to support government, stakeholders, and GFF Country Teams involved in the development and implementation of a country investment case. It is not prescriptive about what any given country should do. The purpose is to provide a starting point from which country partners can work together with GFF to understand their country's data use needs and identify opportunities for engagement.

GFF approach to Data Use

As with all of the GFF's engagement, the country-led process is at its core. The GFF Country Platform plays a principal role in championing the data use agenda and in promoting the alignment of partners' support. We place a strong emphasis on supporting data use at all levels of the health system from national-level strategy and policymaking through to frontline service delivery. This includes strengthening the availability of disaggregated data at national and sub-national levels through a range of support such as strengthening Health Management Information Systems (HMIS), enhancing analytics in RMNCAH-N and MPDSR (maternal and peri-natal disease surveillance and response), improving CRVS (civil registration and vital statistics), and strengthening Health Resource Tracking (HRT). The GFF encourages rapid-cycle approaches to generating, analyzing, and using data to enable timely decision-making, such as Implementation Research and FASTR (Frequent Assessments, and Systems, and Tools for Resilience). The GFF also promotes strengthened integration of gender and equity into data analysis and use.

Scope of GFF engagement

The scope of the GFF's engagement on data use may cover a **wide range of decision-makers** and related decision-making fora from national to sub-national levels. In defining the scope in a particular country, the starting point will be to identify the key decision-makers and decision-making bodies, and to understand their data needs. From that entry point, the types of data required and what they could be used for can be defined.

Range of Data and Evidence

In order to identify and monitor the priority reforms of the investment case, including the availability and allocation of resources to implement those reforms, the **GFF promotes the use of the full range of health systems data** (e.g., service delivery, finance, human resources, logistics, civil registration, etc). This range of data should be reflected in the investment case Results Framework indicators (and related Bank Project indicators as relevant), which will be the cornerstone of the GFF's data use support.

Identifying data use needs

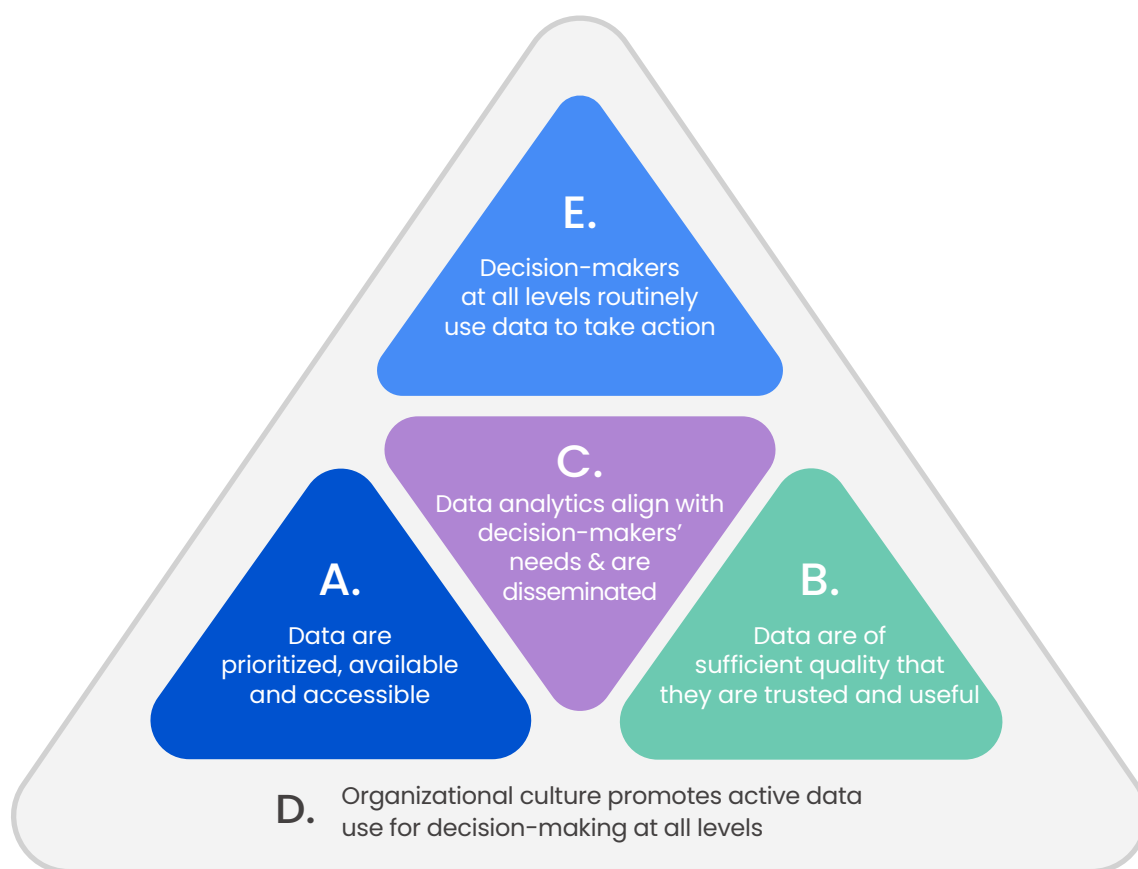
Data use needs and goals will be unique for each country, as will the pathways to reaching those goals. In order to be strategic and prioritize, it is important to have a strong understanding of the needs, systems, and capacity for the production and use of data. It may be helpful, therefore, to carry out a **data-use landscape assessment** to systematically identify needs and gaps. This assessment can be light or in-depth, as appropriate and feasible at the time.

Data Use Plan

Based on the findings from the landscape assessment in a given country, priority areas of engagement for strengthening data use can then be identified. This could be integrated into the Investment Case's Results/M&E Plan or Health Information System (HIS) Strengthening Plan or could be a stand-alone Data Use Plan. Having a stand-alone plan can elevate data use as a priority and facilitate the alignment of development partners and other stakeholders around the commitments in the plan; however, this should be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on existing capacity and momentum in the country. Ideally, the landscape assessment and plan for data use would be carried out during investment case development, although it could be at any opportune moment, especially during key review processes of the investment case.

Building Blocks for Data and Evidence Use

The GFF has identified five key areas that are considered critical for enabling the effective use of data for decision-making within a country – herein referred to as ‘building blocks’ and laid out in the pyramid here. While the pathways to achieving these foundational building blocks may follow a general progression that starts with the building blocks at the bottom of the pyramid and moves toward the top, the pathways are unlikely to be in one direction only. In practice, these building blocks will likely be developed in parallel and can become mutually reinforcing. For example, the more that data products and visuals are available to decision-makers and are reviewed and discussed, the more momentum there will be to strengthen data quality and timeliness, contributing to a positive cycle of increased demand for data use and improved availability.



'Building Blocks for Data and Evidence Use

A. Data are prioritized, available and accessible

Having data aligned to decision-makers needs and consistently available is the first step in working towards active data use. This requires strong health information systems and integrated approaches that connect the full scope of health systems data.

B. Data are of sufficient quality that they are trusted and useful

Decision-makers must have confidence that the data they use is of adequate quality – accurate, consistent, and timely. This requires robust processes for accurate data collection, cleaning, and collation, as well as strong data quality assurance. Data do not have to be perfect to be useful; but identification of gaps in quality, completeness, and provision of feedback is critical for informing improvements.

C. Data analytics align with decision-makers' needs and are disseminated routinely

Decision-makers need relevant, user-friendly analytics at the right time to inform their decisions. This requires strong country capacity to collate, analyze, triangulate, and integrate data and evidence systematically. Innovative digital and rapid-cycle approaches can enable enhanced, timely analytics.

D. Organizational culture promotes active data use for decision-making at all levels

Having a strong organizational culture of data use is critical. It requires strong leadership that champions and role models data use, as well

as organizational policies and guidelines that promote and reinforce data use. Staff need to understand the value of and be committed to using data, alongside having the necessary knowledge and skills. See the toolkit on the GFF's Competency-Based Approach to Data Use here (<https://gffklportal.org/learning/data-use-learning-package/>). This building block encompasses all the other building blocks as an essential enabling environment for change to occur.

E. Decision-makers' at all levels routinely use data to take action

Systematic data use needs to be well embedded into processes for planning, prioritization, resource allocation, monitoring, and review. This includes mainstreaming data use into existing decision-making bodies, management processes, program improvement, and service delivery. Promoting rapid cycles of review and improvement of services can enable decisions to be made in a timely manner.

Next steps

This Guidance can be used as a starting point for the Government, GFF Country Team, and other relevant stakeholders to explore potential needs and opportunities for engagement on data use. Please connect with the country's GFF Focal Point, Liaison Officer or Results Specialist to discuss how best to take this forward.

The guidance covers many possible areas of engagement – it is not expected that everything will be relevant in a given country, but rather the aim is to identify the most impactful ways we can engage based on the prioritisation of needs.

Further information and resources regarding data and evidence use are available here (<https://gffklportal.org/learning/data-use-learning-package/>).

Building block A.

Data are prioritized, available and accessible in a timely manner to potential users at all levels

GFF Value-Add

- Promote country leadership of the results agenda for RMNCAH-N
- Promote partner alignment (including one plan, one budget and one report)
- Promote integrated approaches to Health Information Systems (HIS) and M&E planning, financing and implementation
- Support identification/ implementation of HIS reforms for improved availability of timely RMNCAH-N data at all levels
- Support identification/implementation of Health Resource Tracking (HRT) approaches to inform prioritization of the health system

Key areas of GFF engagement

During investment case development

- Support the development of a **clear results agenda responsive to decision-makers' needs** as part of the investment case, including priority interventions for strengthening HIS and data use.
- Support the development of a **Results Framework** for the investment case (and/or related WB Projects) that is fit-for-purpose and, where relevant, an HIS plan. It should include **RMNCAH-N, health financing, and systems strengthening** (using the full range of health systems data) and consider gender/equity dimensions.
- Promote **partner alignment** through **active engagement of partners** to contribute to

During investment case implementation

- Support **routine monitoring of investment case Results Framework** (and/or related WB Projects).
- Support implementation of **priority HIS strengthening interventions and alignment of partners throughout**.
- Support **access to a full scope of health systems data** (e.g., service delivery - including availability, readiness, and delivery - finance, HR, logistics, civil registration, etc).
- Support the government to conduct **HRT** by identifying and strengthening approaches to tracking governmental and external financial allocation against government priorities. Use HRT data to improve the efficacy and efficiency of investment case implementation.

prioritization of interventions for HIS strengthening and align their engagement accordingly. This includes around prioritized indicators lists and/or data dictionaries.

- Support the government to conduct **HRT** by identifying and strengthening approaches to **tracking governmental and external financial allocation against government priorities**. This includes collecting and using HRT data to inform the prioritization of programming in the investment case.
 - As relevant, incorporate plans for strengthening access to data on **GFF's priority investment areas, such as gender and equity, Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR) and Maternal & Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR)**.
 - Identify opportunities to strengthen **timely use of research and evidence** by developing/implementing **Implementation Research and Evaluation (IR&E) Plans** linked the investment case/WB Project design, as relevant.
 - Identify plans to strengthen core competencies for data collection and compilation etc.
- As relevant, support availability of data on **GFF's priority investment areas (gender, equity, SRHR, MPDSR)**.
 - Support **Health Facility Assessments or population-based surveys** to complement routine data sources where relevant. This includes adaptation of rapid-cycle health facility and household phone surveys, linked to **analysis of routine data sources and in-person surveys via FASTR**.
 - Support **IR&E** to generate timely, relevant, and accessible data and evidence in line with the investment case learning and evidence needs.
 - Strengthen capacity, including through **competency-based approaches, for data collection**, compilation etc.

Building block B.

Data are of sufficient quality that they are trusted and enable accurate decision-making

GFF Value-Add

- Support identification and implementation of key HIS interventions to ensure that data collection tools, processes and documentation contribute to stronger data quality
- Support strong data quality assurance tools and review processes at all levels

Key areas of GFF engagement

During investment case development

- Identify interventions for **data quality assessment and improvement, including quality assurance mechanisms, policies, data quality functionality, and routine data quality processes** as part of the investment case (and/or WB Projects). An HIS plan that includes data quality activities may be developed either as a standalone plan or as a component of a broader plan, as relevant.
- Identify **data quality assurance mechanisms** for investment case Results Framework indicators; for example, routine data quality processes/assessments, verification processes, annual data cleaning, etc. This may include the use of **FASTR's data quality assessment reports of DHIS2 data**.

During investment case implementation

- Ongoing support for the implementation of interventions related to **data quality assessment** and improvement. This may include support for **quality assurance mechanisms**, including policies (clear roles and accountability), built-in data quality functionality (validation rules, outlier analysis, etc), and routine data quality processes (supervision, review meetings, data cleaning, sign-off).
- Use **key review moments to address data quality issues** (e.g., routine review and quality assurance of investment case Results Framework indicators, periodic health sector reviews, mid-term reviews, WB Project ISRs, etc).

- Identify opportunities to incorporate/strengthen quality **HRT approaches** that include critical pieces of information needed to make specific budgetary decisions, such as public and external allocations available for specific priorities.
- Identify opportunities to ensure high-quality evidence is generated through **IR&E**.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen **core competencies for data quality improvement and assurance**.
- Promote regular and **timely feedback on gaps and limitations in data quality** to inform improvements.
- Use quarterly data **quality assessment** reports generated by **FASTR's support to countries on DHIS2 analysis** to identify, discuss, and address data quality issues.
- Use **data cleaning related to analysis of variations in delivery of essential health services as an opportunity to strengthen data quality** processes (including validation of rapid-cycle approaches and assessment of HMIS data quality) etc.
- Support quality **HRT approaches to inform** budgetary decisions, such as public and external allocations available for specific priorities.
- Support to **IR&E capacity strengthening** to ensure high-quality evidence is generated through IR&E.
- Support strengthening of **core competencies for data quality assurance**.

Building block C.

Data analytics are prepared and disseminated in alignment with decision-makers' needs

GFF Value-Add

- Build country capacity to produce updated national and sub-national RMNCAH-N analytics
- Promote the integrated analysis of different types of health systems data (e.g., cross-referencing data on service delivery, finance, HR, logistics, civil registration, etc)
- Promote innovative, rapid-cycle approaches to analytics as well as strengthened analysis of gender & equity

Key areas of GFF engagement

During investment case development

- Ensure that the **Country Platform** includes or is linked to an **analytic unit or working group** with clear responsibilities around data collation, analysis, and triangulation.
- Identify key interventions **to strengthen the production and dissemination of timely data analytics** (service utilization, coverage, quality, readiness, and demand-side) as part of the investment case and/or related WB Projects. Support the **inclusion of different types** of health systems data into analytics, including from routine sources as well as surveys (e.g., service delivery, finance, HR, logistics, civil registration, health facility assessments, household surveys, etc), **sub-national analysis, gender and equity analysis, etc.**

During investment case implementation

- Support the generation of **timely analytics on primary health care functioning** (service utilization, coverage, quality, readiness, and demand-side analysis).
- Strengthen the **development of key analytical products** (reports/visuals/scorecards/ dashboards, FASTR analytical outputs/HRT reports) to enable monitoring and evaluation of the investment case.
- Support the **routine dissemination** of these analytics as part of national and sub-national review processes, such as quarterly, annual, and mid-term reviews, WB review processes, and evaluations, etc.

- Identify opportunities to support the **adoption of digital and other forms of innovation** for the production of timely analytics.
- Identify opportunities to **strengthen analysis of HRT data** to improve donor coordination and inform key budgetary decisions.
- Identify opportunities to support the production of timely analytics on **Primary Health Care functioning and service use via FASTR**.
- Facilitate identification and prioritization of issues requiring deeper analysis, including **through IR&E and FASTR's rapid qualitative follow-up approaches**.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen **core competencies to design, develop, disseminate, and maintain** analytical products and introduce innovative techniques, including through **Countdown to 2030** and similar initiatives.

- Support these analytical products to **include targets, sub-national disaggregation, and gender and equity analysis. Promote the inclusion of different types** of health systems data into analytics, including from routine sources as well as surveys (e.g., service delivery, finance, HR, logistics, civil registration, health facility assessments, household surveys, etc).
- Promote **digital and other forms of innovation** for the production of timely analytics.
- Support capacity building to **implement and analyze HRT data** to improve coordination and make key budgetary decisions.
- Support capacity building to carry out timely analytics on **Primary Health Care functioning and service use via FASTR**.
- Facilitate ongoing identification of issues requiring deeper analysis, including **through IR&E and FASTR's rapid qualitative follow-up approaches**.
- Support the strengthening of **competencies to design, develop, disseminate, and maintain** analytical products and introduce innovative techniques, including through **Countdown to 2030** and similar initiatives.

Building block D.

Organizational culture promotes active use of data for decision-making at all levels

GFF Value-Add

- Strengthen leadership around HIS and data use
- Support champions for data use to act as catalysts to stimulate demand for data at all levels of the data cycle
- Promote opportunities to incentivize data use

Key areas of GFF engagement

During investment case development

- Identify roles and responsibilities of the **Country Platform in relation to data use.**
- Identify other potential **data use champions** beyond the **Country Platform.**
- Identify **key interventions and campaigns to promote data use culture, policies, and processes** during investment case development (and/or related WB Project development). This may be within the investment case or as a stand-alone Data Use Plan.
- Identify opportunities to develop/strengthen **human resource performance frameworks, minimum standards, and strategic purchasing approaches** so that they reward measurable success.

During investment case implementation

- Ongoing support for the **Country Platform** to act as a **champion for data use.**
- Support other potential **champions for data use**, especially leadership at both national and sub-national levels.
- Support **interventions (or Data Use Plan), campaigns, policies, and processes** that promote and incentivize the use of evidence to inform decision-making.
- Support implementation of **human resource performance frameworks, minimum standards, and strategic purchasing approaches** that reward measurable success.

- Identify opportunities to promote the use of data and evidence for transformative leadership through **competency-development programs such as the Country Leadership Program (CLP)**.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen **core competencies** that can promote a culture of data use, especially positive **values, attitudes, and behaviors**.

- Implement competency-development programs such as the **Country Leadership Program (CLP)**.
- Support **values, attitudes, and behaviours** for data quality and evidence-based decision-making as part of competency-based approaches.

Building block E.

Decision-makers at all levels routinely use data to take action

GFF Value-Add

- Promote evidence-based prioritization during planning and resource allocation
- Support use of relevant data to inform regular review processes
- Use Implementation and Evaluation Research (IR&E) to promote timely data use and foster continuous learning

Key areas of GFF engagement

During investment case development

- Identify key interventions to **promote and reinforce data use** (may be within the investment case/WB Projects or as a stand-alone Data Use Plan), including:
 - main streaming **data use into existing decision-making bodies, management processes, program improvement, and service delivery.**
 - incorporating **routine use of rapid-cycle analytics, including FASTR**, at national and subnational levels to respond to service use, coverage, and PHC system challenges.
 - incorporating **IR&E** for timely generation and use of evidence.
 - incorporating routine use of **HRT data** to support specific stakeholder decisions and improve donor coordination around government priorities.

During investment case implementation

- Support implementation of investment case interventions (and/or WB-related Projects) to **actively promote and reinforce data use**, including Data Use Plan where relevant.
- Use **key review and data verification moments** to strengthen the systematic use of data and evidence to inform decision-making. E.g., quarterly, annual, mid-point and end-point reviews.
- **Mainstream data use into existing decision-making bodies, management processes, program improvement, and service delivery.** This includes the Country Platform meetings having a standing agenda to regularly check progress on core indicators, and ensuring decisions are documented and tracked.

- incorporating **performance-based financing and related data verification processes** to promote rigorous use of data to inform decisions.
 - incorporating use of **real-time data by frontline service providers** to inform daily service provision.
 - strengthening **feedback loops** between different decision-making levels and between data users and producers.
- Use the development of the investment case (and/or related WB Projects) as an opportunity to **demonstrate best practices in use of holistic health systems data for evidence-based planning and prioritization.**
 - Identify opportunities to strengthen core competencies for **evidence-based decision-making.** E.g., competencies at national and sub-national levels for data interpretation, decision-taking, follow-through, supportive supervision, mentoring, etc.
- Promote use of **rapid-cycle analytics, including via FASTR,** at national and subnational levels to respond to service use, coverage, and PHC system challenges.
 - Engage decision-makers early and throughout **IR&E** activities to ensure responsiveness to their needs and ensure IR&E dissemination facilitates and promotes timely use of evidence.
 - Support use of **HRT** to inform stakeholder decisions and improve donor coordination around government priorities.
 - Use processes such as **performance-based financing** and related **data verification processes** to promote rigorous use of data to inform decisions.
 - Support use of **real-time data by frontline service providers** to inform daily service provision
 - Support **feedback loops** between different decision-making levels and between data users and producers.
 - Strengthen **core competencies for evidence-based decision-making.** E.g., competencies at national and sub-national level for data interpretation, decision-taking, follow-through, supportive supervision, mentoring, etc.

