

The Track20 project works to build the capacity of country data systems and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff to generate and use data to inform their programming, improve impact, and accelerate progress toward their family planning (FP) goals. One of the pillars of the Track20 approach is the cultivation of a network of M&E Officers dedicated to increasing the quality and use of FP data. These M&E Officers are working within or in partnership with Ministries of Health in 34 countries.

### Why Embed?

Central to Track20's approach is the positioning of government as the definitive FP data source in a country. Often in development, projects set up parallel data and monitoring systems, and governments look to implementing partners to conduct analysis. Over time this destabilizes programs, making them dependent on partners for data.

Track20 decolonizes this process. Rather than look to outside data, and external capacity, Track20 puts government and the data they already invest in and collect, at the center of our efforts, working through a system of embedding Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Officers directly into Ministries of Health to change government data systems and build capacity in data and analysis from within.

By embedding a dedicated FP data expert into the MoH, Track20 draws attention to the fact that M&E Officers, often overlooked as support staff, are critical to dynamic program management; and that well-trained, data-focused staff can be catalytic in terms helping Ministries prioritize, target, and advance their programs.

When capable M&E staff with access to Track20's innovative tools, approaches, and technical support are placed within the Ministry, it shifts the locus of data expertise from external, to internal. Instead of looking to partners for data and analysis, the Ministry can serve its own data needs, better allowing them to conduct analyses that answer the questions they define, rather than those of interest to the partner. Internal data expertise also gives the Ministry access to responsive, proactive analysis to answer emerging questions on demand.

Sustainability is also an important motivation for the embed approach. Showing the value of this position and an improved Scope of Work (SOW) for M&E Officers is a focused way to advocate for the government to uptake these efforts. Three countries have taken over the cost of M&E Officers that Track20 initially paid: Ghana, Philippines, and Kenya (see box for details).

### Sustainability: Governments Invest in Dedicated M&E Officers

The MoH in **Ghana** realized not only the value that their individual Track20 M&E Officer was providing to their program, but the overall value of a more singularly focused M&E Officer role. The Ministry created a government-funded, higher-level position into which the previously Track20-supported M&E Officer transitioned. Not only did this new internal position retain the FP and data-focused SOW developed by the Ministry and Track20, but it used it as a template to modify the SOW for all other M&E Officers, transforming how M&E is done across the MoH and signaling their dedication to data.

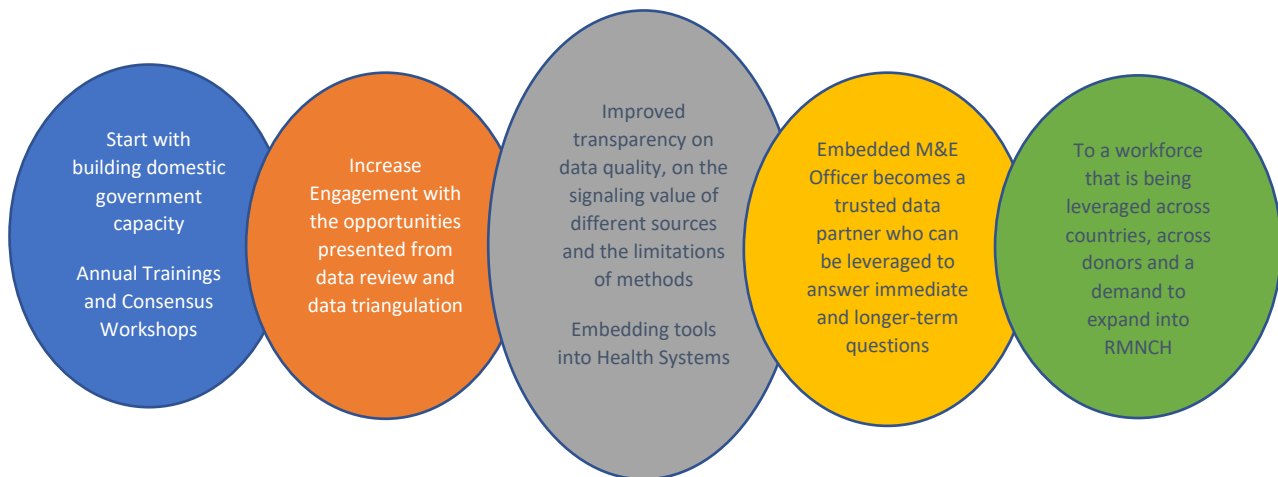
In the **Philippines**, the government created a new position for the M&E Officer. The position retains the approach and analysis defined by Track20 and added additional levels of seniority for coordinating data across the many government data platforms. This includes standardized reporting ensuring that data being used by different departments is consistent. There have already been successes that have been formalized through Government decree, such as using FPET for all official reporting.

When the **Kenya** MoH restructured the Track20 M&E Officer was transitioned into a government funded position within the National Council on Population and Development (NCPD), which has a mandated funding stream ensuring continuity of the position. The transition also allowed for expansion of the position, since part of the NCPD mandate is working at the sub-national level.

### Evolution of Impact

Fostering organic demand for data is at the heart of the Track20 approach. This demand driven approach takes time and starts with building government capacity, which in the commonly low-resourced Family Planning departments of Ministries, often means strengthening the analytic skills of just a single Ministry staff member through mentoring from Track20 staff or other Track20 M&E Officers, and the project’s annual trainings where they can build technical skills and understanding of analytic concepts. Dedicated M&E Officers work to elevate the profile of data through regular presentations of data and analysis and the introduction of government-led whole of program reviews of their routine service statistics on an annual basis. Starting with these small but important internal shifts has had an important effect on engagement – countries can see themselves, their systems, and their data as the central source to answer their own pressing questions and inform program decisions. This increased focus on routine data and strengthened understanding of how it relates to, and can be interpreted alongside, other data sources like surveys, supports their use of their own data to answer both big questions on trajectories of growth, and granular questions on gaps in performance. When governments see important targets or programs at risk because of a lack of data, or low-quality data, and understand the utility of good data in decision making, they are more likely to increase investments of time and money to further improve data quality to facilitate even more precise monitoring and analysis. Ministries have found the tools and processes useful, leading to greater interest to embed them directly in their DHIS2 systems so they are sustained beyond any one project or partnership, customized to their needs and data priorities, and accessible to all levels of Ministry staff.

Track20 M&E Officers, and hence the government, become the trusted central source for data, and Track20 M&E Officers are leveraged both internally and externally to answer immediate and longer-term questions. Seasoned M&E Officers are now resources for Ministries in other countries, for implementing partners, and for donors. Track20’s work with Ministries over time have increased general confidence and interest in family planning data and led to the realization that the improvements in analytics can inform other areas of health, can inform the practices of other countries, and can drill down to the management of services at the local level. This is a big step in family planning taking its place among other more well-funded health areas in terms of data use and quality.



### Approach Risks and Mitigation

There are limitations to the kind of impacts that capacity building and secondment of this nature can deliver. The risks to this approach are (a) common to all trainings, there is staff turnover and with it loss of institutional memory and skills; (b) even with access to skilled officers, FP programs may make poor use of secondments or ignore data

advice; (c) host governments may focus on immediate or political priorities, possibly ignoring the FP scope, in which case the value of secondment may be minimal; (e) FP programs may be so poorly situated that they are unable to exercise influence either within the MOH or outside it vis a vis partners; (f) government retention of secondees may be difficult because of differences in remuneration packages and; (g) sustainability of the position may be impossible because of existing procurement guidelines and rules. Track20 has taken steps to mitigate against some of these risks, such as hiring only within the government salary scale to prevent a two-tier system<sup>1</sup>, training the entire M&E team as opposed to the only the secondees to diminish skill loss, moving secondments from the FP program to HMIS where there is more governance/leadership, and finally, embedding our tools and approach directly within health information systems to buffer against staff turnover or position loss and facilitate sustained implementation. We have also calibrated our level of engagement and kind of engagement based on our patient reading of the governance approach of FP programs. Some host programs have done the same with Track20; Rwanda is one example of a country that tested the project – wanting to understand how we approach technical transfers before requesting a secondment.

### Examples of Impact

Track20 M&E Officers influence and strengthen the data system from within to grow and sustain focus on FP data for monitoring and decision making. The following examples highlight some of the many ways embedded M&E Officers across countries influence the data landscape.

#### Transforming M&E Scope and Practices from Within

M&E Officers are commonly overstretched across multiple health areas, leaving no time for essential data quality review, much less additional analysis. The FP data-focused scope of embedded M&E Officers allows them to leverage the skills they acquire and integrate them into their everyday work, which in turn, introduces and normalizes these skills and best practices into the broader M&E team and systems in which they work. Their narrower scope of work also allows them time to dig into the data, follow-up on anomalies, conduct secondary analysis of DHS, and explore ways to improve the accuracy and relevance of indicators and data collection tools. The dedicated eye to FP data also promotes improved dissemination and use of FP data, which is often overlooked.

Having dedicated M&E staff looking at FP data, reviewing and revising standard data elements and data collection instruments, and running analyses is helping countries streamline their monitoring processes and get the most information possible out of the data they already collect. Tailored data elements better measure FP progress, especially on specific focus areas like adolescents, post-partum use or discontinuation. Efforts by M&E Officers across many countries, including **Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire, and Kenya**, have resulted in revised data collection tools that eliminate indicators that are not being used and better capture the information needed to answer questions relevant to their unique programming.

In **Uganda**, embedding the M&E Officer in the HMIS Division has led the HMIS Director to become more involved in FP meetings. This has resulted in more visibility and questioning of FP indicators and more collaboration between partners, donors and the ministries to improve data quality and completeness. The M&E Officer now makes quarterly presentation to USAID on FP data.

The M&E Officer in **Madagascar** has introduced data workshops with the regional FP Data Directors. In advance

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<sup>1</sup> Grignon JS, Ledikwe JH, Makati D, Nyangah R, Sento BW, Semo B. 2014. Maximizing the benefit of health workforce secondment in Botswana: An approach for strengthening health systems in resource-limited settings. *Risk Manage Health Pol.* 2014; 7:91–98. <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S61473>

of the workshop, participants completed worksheets on their own region's data and had a week-long workshop to analyze the regional-level data. Regional FP Data Directors then brought this analysis to a larger workshop where presentations depicting FP at the national level were made, followed by regional presentations made by the regional Directors on their own analysis. Together, participants Identified regions that where progress was stalling and high-performing regions and discussed possible reasons for the differing outcomes. During the discussion it was noted that the lowest performing region did not come prepared with data, so they then prioritized that region to strengthen data and supervision. After the workshop, regional reproductive health managers were more aware of the importance of data quality and made efforts to submit data on-time, improving reporting rates significantly.

In **Zimbabwe**, the M&E Officer conducted a private sector mapping to identify where FP services were being provided and which methods. One quarter of providers providing FP services were in the private sector, and those data were not being entered into DHIS2. To harmonize public and private reporting, the M&E Officer developed one standard data collection register for use by public and private providers. As a result, almost 60 percent of private providers are now reporting into DHIS2.

The M&E Officer in **Cote D'Ivoire** developed new indicators related to the social impact of modern contraceptive use in the general population as well as in adolescents and young people, including calculation of the number of expected maternal deaths, the number of expected unwanted pregnancies and the expected number of unsafe and high-risk abortions. In **Zimbabwe**, The M&E Officer led a major review of existing data elements and developed new ones that better monitor progress; he then implemented training to ensure that those collecting and using the data understood the new elements, reducing the chance of errors.

### Driving Data Standardization in FP

As the focal point for FP data, M&E Officers are also positioned to drive data standardization, for example, driving use of FPET outputs for mCPR to be the official country estimates, which means they are used for annual reporting, procurement and reports to parliament, ensuring that the numbers used and referred to by government and partners alike are consistent. Three countries' Bureaus of Statistics have now officially endorsed the use of FPET for annual mCPR estimates including the **Philippines, Zimbabwe, and Uganda**. Other countries have specified that annual estimates of mCPR produced by the M&E Officers using FPET are the official country estimates, including **Cote d'Ivoire and India**, which reports FPET to Parliament. In addition, countries, including **Cote d'Ivoire, and Togo**, are now using FPET estimates in the quantification process.

Countries use of standardized indicators for FP2030 reporting, and ability to generate these internally, has also produced ambition about reviewing indicators within HMIS. M&E Officers are now routinely tasked to address indicator calculations, welcomed for their insight into data metrics and quality in discussions relating to the RMNCH scorecards and RBF indicators for FP.

The M&E Officer in **Kenya** partnered with DHIS2 and the Reproductive Health Directorate to identify poorly calculated indicators and data elements not being used and compared county level performance using multiple data sources to reduce costly inefficiencies in data collection and improve signaling from routine indicators.

In **Ethiopia**, the government adopted the approach that any new method of estimation being proposed needed to be understood at the subnational level and needed a clear way to interpret performance shown by service statistics given new estimation models. Equally they wanted both program and HMIS staff to be trained together so that data being produced by the latter could be understood by the former. To support their efforts, Track20 conducted a regional workshop to enable subnational staff to evaluate their HMIS indicator-based goals and align

with national goals for performance.

### Using Data and Analyses to Influence Decision Making

Track20 M&E Officers have been a primary source of data and analysis for many Ministries as they develop their FP2030 commitments, prepare Costed Implementation Plans (CIP), respond to emergencies such as COVID-19, and identify bottlenecks and opportunities for progress.

Track20 works at both the federal and state level in **Nigeria** to improve data use and informed decision-making. Successes include improving goal setting processes to be data driven. This approach supported the creation of the goal in the FP2030 commitment and the revision of goals in 9 of the 13 states included in the Transparency, Accountability, and Capacity Building (TRAC) platform. Track20 also created an Excel based Maternal Health tool to review the quality and improve the interpretation and use of HMIS data. This has now been transformed into a DHIS2 module that is currently being embedded in the country's official HMIS environment. This will ensure that these tools will continue to be used beyond the term of the Track20 project, and also be accessible to all levels of the health system and all Nigerian states. This will greatly increase the access to and use of data, and experience has shown that the more data is used and issues with data quality are identified, the more effort is put into addressing these issues and improving overall data quality.

Analysis prepared by Track20 identifying opportunities for mCPR growth in **Nigeria** have led to the national prioritization of postpartum family planning and youth programming. The Federal Ministry of Health Reproductive Health Unit is now coordinating with implementing partners (CHAI, FHI360, Jhpiego, etc.) to ensure that FP activities and programs supported by these partners include Youth and PFP in their programming where within their donor mandates.

The impact analyses of Covid-19 on FP services that Track20 prepared with the FMOH provided timely data required to support a proactive response and contributed to the development of **Nigeria's National SRH Covid-19 Protocol**. In Lagos, we were involved in workshops aimed at improving the efficiency of the PHC Board. The outcome of this work will serve as the guiding document for the development of the PHC Board Strategic Plan, Annual Operational Plan documents, and other key activities as the State PHC Board aims to embark upon in the actualization of PHC under one roof.

In **India**, the Assistant Commissioner of Family Planning routinely relies on Track20's estimates on contraceptive use, unmet need, and impacts from contraceptive use, leverages demographic analyses and modelled estimates of fertility to provide reliable responses for Minister of Health to respond during Question Hour in Parliament, extracts standardised reports from the Track20 supported FP Dashboard to monitor state and district level work in Family planning and use the data for targeting additional resources for FP activities at the district level. The FP Dashboard has proved critical to the AC's ability to assess and respond in real time and reduced the burden on his staff to manually extract and analyse routine data. In addition to routine reliance on such modelled estimates and data systems, the MOHFW leverages its access to standardised information in higher level forums. In December 2020, the Prime Minister's Office highlighted the core indicator estimates produced by India's Track20 team in a tweet on the results of the India's Expert Group & Consensus Meeting and Dissemination Workshop held on 21 Dec 21 in New Delhi organized by Track20. In October 2020, Track20 estimates of impacts of Family Planning were used by the Secretary of Health and the Additional Secretary and Managing Director of Health in an orientation of different divisions of health for the National Health Mission.

After seeing data from 2016 FP Financial Flow Estimate Survey on contraceptive pricing for IUDs, implants and

injectables presented at the 2018 FP Data Consensus Workshop in **Guinea**, the Minister of Health issued a memorandum to the regional and prefectural directors of health to display the contraceptive tariffs in force in all health facilities in the country and wide dissemination of this memo to local authorities for its application in hopes of increasing accessibility to a range of methods.

Countries have used analysis from Track20 M&E Officers to advocate for increased focus on demand generation. In countries such as **Senegal and Niger** this has led to governments requesting and partners responding for more focused demand generation activities.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, analyses supported by the Track20 M&E Officer have led to numerous actions by the Ministry of Health to strengthen FP programming. For instance, alerted to the slow progress on mCPR through monitoring supported by the M&E Officer, the MoH decided to introduce DMPA-SC into the mix of modern contraceptive methods offered by community-based contraceptive distributors, greatly increasing access to this popular method. In addition, an analysis of stockouts prompted an assessment of commodity quantification to ensure that provincial clients' needs were met and postpartum FP (PPFP) data analysis results prompted the Ministry to advocate to partners to support PPFP.

Since 2005 the **Philippines** Department of Health (DoH) FP target has been 65% CPR among married women. The Track20 M&E Officer successfully convinced the DoH to change the target in the new National Objectives for Health to 30% mCPR among all women, using data and analysis from several Track20 tools to demonstrate the feasibility of reaching the target, and its impact on health outcomes and the country's fertility rate. The Philippines M&E Officer also developed a simplified version of an existing Track20 tool that allows the user to input a year and the number of current users (can be from service statistics or target) to calculate the impacts of FP use on unintended pregnancies, abortion and maternal deaths averted. The estimates informed FP program plans and budgets that were presented to and approved by the President of the Philippines, and the estimates were quoted in several local news articles.

The M&E Officer in **Chad** conducted a situational analysis on the monitoring and availability of contraceptive products at the last mile funded by the SWEDD project. This analysis prompted the Global Fund to introduce Chemonic's SIGL-TCHAD software, an early warning system which improves management of the tracer medicines and reduces stockouts.

### M&E Officer Expertise Recognized and Leveraged by Partners

Implementing partners such as USAID-funded projects seek out these M&E staff to contribute to their work and multilaterals look to them and their deep data knowledge to inform their approaches. These examples illustrate the shift that the embed approach has facilitated in positioning the government, not partners, as the leader and steward of FP data. Examples of these include:

- Joint work with WHO and M&E Officers on age disaggregation within HMIS in Liberia, Zimbabwe and Kenya.
- USAID's MCGL project using M&E Officers to support Adolescent High Impact Practices indicator selection. MCGL also leverages M&E Officers in their countries to assist with project monitoring, data quality review, and data collection and analysis to determine priorities.
- Partnership with USAID's Data for Impact (D4I) Project to create a new approach for Data Quality Assessment activities for family planning data.
- Co-convening with USAID's PACE Project an expert meeting on utilizing service statistics to analyze the impact of health system shocks on health care.
- Work with USAID's GHSC project on assessing LMIS and DHIS2 data elements on stockouts in select countries.
- Support to Gutmacher to provide data and review country briefs before dissemination.