



New Frontiers in Joint Accountability for Family Planning Commitments

Background

Since 2012, new global efforts to advance family planning around the world—including Family Planning 2020 (now FP2030) and the francophone West Africa-focused Ouagadougou Partnership—have galvanized governments and other stakeholders to make commitments to improve family planning and reproductive health. Yet commitments made on a global stage must be implemented at national and subnational levels, posing significant challenges for ensuring accountability for those commitments as the number of interested stakeholders and responsible government offices grows.

As a result, both FP2030 and the Ouagadougou Partnership are promoting civil society engagement in the commitment-making process and in efforts to hold governments to account for their commitments. For example, the Ouagadougou Partnership has a strategy specifically focused on civil society engagement. One key initiative that is being implemented to support monitoring of commitments includes the Motion Tracker, a civil society organization (CSO)-led accountability mechanism that convenes all stakeholders to enhance understanding of commitments, establish progress metrics, and galvanize coordinated action to address identified bottlenecks.

Recently, the Ouagadougou Partnership Coordination Unit and the Samasha Medical Foundation introduced the Motion Tracker to Ouagadougou Partnership countries. This presented an opportunity to further strengthen

accountability for family planning commitments by complementing it with an approach to joint accountability, which supports a deep-dive into the accountability ecosystem and its challenges for a particular commitment. As a result, the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Health Policy Plus (HP+) project and Samasha worked together to implement the joint accountability approach in Benin, Niger, and Senegal in concert with each country's efforts to implement the Motion Tracker.

Linking Two Accountability Interventions to Maximize Efforts and Impact

The [joint accountability approach](#), designed by HP+, has been rolled out in eight countries and has been adapted at national and community levels to explore accountability for a specific family planning challenge. This approach centers on a workshop that convenes government and other stakeholders to develop an understanding of different types of accountability and to map the accountability relationships required to support a particular commitment. The workshop culminates in the development of an action plan designed to address barriers to accountability for the specific commitment. After the workshop, participants work together to implement the action plan.

In 2021 and 2022, HP+ and Samasha partnered to pioneer the first explicit effort to link joint accountability with the Motion Tracker as a way to galvanize action for all family planning/reproductive health commitments and via joint accountability to explore difficulties with one commitment in particular. While HP+ and

Samasha had intended for the joint accountability workshops to be completed after the first Motion Tracker stakeholder meetings, this was not possible in all countries due to different country timelines and plans.

The [Motion Tracker](#), initially developed, tested, and implemented in Uganda by Samasha, is an ongoing, participatory commitment-tracking mechanism. Now operating in 16 countries, it empowers a local CSO to convene government and other stakeholders to improve understanding of all the family planning and reproductive health commitments made, including establishing the baseline, target, timeline, and responsible party for each, and defining indicators to track progress. The lead CSO convenes quarterly stakeholder forums that include donors, government, and civil society to review progress toward the established indicators, identify common bottlenecks, and develop consensus on how to address the bottlenecks and keep things moving forward.

Potential Realized in Niger

Linking the joint accountability approach with the Motion Tracker proved particularly successful in Niger where local CSO Lafia Matassa served as the in-country lead and facilitator. Working closely with the Ouagadougou Partnership Coordination Unit and the Family Planning Directorate at the Ministry of Health, the 17 CSOs represented at the joint accountability workshop, held in July 2021, chose to dive into issues around youth engagement in adolescent- and youth-targeted interventions. As a result, their action plan aimed to institutionalize youth engagement into family planning/reproductive health policy and program planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Since the workshop, participants, including youth organizations, have taken action to:

- Strengthen youth engagement structures
- Improve sharing of real-time information with young people
- Systematically include youth in project and program planning

- Improve timeliness of monitoring and evaluation reports
- Develop and distribute Ministry of Health business plans to youth organizations

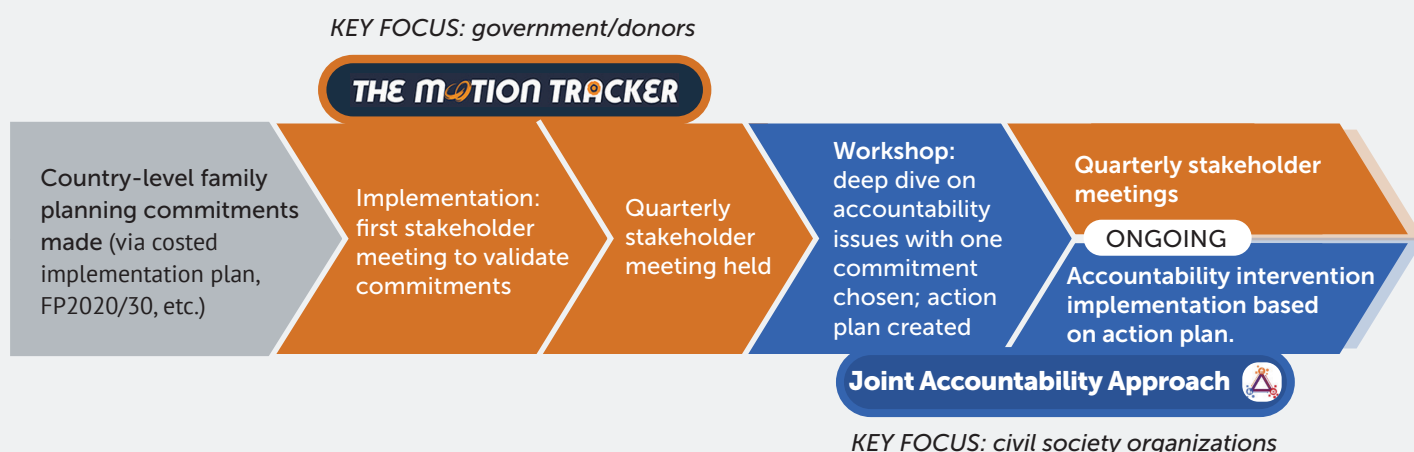
The stakeholders worked together to establish an easy-to-use WhatsApp group that unites all youth associations and is now being used regularly to share information. Further, youth organizations have revitalized relationships with other CSOs that are working to support the family planning agenda in Niger, allowing the youth greater access to wider discussions. A family planning-focused CSO, Coalition des Acteurs pour le Repositionnement de la Planification Familiale (Car/PF), has been providing coaching sessions for the youth to support their efforts to engage in policy and program discussions with the government and other stakeholders. Subnational regional directors of public health have supported the establishment of regional bureaus for youth ambassadors, which are tasked with coordinating activities and ensuring communication within the region and across the country. In alignment with the action plan, selected stakeholders have provided training to 100 youth from four different regions on themes related to family planning and reproductive health and advocacy techniques. Youth ambassadors have also led digital campaigns to educate youth and adolescents.

“Joint accountability has allowed us, as a youth organization focused on reproductive health and family planning, to inform and involve all stakeholders, including member organizations of our network and other youth organizations, the coalition for RH/FP, Ministry of Health, and other related ministers when organizing activities.

The joint accountability action plan also led to us being well-listened to by different stakeholders, and to be in contact with the other young people throughout the country. It helped us to better organize ourselves and to not duplicate the same activities at the same time. This has allowed our activities to have great visibility.”

—Abdoul Fatah, Niger youth focal point

Figure 1. Linking the Joint Accountability Approach and the Motion Tracker



Lessons Learned from Benin and Senegal

The experiences and results from Benin and Senegal were more uneven. CSOs struggled with implementing the two accountability initiatives and could have benefitted from stronger support from the Ouagadougou Partnership Coordination Unit, which is leading implementation of the Motion Tracker. Further, HP+ and Samasha underestimated the potential for CSOs being stretched too thin, which resulted in changes in action plan leads in both countries. The intervention's success requires inclusion and understanding of all stakeholders starting from the planning and preparatory phases, introducing at the outset the complementary nature of the two approaches.

The joint accountability workshop generated a lot of excitement. However, as action plans for selected issue areas were developed, facilitators and participants underestimated the feasibility of implementing them. To ensure that the resulting action plan is achievable, facilitators must be prepared to probe participants to discuss

questions around feasibility, such as who has the required information, connections, time, and resources to implement actions.

Recommendations

While both the Motion Tracker and the joint accountability approach have been implemented elsewhere separately, this marked the first effort to implement them together. Because the Motion Tracker is an accountability mechanism that focuses on all family planning/reproductive health commitments and supports both data collection and relationship-building between government and other stakeholders, future efforts to implement these together should consider first holding the inaugural Motion Tracker quarterly meeting, then supplementing that with the joint accountability workshop (see Figure 1). In this way, the joint accountability participants, understanding the different accountability relationships, can focus on an identified bottleneck within the larger context of the Motion Tracker and family planning/reproductive health commitments.



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