Data for Decisions (D4D) Fund
A Multi-Partner Initiative

IMF Staff Response to the Recommendations of the D4D Fund Independent Midterm Evaluation

6th ANNUAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

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ROOM
DOCUMENT

IMF Staff Response to the External Midterm Evaluation of the Data Decisions Fund for 2018-2021

IMF staff welcomes the comprehensive midterm evaluation of the capacity development (CD) activities financed by the Data for Decisions (D4D) Fund between June 2018 and April 2021.

The overall results were positive: the D4D Fund provides CD that is relevant, effective, coherent, and efficient; but more could be done to ensure that it achieves a longer-term sustainable impact. One of the key recommendations of the evaluation is to move from a CD-delivery-centered approach toward a change management approach, with more emphasis on achieving organizational change. Another important recommendation is to increase focus on *use* of data for policy decisions, which should be more integrated into CD delivery, its ex-ante assessments, and monitoring of results.

The assessment confirms the relevance of the IMF's demand-driven CD approach, and the positive impact IMF CD has on building national statistical systems and in supporting new or improved statistical products in low- and lower middle-income countries. IMF staff appreciates the positive feedback from country authorities who value the Fund's high quality of CD delivery.

The findings of the report and recommendations will be instrumental in the design of—and planning for—the next phase of the D4D Fund. Notably, several actions are already in progress. IMF staff recognizes the importance of a strong data user orientation, and have taken steps to create a Financial Access Survey Advisory Group. There is stronger collaboration with the World Bank. For Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCS), synergies between the D4D-funded CD with other IMF departments' activities are deepening under the IMF's new FCS Strategy—with more tailored needs assessments supported by country engagement strategies. With the implementation of the Capacity Development Management and Administration Program (CDMAP), the IMF's CD planning has shifted from a one- to a three-year roadmap orientation through medium term work plans that are periodically reviewed and updated. An IMF Staff Operational Guidance on the Dissemination of Capacity Development Information issued in 2022 provides for wider, more active, and timelier sharing of CD information—including through the dissemination of high-level summaries of strategic final CD outputs.

While the IMF works towards enhancing country ownership of CD, it should also be noted that recipient engagement and ownership are not under the IMF's direct control. This will continue to be a challenge, particularly in countries where statistics CD is most needed, and where underfunding of statistical programs continues to hamper the agility and resiliency of statistics-producing agencies.

Detailed IMF staff responses to the seven recommendations and proposed actions of the evaluators are presented in the Action Plan below, which also takes account of the insightful discussions of the D4D Steering Committee Mid-Year Check-In Meeting in January 2023.

Data for Decisions (D4D) Fund Phase I Mid-Term Evaluation: Action Plan

Actions proposed by the IMF will be undertaken primarily by the Statistics Department (STA) in close collaboration with the Institute of Capacity Development (ICD), and in cooperation with other Capacity Development Departments (CDDs) and Area Departments (ADs), as applicable. While several actions are ongoing, most are to be implemented during the remaining cycle of D4D Fund Phase I and the proposed D4D Fund Phase II to start in July 2025.

Priority:	High	Medium	Low

Recommendation 1. Take active steps to move from a "CD delivery" to a "change management" approach, so as to increase the likelihood that the short-term effects of CD activities will actually translate into longer-term effects in terms of organizational change and policy improvements (especially for M1 and M3).		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
Agree	A. Take active steps to encourage authorities to allocate the required resources to sustained data collection and dissemination and to eventually use the improved data for policy decisions, through increased ownership. A.1. Make it a requirement (or strong recommendation) that country authorities (preferably senior management or senior technical staff) review proposals for CD activities and missions, and include their suggestions into the design of the CD to the extent possible. A.2. To mitigate the negative effects of high workload and staff rotation, ask authorities to confirm explicitly that staff and resources are available, also for implementation (since senior management support and securing available national resources were found to be necessary pre-conditions for sustainability). B. Take more active steps to ensure that progress with knowledge strengthening is actually translated into improved data production. B.1. Encourage CD recipients to ensure that newly acquired knowledge is (a) shared within the institution; and (b) embedded in improved organizational systems and processes (this will also reduce the risks of staff turnover).	**Planned actions will aim to design and implement CD interventions better tailored to country context and geared to lasting impact.** (A) (C) With the implementation of CDMAP, IMF CD planning has already shifted from a one-year focus to a three-year roadmap orientation through medium-term work (MTW) plans that are periodically reviewed and updated. To strengthen country ownership of the MTW, IMF staff will discuss roadmap proposals at earlier stages with the authorities. STA will undertake this in conjunction with ADs to strengthen links between roadmap proposals and policy relevance; and to sensitize country authorities to the resource implications. STA will: (i) proactively discuss resource needs and CD impact with high-level country authorities during IMF Annual and Spring Meetings; and (ii) work with AD teams (including IMF Resident Representatives) to identify—and seek action by country authorities on—underfunding of statistical programs. More specific recommendations on macroeconomic statistics would be included in IMF Article IV reports (based on prioritization), with particular attention to countries that are under an IMF Program.

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	B.2. Include more country-specific recommendations and compilation approaches. B.3. Devote more attention to actual data compilation during training activities. C. In coordination with area departments, take active steps to ensure that progress with data production is actually translated into improved data usage for policy decision making. C.1. Prior to missions, or during the first mission, ask authorities to formally agree to dedicate sufficient national resources to CD implementation, and ask them to indicate how they envisage the data to be used for national policy purposes, and by whom. C.2. During missions, devote more attention to discussing how newly compiled or improved data can be (better) used for policy purposes, and include recommendations in training courses and TA reports on how this could be done. C.3. Following missions, ensure that there is regular follow-up with the authorities even after a project has ended (and even if the contract of the expert has expired or the STA staff member is no longer engaged), to discuss whether CD recommendations are being adopted/implemented, what bottlenecks authorities may be facing that prevent outcomes or impact from being reached (including at the policy level), and what could be done to ensure that newly compiled or improved data are being used for policy purposes. Coordinate with area departments who should be responsible for conducting such policy discussions, and ideally conduct them jointly with area department staff. These sessions could, for example, be conducted remotely around two or three times a year.	Leveraging new CD modalities, STA will explore the feasibility of more continuous country engagement with country authorities through regular informal check-ins between CD missions to discuss progress in implementing CD recommendations. STA will upgrade its current country management practices (during FY24) by repurposing the role of its regional managers and country coordinators to ensure more regular dialogue with ADs on country data needs, MTW progress, and on data usage for policy decision making. (B) STA will continue to encourage and support documentation of country data compilation processes to mitigate the risks of frequent staff rotation. Use of existing STA resources such as online learning and How-to Notes will also be promoted. STA is also developing a Compilers' Hub as a knowledge sharing tool to improve data production. New CD delivery modalities will be leveraged to ensure training activities are more oriented to data compilation (including use of country or synthetic datasets where applicable). This will build on STA tools in use (e.g., supply-use table balancing tool for the national accounts). Standard STA training programs already incorporate practical exercises and case studies on data compilation; and these will be further integrated into D4D-funded in-country/regional workshops. The D4D-funded online learning curriculum includes modules on use of data for policy purposes. This will be continued in all new online courses. (C) STA will examine the feasibility of implementing C3, particularly for new statistical products. While formal documentation on

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		progress occurs with a project close-out in CDMAP and through post-project independent evaluations, IMF staff are able to gauge post-project sustainability primarily through: (i) surveillance or lending missions where data adequacy issues may arise; and (ii) gaps in countries' reporting to STA databases and/or compliance with IMF data standards.

Recommendation 2. During intervention planning and design, include an explicit requirement to provide a clear needs assessment for data use, for (i) CD recipients, for M1 and M3; (ii) area departments, for M1 and M3; and (iii) third party data users, for all modules.		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
Partially agree	A. For **country authorities** (mostly for M1 and M3): A.1. Provide an assessment of (a) how the intervention would fill recipients' data gaps (e.g., where they lag behind international standards); (b) any indications of local interest in using the improved data for macroeconomic analysis and policy decisions; (c) the likelihood that the data would be used by national authorities (and by which agencies, for what purposes). A.2. Involve recipients more actively in jointly designing the terms of reference of missions, including the selection of realistic and relevant project outcomes/milestones (since recipients often were not aware of milestones). E.g., more frequent (online) discussions during the planning stage. This would help not only to assess needs, but also to assess and increase ownership by country authorities. B. For **area departments** (mostly for M1 and M3): include the IMF country team's assessment of (a) the data gaps addressed by the project; (b) the relevance of these data for specific surveillance or program monitoring purposes; (c) a score that	**Planned actions will aim at understanding the data needs and drivers for implementation including incentives of all stakeholders and potential obstacles for implementation.** (A) STA will consult extensively with country authorities at the design phase of each project to clearly assess the data use needs. (See also actions proposed for Recommendation 1). During D4D-funded regional workshops, country-specific engagements cover how potential CD interventions would address data gaps as well as readiness of the authorities to embark on a new project. (B) IMF Country Engagement Strategies will inform CD planning and design on macroeconomic statistics for Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCS). Assessments of data adequacy for surveillance are included in IMF Article IV Reports. Assessments by other IMF Capacity Development Departments (CDDs) also flag data gaps (e.g., analysis of financial sector risks impaired by lack of data on property prices).

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	reflects the likelihood that the data will be used by area departments. C. For **third party data users** (for all modules), assessments could be made in a qualitative way. E.g., for the FAS, consider conducting a survey among third party data users on their data needs and feed the results into subsequent project design.	(C) To further enhance engagement with data users, a FAS Advisory Group is being formed under M2, consisting of prominent policymakers, reporting countries, stakeholder organizations, and academia. The FAS Advisory Group is expected to provide feedback on various aspects of the FAS development work, which will be used as inputs to improve the quality, coverage, and outreach of the FAS. For standard macroeconomic datasets covered under M1, user heterogeneity and the scope of the D4D-funded CD interventions (primarily data quality upgrades) may pose challenges for full third-party user needs assessments. IMF staff encourage countries to undertake national user consultations for key CD projects such as a GDP rebasing.

Recommendation 3. During CD planning and design, require a more systematic assessment of ownership and absorption capacity, particularly for M1.

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Partially agree	CD planning and design should require an explicit assessment of: ▪ Factors that affect ownership for data-related reforms, in order to ensure that D4D-supported CD projects address areas for which there is in fact political willingness to reform. ▪ Absorption capacity, i.e., capacity gaps among recipient organizations.	**Planned actions will aim to design and implement interventions that are owned by the authorities at all levels**. STA will continue to systematically engage with country authorities before designing the project on their views of the most pressing data gaps; and discuss the required resources to achieve the objective of the project. (See also actions proposed for Recommendation 1). Diagnostic missions will include use case analysis where feasible; and address more directly, countries' resource availability and absorptive capacity through engagements with key stakeholders, including both compiling and source data-providing agencies.

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		Regional workshops on new statistical products (e.g., residential property price index) will communicate to country participants the importance of their agencies conducting user outreach prior to making decisions on D4D-funded CD country engagement.

Recommendation 4. Improve the impact monitoring and evaluation at the level of data users, e.g., by including user-level indicators in the strategic log frame; encouraging project teams to at least report on them more systematically in progress reports; carrying out more frequent post-mission follow-up monitoring (especially for Module 1); specifying who should be responsible for such monitoring; and allocating a share of the D4D budget to ensure that such monitoring can take place.		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
Partially agree	A. Include user-level indicators in the strategic log frame and/or the next version of the RBM Catalogue. The impact of CD activities on policy change depends on the extent to which data are used, rather than data compilation and dissemination per se. However, despite the name "Data for Decisions", the RBM Catalogue did not yet (at the time the evaluation started) include (sufficient) outcomes that measure progress at this level. While the use of improved data sometimes follows only years after a project's completion, our case studies showed that in some cases it can already be observed while the CD is still going on.

B. Encourage project teams to at least report on them more systematically in progress reports or annual reports. In particular, more frequent post-mission follow-up should be conducted to collect information on (examples of) the use of newly compiled or improved data. Rather than making this a formal exercise, it would be useful if progress or annual reports would include qualitative, country-specific proxies or examples of successful use of the improved data for policy analysis and decisions. Ideally, this type of information would be collected at three levels: | **Planned actions will strengthen monitoring of, and communication on, CD outcomes at the data user level.**

(A) (B) STA will explore the feasibility of including in D4D Fund progress reports, qualitative information on the use of improved data for policy analysis and decisions, drawing on readily available information in government policy publications. Outreach to national policymakers and to IMF mission chiefs will be undertaken, and examples of successful use of data will be included in D4D Fund Annual Reports.

STA will continue to monitor internal usage of the FAS data including in Staff Reports, Policy Notes, Article IVs, and other documents under M2. In addition, STA's Data Product Evaluation aims to monitor the usage of IMF's statistical products (with some caveats related to data dissemination in third-party websites). STA's Data Product Evaluation will continue to estimate FAS user statistics, as well as references of FAS data and definitions in IMF internal documents using data mining. |

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	- IMF area departments (examples of data use for Article IV reports, DSAs, REOs, WEO, etc.);
	     - National authorities (examples of data use by relevant government or central bank agencies in their reports/publications and on their websites);
	     - Relevant third parties (examples of data use by rating agencies, investment banks, researchers, development partners, NGOs, etc.).
	
	 C. Clarify who should be responsible for the follow-up monitoring. When contracts of experts end, relationships with authorities sometimes fade. To prevent this from happening, especially for Module 1, consider handing over the follow-up monitoring to the STA economist, STA project manager, Resident Representative offices (if present in the country) or the IMF country team, in case they are important data users. When Res Reps or country economists are involved in the analysis of country data anyway, it may not be a major burden for them to assess the extent to which the national authorities use the new data.
	
	 D. The evaluation team acknowledges that this recommendation can prove to be quite costly. To ensure that the aforementioned follow-up monitoring can take place, allocate a certain share of the D4D Fund budget to the monitoring of user-level outcomes by either short-term experts or STA staff. This monitoring could in some cases also be conducted via ex-post surveys (especially for training courses).
		(C) Under CDMAP processes, active project monitoring (during the project life cycle) is the responsibility of the STA project manager. IMF contract arrangements with short-term experts limit their role on country engagement to mission duration. IMF will assess feasibility of integrating post-project follow-up into existing processes. Reversal of project gains (decline in data quality for example) are typically identified by IMF staff in the context of surveillance or lending operations or through gaps in data reporting to STA; and by national authorities as a basis for CD requests.
		
		 (D) STA will propose to the D4D Fund Steering Committee a share of the Phase II budget for implementing systematic monitoring, including post-project surveys. The proposal will be articulated in the Program document for endorsement.

Recommendation 5. Enhance coordination and strengthen synergies with other development partners (e.g., the World Bank, UN Statistics Division, or via PARIS21).		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
Fully agree	A. Include a systematic overview in the D4D Fund's annual reports of the CD activities of other relevant DPs in the area of macroeconomic statistics, potentially based on information obtained through PARIS21. B. Consider disseminating the D4D Fund's TA reports more widely: B.1. Taking into account the new operational guidelines, consider ways to more actively share TA reports with other DPs offering CD in macroeconomic statistics, and consider publishing summaries of TA reports on the IMF website. B.2. Communicate more clearly in project proposals, TA reports and annual reports how D4D Fund-supported CD is complementary to what others are doing, and which improved data are expected to become available. C. Continue the recent progress made with enhancing coordination with the World Bank: C.1. Institutionalize agreements to regularly and systematically obtain information from the World Bank on relevant statistics-related CD projects that have passed the design phase. C.2. Going forward, increase coordination on potential complementary projects also at the design stage (e.g., invite each other to also share proposals for projects at the design stage).	**Planned actions will further strengthen—and report—on synergies with other developments partners; and operationalize IMF guidelines on the dissemination of CD outputs.** (A) In the future, STA would leverage the more granular information accessible in the recently launched [Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data](#) to enhance existing coordination mechanisms. Beginning in 2024, D4D Fund Annual Reports will feature more systematic reporting on how D4D Fund-supported CD is complementary to those of other development partners. (B) STA will advance work on sharing of CD outputs in line with the IMF Staff Operational Guidance on the Dissemination of Capacity Development Information issued in 2022. Steps will be taken to disseminate high-level summaries (HLS), and increase the number of technical assistance reports (TARs) on the IMF website. Progress to be reported in D4D Fund Annual Reports. In addition to the D4D Fund donor group having access to TARs, they may be shared with other DPs on request and subject to the CD-recipient country 's agreement. (C) STA has established mechanisms with the World Bank for coordination on activities of mutual interest and will further strengthen the collaboration (e.g., public sector debt statistics, national accounts, prices, climate). Since 2022, the World Bank has been engaging STA at the design phase of their statistics CD projects. This upstream coordination allows a clear understanding of the projects scope, coverage and timelines, and facilitates coordination in the field with appropriate phasing of TA to maximize cross-fertilization.

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	C.3. Improve the mapping of projects, e.g., by aligning field codes of projects with those from the WB, so that it becomes easier to systematically identify potential overlaps and complementarities. D. Strengthen external coordination at the project level. For example: D.1. Renew efforts to involve UN Statistics Division staff in online M3 courses such as NASx. D.2. Enhance monitoring of potential overlaps and complementarities with the World Bank between the FAS (M2) and the World Bank Global Findex databases, and discuss possible measures to increase their complementarities.	(D) Avenues for coordination with other DPs involved in statistical development will be pursued for each new project/activity under the D4D Fund (including tapping the expertise of other international organizations for remaining online courses to be produced). Under M2, coordination with the World Bank's Findex has helped enhance financial inclusion data collection. The FAS and Findex are discussing complementarities between these databases, particularly in the context of the FAS pilot data collection and Data Gaps Initiative 3 Recommendation 12: Fintech-enabled financial inclusion. The FAS is also harnessing complementarities with other databases such as the FSB's Fintech Credit survey, World Bank's Global Payment System Survey, OECD's financial literacy surveys, etc. The coordination will continue.

Recommendation 6. Further tailor the RBM framework to the D4D Fund.		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
Partially agree	A. Discuss with ICD how the RBM framework to be used by the D4D Fund can potentially be better adapted to, or merged with, the D4D Fund Strategic Log Frame, since it is sometimes confusing and burdensome (inefficient) for PMs to have to work with two sets of objectives and outcomes. B. Given that the RBM framework was seen by D4D project managers as too generic to be useful as a project management tool, consider further expanding the already improved granularity of the new RBM Catalogue. In particular: B.1. Include more outcomes and indicators that better fit the country context (while still being general enough to be part of the Catalogue);	**STA has updated its RBM catalogue; and will undertake further updates based on business needs.** (A) To be undertaken in designing the strategic log frame for Phase II of the D4D Fund—in close consultation with ICD. (B) To better fit country context, STA has already expanded the number of objectives available in the RBM Catalog (e.g., real sector statistics has 4 for national accounts instead of 1 in the old catalog). Expansion will continue (e.g., for climate statistics CD delivery).

Recommendation 6. Further tailor the RBM framework to the D4D Fund.		
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	B.2. Include outcomes and outcome indicators that can be used (for relevant projects) as proxies for data use; B.3. Since the linkages between milestones and outcomes are sometimes not clear or lacking, consider requiring a more direct link between project or country-specific milestones and (general) outcomes, especially for Module 1. C. To account for the fact that progress with country-specific outcomes is often subject to exogenous country circumstances that are beyond the control of the D4D Fund, combine the use of country-specific outcomes and milestones with global or regional targets (e.g., the target that a certain share of countries should have outcome ratings of 3 or 4 for a certain outcome or objective), and report both country targets and global targets in annual progress reports. D. Ensure that STA project managers of D4D-supported projects rate outcomes and milestones in the new CD-MAP system on a timely basis, and provide more guidance to ensure that they interpret RBM ratings correctly and consistently.	(C) Global or regional targets will build on country-specific outcomes in the design of the strategic log frame of the Phase II of the D4D Fund. (D) Inputs for monitoring and reporting of the strategic log frame of the D4D Fund will be directly drawn from CDMAP, ensuring ratings of outcomes and milestones are properly and timely recorded in CDMAP. Annual project assessments are a part of the CDMAP deliverables, and STA has implemented an RBM data completeness monitor to improve the quality of these assessments.

Recommendation 7. Continue developing and institutionalizing the blended (online and in-person) CD delivery model.		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
Fully agree	Leveraging the COVID experience with remote CD delivery, there are opportunities for further enhancing the synergies between remote CD (including online courses) and in-person CD, while continuing to treat remote and in-person CD as complements rather than substitutes: **Prior to missions**, use remote tools more systematically to conduct pre-CD assessments	**Planned actions will fully mainstream blended CD delivery.** Blended learning is now an established CD delivery modality and STA will continue to roll out the blended learning courses piloted during FY23 to all work streams, countries and regions.

Recommendation 7. Continue developing and institutionalizing the blended (online and in-person) CD delivery model.		
IMF Staff Response	**Actions Proposed by Evaluators**	**Actions Proposed by the IMF**
	(assessment of the need for M3 online courses or an online component of the CD project). Based on this assessment, offer online training prior to CD missions (e.g., one month in advance) in order to improve the absorption capacity and level the playing field for participants (and increase the effectiveness of in-person CD). ▪ Consider making M3 course certification by senior technical staff a requirement for receiving follow-up TA from M1 (or for other TA in the same area offered by STA or other IMF trust funds). ▪ This would increase both (a) the relevance of online training, and (b) the effectiveness of in-person CD, since M3 has the potential to improve the absorption capacity of in-person CD (funded by M1 or other sources). **During missions**, encourage IMF staff and experts to more actively recommend participants to sign up for online courses if technical capacity gaps are identified. **Following missions**, use remote tools more systematically to follow up and keep the momentum going (e.g., via regular meetings recommended in Recommendation 1). Lockdown periods notwithstanding, remote CD should remain a complement rather than a substitute for in-person CD (also given the IT capacity constraints in fragile and low-income countries, the lack of focus when recipients can easily be called away, the more limited opportunities for hands-on support, dialogue, etc.).	Integration of Modules 1 and 3 of the D4D Fund through blended learning has already started. One example (HFIEA/QNA) is cited in this year's (2023) D4D Fund Annual Report. STA will request authorities to encourage their staff to register for the available online courses. In some instances, STA will make completion of online (foundational) courses a precondition for attendance to its in-person workshops and trainings. STA will expand the blended modality to scheduled TA activities that have an embedded training component, leveraging the online learning curriculum developed under M3 (either taking the course in its entirety or using selected videos from the course). STA will continue to leverage the benefits of hybrid CD delivery to widen audience reach and tap the expertise of other international/regional organizations to sharpen the focus on use of data in its training programs (e.g., World Bank to discuss use of Quarterly External Debt Statistics during STA training on external debt statistics).