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**LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT  
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*Inspired Leadership. Sound Management. Transparent Governance.*

# Put Data in the Driver's Seat

## The PEPFAR Management Dashboard



Photo: MSH



Yale Global Health Leadership Institute



### **About the LMG Project**

Funded by the USAID, the Leadership, Management and Governance (LMG) Project (2011-2016) is collaborating with health leaders, managers and policy-makers at all levels to show that investments in leadership, management and governance lead to stronger health systems and improved health. The LMG Project embraces the principles of country ownership, gender equity, and evidence-driven approaches. Emphasis is also placed on good governance in the health sector – the ultimate commitment to improving service delivery, and fostering sustainability through accountability, engagement, transparency, and stewardship. Led by Management Sciences for Health (MSH), the LMG consortium includes the Amref Health Africa; International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF); Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH); Medic Mobile; and Yale University Global Health Leadership Institute (GHLI).

*This document contains hyperlinks. All materials referenced below are available on the LMG Project's Website at the following address: <http://bit.ly/2hNY0Iq>.*

*Funding was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement AID-OAA-A-11-00015. The contents are the responsibility of the Leadership, Management, and Governance Project and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*

## 1. Introduction

The Leadership, Management, and Governance (LMG) Project seeks to strengthen management and governance practices through improved health systems. The project aims to develop tools and operational processes for US Government-funded country projects and to empower local implementing partners to manage their operations more effectively, ultimately improving performance and results. To this end, LMG has developed a dashboard which provides project managers with an easy-to-read, real-time, user interface. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) management dashboard provides a dynamic graphical presentation of the current status and historical trends of the implementing partners' key performance indicators to enable instantaneous and informed decision-making.

## 2. Background

The first phase of implementing the dashboard concept was introduced between May and September 2012 to two civil society organizations (CSOs) in Uganda – Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) and Protecting Families against HIV/AIDS (PREFA). The second phase of implementation took place between January and September 2014, when the dashboard was transformed into a generic format and tested at two CSOs in Kenya – the National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE) and Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO).

In its current format, any organization or project, regardless of size of operation or technical sector (health, education, agriculture, etc.), can use the dashboard, provided the implementer meets basic information technology (IT) and organizational requirements. The dashboard and its supporting tools are available [here](#).

## 3. What is the PEPFAR Management Dashboard?

The PEPFAR dashboard is a management tool that aims to address one of the more common challenges that project managers face when analyzing and using data for decision-making: what issues to prioritize and address before they manifest into something larger and significantly adverse for the project or organization. This situation is typically faced by managers who have to review and process large amounts of data that is typically generated by different departments and projects, that at times overwhelms management and distracts them from the most important issues that they need to focus on.

The dashboard is useful because it shows the performance of a small set of important programmatic, financial, and management indicators, allowing managers to quickly see issues as they emerge, before they escalate. The dashboard is an easy-to-read visual tool, allowing for quick and instinctive identification of problem areas.

The data displayed on the dashboard – be it via a PDF, PowerPoint, or Word file – has integrity and cannot be tampered with since the dashboard generation process is managed at one central point, guaranteeing accuracy, reliability, and ultimately confidence in the results. The dashboard is designed to complement existing reporting systems and feeds off of established systems. It requires minimal time to be established – as long as relatively robust reporting systems are in place to generate the required

financial, programmatic, and management information.

## 4. What does the dashboard show?

There are four major components of the management dashboard that are presented as “tabs” at the top of the page. These include the following:

- The Program component, which tracks the results of the implementation of activities
- The Finance component, which tracks the organization’s financial investments
- The Management component, which tracks the organization’s key delivery mechanisms and critical resources for implementation (such as staffing levels, logistics, etc.)
- The Action Plan component, which tracks key decisions made and actions to be taken to address issues identified in the three operational areas and amongst the projects

## 5. Advantages of the dashboard

The dashboard can be generated and shared in various file formats, including .PDF, .DOCX, and .PPTX and can be easily incorporated into reports, as demonstrated below. This reduces time spent developing graphs for PowerPoint presentations and routine reports and adds a dynamic element to presentations during executive meetings. The dashboard only requires Adobe Flash Player, Microsoft Office, and Adobe Acrobat Reader to be installed in order to view its dynamic content, meaning it is easily shared and can even be posted on organizational/project websites. Only the designated dashboard developer is required the SAP crystal dashboard software installation and at least one user license to generate the dashboard.

The dashboard is exciting for its dynamic features, modern feel, and ease of use, which does not require any training – only the instinctive click, select, and view actions. It is easy to tell which operational areas or projects or departments are doing well, vis-à-vis the ones that require urgent attention. Please see sample dashboard below.

From a team management perspective, the dashboard can be used to encourage healthy competition, for instance, by allowing different project teams to see one another’s performance. With regards to problem solving and monitoring the progress of remedial actions, the action plan component of the dashboard allows for management to track the progress of key response actions.

## 6. How is the dashboard generated?

The dashboard system uses information that is provided by the organization’s established financial and programmatic



reporting systems. This information is populated into simple Excel sheets that are formatted to feed into the dashboard master file. The dashboard master file then consolidates information into a data file that, when exported to the SAP software, generates the dashboard.

## 7. Minimum requirements to generate the dashboard

To generate the dashboard, the organization is required to have: (1) Excel; (2) the SAP crystal dashboard software with at least one license; and (3) Adobe Flash Player. These should be installed on the computer that is to be used to produce the dashboard. The users of the machine on which the master file and SAP are installed should have the appropriate administration rights and settings for running applications and macros.

## 8. Minimum requirements to view the dashboard

To view the dashboard, the viewer must have the relevant program installed (Word, PowerPoint, or Adobe Acrobat Reader) and Adobe Flash Player, which is necessary for the dashboard's dynamic features to function.

## 9. How to develop and maintain a dashboard for your organization

The process for building and maintaining an organizational or project dashboard is laid out in the PEPFAR Management Dashboard Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are available [here](#).

## 10. Key criteria for the successful adoption of the dashboard

Beyond the technical guidance provided in the SOPs on setting up and maintaining a dashboard, there are key lessons learned from the four CSOs that piloted the dashboard that are considered critical for the success of the dashboard development and management process, as well as its institutionalization as a management tool within an organization. These key criteria are as follows:

- Management should first ensure that the basic requirements that are necessary to set up and use dashboards are present. It is important for an organization implementing the dashboard to have some in-house technical skills relating to IT infrastructure, MS Excel data management, and some limited knowledge of the SAP dashboard designer software.
- The dashboard requires management to openly acknowledge both good and poor performance. As such, it requires an open and transparent mindset across the organization. When a decision is taken to adopt the dashboard as a management tool, the management team should be clear about its objectives for adopting the dashboard, and to demonstrate its commitment, it should develop a clear roadmap and implementation strategy for adopting the dashboard within the

organization or project. This information should be communicated to all staff across the organization in order to ensure everyone is aware of the project, in addition to creating a sense of excitement and interest related to the dashboard project.

- The organization should establish a dashboard project team that drives the implementation of the dashboard adoption process. All staff in the organization or project should be clear about what their roles are regarding the dashboard. This should start as early as possible in the process, and roles should continuously be refined as experience is built. As part of this process, the dashboard project team should appoint at least two dashboard champions to act as the focal points for the more technical aspects of the dashboard development process.
- Management should identify the right people for the role of dashboard champion. This applies to the different levels and/or technical areas. Consideration should be given towards a person's ability to dedicate the necessary time to the new project, especially at the start; technical competencies; tenure on the job; and contacts and relationships across projects or technical areas. It is critical that the dashboard focal persons have sound IT skills, some knowledge of SAP and Excel, and are familiar with the organization's data flow and reporting systems.
- The dashboard project team should consult extensively with the dashboard users. This is critical at the start (and has been built into the dashboard set-up process) since the dashboard users should be able to get the information that they want from the dashboard. For instance, if the board of directors prefers aggregated information by donor this would have to be taken into consideration when the dashboard is being set-up. Or if a development partner wishes to see certain sub-aggregate values, this would have to be addressed when setting up the dashboard.
- The management team should be ready to invest time improving and refining the organization's or project's reporting systems. For instance, if the dashboard is to be used to monitor the performance of financial sub-categories each quarter (for instance, expenditure on infrastructure, travel costs, etc.), management shall need to ensure that it has budgets for these categories, split by quarter, and that the reporting system can generate this level of detail. This may require some adjustments to be made to the financial reporting tools and system. To support this process, tools have been developed that help to determine whether the necessary systems are in place to generate the required data for the dashboard (see [here](#)). These include the organizational checklist, the IT readiness checklist, and the indicator selection worksheet tools.
- The dashboard project team should aim to keep the process simple at the start, for instance by using existing tools to collect data that feeds into the dashboard files, or vice-versa by using the dashboard tool to also collect routinely reported data. Over the long run the organization can modify systems by linking primary data sources to the dashboard.
- Management and the dashboard project team should be patient and flexible. The concept of a dynamic dashboard is new to most organizations and using a new tool like the SAP dashboard designer can be intimidating to new users. The dashboard project team could consider a phased implementation approach, where only one or two projects that have well-established data flow and reporting systems are part of the dashboard, for example, with the rest of the projects

being included after some dashboard experience has been gained.

- The dashboard project team should establish a system of accountability as part of the dashboard adoption process so that constraints are identified and addressed early. The accountability mechanism would further encourage the various stakeholders to feel a sense of responsibility to perform their respective tasks and functions. The accountability mechanism should be internal (for example: project teams accountable to the dashboard champion; dashboard champion accountable to management; etc.), and external (for instance: management held accountable to the financial sponsor/donor, and/or the board of directors).
- Management and the dashboard project team should proactively identify and liaise with other dashboard users, especially those within a common sector. The last assessment undertaken for the dashboard pilot project showed that the more people that use and engage around the dashboard, the more the culture sets in and becomes the norm.
- The IT principle of “Garbage in, Garbage out” applies to the concept of dashboard implementation. Thus, the dashboard project team should ensure that the data used for dashboard generation has gone through the appropriate quality and consistency control mechanisms before being used as inputs in the data master file.

The dashboard is a means to an end. Its implementation does not guarantee improved implementation of activities unless the information is adequately used for proactive evidence-based decision-making.

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