Improving the sharing and use of FP/RH knowledge in West Africa

Background information on West Africa regional work

Knowledge SUCCESS

Regional Strategy Overview

In the past, there has been a tendency across West Africa for each country to conduct their own family planning (FP) pilot before making bold policy improvements such as authorizing task-sharing or self-injection of the injectable contraceptive DMPA-SC. This impression that each country's operating environment is unique enough to require its own pilot has for many years been enforced by a lack of information sharing beyond formal end-of-project reports that take many years to appear and are not written as how-to guides to start a program. A series of similar pilots repeated in one country after another is one example of how a lack of efficient information sharing can slow progress and waste time and funds, ultimately affecting quality of care.

The Knowledge SUCCESS model addresses these challenges by using knowledge management (KM) tools and techniques to improve documentation, and information sharing, use, and dissemination, to make programs more effective and promote best practices and lessons learned. Appreciation for this model of KM as a tool to achieve a country's FP goals is increasing at national and regional levels.

Our model is designed to keep our fingers on the pulse of what is important to our target audiences at any given time and, as such, we make every effort to remain nimble and responsive to new priorities. Similarly, we have strategically positioned ourselves to be the "go-to" partner for select key partners (e.g., the Ouagadougou Partnership [OP], FP2030, and the West African Health Organization [WAHO]), and to prioritize collaboration opportunities that arise in interactions with them. These partners are central to FP in West Africa and we are their KM partner. For example, the OP recently improved their website at our suggestion, making it a much more useful and user-friendly resource. Following assistance from Knowledge SUCCESS that aligns with website best practices, there is now a regular effort to produce blogs and recaps published on the site and written by the OP Coordination Unit (OPCU) staff and young FP champions, members of the OP's Youth Think Tank. Regular updates signal to search engine algorithms that the site can be moved up in search results, since it is being actively maintained, thereby improving access to this information by the FP community.

Our work in West Africa is informed by a regional stakeholder mapping exercise (conducted August–December 2020), co-creation workshops, and discussions with key partners in the region. Through this groundwork and continuous strategic engagement, Knowledge SUCCESS has identified the following key priorities in the region: 1) support organizations at the national level to **strengthen FP/RH programs through KM**; 2) strengthen **organizational KM capacity**; 3) **document and share lessons** from FP/RH **program implementation** (in both English and French); 4) foster **collaboration** among FP/RH actors.

Knowledge SUCCESS has the advantage of being effective at the global, regional, and country levels. This structure positions us well to play a meaningful role in ongoing efforts to localize our global FP/RH field (e.g., as demonstrated by the conversion of FP2030 into regional hubs and the OPCU

now being housed within regional organization Speak Up Africa). Advancing FP KM at the regional level depends on partnerships and collaborations forged to infuse KM into their activities. Structures such as the OP Coordination Unit and Youth Think-Tank (OPCU), West Africa Breakthrough ACTION (WABA), FP2030, Pathfinder, PRB, and ministries of health (MOHs) integrate many actors and use mostly unintentional KM practices. That said, they have created a good foundation. By working with them, we not only achieve their better understanding of KM but also their understanding (and at different levels) of existing techniques and tools that are useful and appropriate for the region. They provide frameworks for collaboration and exchange among FP/RH actors and ensure KM activities will continue in the region while engaging different target audiences and partners.

West Africa Key Activities

As part of its mission, Knowledge SUCCESS, in collaboration with organizations committed to the advancement of FP/RH in the region, conducts several flagship activities that have led to a better understanding of KM and its effective incorporation into various activities. To extend this intentional approach to collecting and preserving knowledge, its connection to people, and its effective use, the project's flagship activities in the region revolve around:

- Providing support to MOHs to integrate KM activities into their new costed implementation plans (CIPs)
- Collaboration with the OPCU and around the OP Youth Think Tank to promote and use KM tools as a means to advance FP goals in the region

- Collaboration with partners such as the Self-Care Trailblazers group in Senegal and PRB to use and promote KM and learning activities

The following activities link to each of the four priority areas above. These actions meet the demand from stakeholders and fit within the mandate of the project.

1. **Support countries as they develop CIPs.** Governments' FP CIPs set the FP agenda and signal a country's priorities to potential partners and investors. As KM activities begin to be included in CIPs, partner implementation of those activities will have significant regionwide ripple effects. Knowledge SUCCESS conducts KM training for country-level partners, helps partners develop KM activities for the draft CIP and KM indicators to measure progress in the accompanying implementation plan, and assists in documenting the use of KM approaches during the execution of CIPs. In Burkina Faso, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire, the technical working groups (TWGs) in charge of the CIP received an orientation on KM basics and tools to assess their own KM needs and to identify appropriate activities within the framework of their CIP. This is to ensure better knowledge and use of the CIP document and FP resources by all stakeholders, as well as to promote the documentation, sharing, and use of good practices and lessons learned during development and implementation.

   These plans reinforce buy-in and sustainability of KM practice in these countries when we know that this

strategic document is carried out by the MOH, with the collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders.

2. **Conduct KM training** in response to demand from partners in the region to improve the ability of FP/RH professionals to use KM to strengthen programs and more effectively use the latest knowledge, tools, and guidelines. In addition to the KM training sessions organized for FP/RH professionals in the region, Knowledge SUCCESS also held KM 101 sessions with some partner organizations to foster/improve KM in their programs. Tailored trainings on specific KM tools and techniques were also conducted and these sessions resulted in a better understanding of KM and its importance in FP, hence the intentional use of KM techniques and tools to facilitate, for example, the synthesis, access, sharing, and use of useful information on FP/RH in the region. Now, with various partners in the region, KM tools and techniques are being considered/used, with support from Knowledge SUCCESS, to organize activities and/or develop strategic documents for advancing FP in the region.

3. **Document and share lessons from FP/RH program implementation.** Country programs in West Africa are often not fully documented (particularly in French) and shared with others—and knowledge of other programs has not typically been readily available beyond end-of-project reports. We respond to the need for developing and disseminating FP/RH tools by national-level actors and for more learning events in West Africa, mainly for French-speaking professionals.

Linking FP insight to Learning Circles as a tool for the cohorts to practice has been an effective strategy for promoting the dissemination of FP/RH tools through national-level networks.

- **Create content for knowledgesuccess.org, in collaboration with FP/RH partners in West Africa**—documenting both successes and challenges of FP/RH programs—addressing the limited availability of resources, particularly in French. This way, our audience will have regular access to current information they can use rather than waiting for an end-of-project report that may not even be designed to help create programs. Learning KM skills has allowed FP/RH professionals in the region to both document and share information, and also to use it in their work. Thanks to the training and the availability of content development guides, specifically webinar recaps in French and English, many partners in the region are creating and publishing content for the Knowledge SUCCESS website, and increasingly for their own websites. We have trained young FP/RH professionals in blogging skills and continue to mentor them as they apply these skills. This learning-by-doing approach has succeeded in laying the groundwork for an ongoing commitment to producing content to be developed and shared with the general public in the most accessible way.
- **Hold regional Learning Circles** to encourage sharing and documenting FP/RH programs in the region. Throughout the execution of the French-language Learning Circles cohorts, the facilitators promote open

sharing of lessons learned through plenary and breakout group discussions during live Zoom sessions, and sharing over WhatsApp in the interim. This activity allows for networking among FP/RH professionals, learning KM techniques, and collecting practical experiences and advice on what works and doesn't work around a specific FP/RH topic. This activity has now attracted the interest of regional FP/RH partners to collaborate on the second West Africa cohort on a priority topic in the region. They plan to hold regular Learning Circles to share experiences and gain knowledge on other topics for the advancement of FP in West Africa.

4. **Foster collaboration among the FP/RH actors in the region.** Knowledge sharing is limited at the regional level— particularly between Francophone and Anglophone countries— and especially between the FP/RH and broader maternal and child health sectors. Knowledge SUCCESS as a global project, and with French- and English-speaking staff, is well positioned to strengthen relationships between Anglophone and Francophone West Africa in collaboration with partners such as WAHO and the FP2030 regional hub, who are able to work across the regional linguistic divide. This strategy responds to the need for revitalizing existing regional platforms, such as the Dissemination Subcommittee of the OP's Youth Think Tank and engagement around the WAHO's Best Practices Forum.

   - **Promote collaboration through partnerships**—by bringing KM approaches and knowledge sharing into working groups such as the Dissemination Subcommittee of the OP's Youth Think Tank and the Francophone West Africa Integrated Postpartum FP Community of Practice, and in strengthening partnerships with regional partners such as WAHO. Through routine activities, we have promoted the use of collaborative and accessible tools such as Google Drive to allow for resource sharing and exchanges between partners.

   - **Expand information sharing between regions**—particularly ensuring French language resources reach Francophone priority countries outside of West Africa.

West Africa Engaging Audiences

In supporting MOHs in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Côte d'Ivoire in incorporating KM into their FP CIPs, Knowledge SUCCESS led KM trainings and worked with TWGs to tailor KM best practices to their FP needs and draft priorities and activities for their CIPs. These CIP workshops are very collaborative, especially in Francophone West Africa where civil society plays a strong role in advocating to government, ensuring cooperation, and holding decision makers accountable. Activities like this that provide an overview of KM practices, especially when conducted in-person as these were, create a ripple effect of demand. Following these initial workshops in Quarter 1 of 2021, participating partners requested tailored KM trainings for their own organizations (OPCU, Jhpiego, Pathfinder Burkina), reached out to Knowledge SUCCESS for support designing meetings (FP2030, OPCU) and webinars (PRB), and encouraged additional countries to replicate the progress in their own FP activities (Mali, Senegal).

Table: How audiences are accessing, sharing, and using the knowledge/opportunities generated from West Africa activities

REGIONAL ACTIVITY	HOW AUDIENCES ARE ACCESSING, SHARING, & USING THE KNOWLEDGE/ OPPORTUNITIES GENERATED	PROGRAM MANAGERS	TECHNICAL ADVISORS	DECISION MAKERS	CONVENERS
KM trainings and working meetings in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger	• CIP TWGs used what they learned to incorporate KM into CIPs • The CIP workshops brought the work of Knowledge SUCCESS to the attention of partners, creating ripple effects such as: 　• WABA helped create demand in Mali and Senegal 　• PAI wants to learn more and use KM in their collaborations with civil society organization (CSOs) around the GFF[SS1] [SS1]Undefined	●	●	●	●
Engagement with OPCU including tailored KM training and co-planning a regional CSO workshop, incorporating practices into the workshop design and capturing key takeaways	• Youth leaders have written and published blog posts • KM tools and techniques in activities are incorporated into activities, e.g., knowledge café				●
Participation in Senegal's Self-Care Trailblazers Group (SCTG)	• Research and Learning Agenda developed by Senegal's SCTG[SS1] • Integration of KM and learning into the draft Senegal self-care guidelines [SS1]Undefined	●	●	●	
Engagement with PRB (PACE project) and KM training tailored with PACE young leaders	• PACE young leaders are drafting blog posts • Regular blog posts and webinar recap from PRB's staff published on Knowledge SUCCESS website	●	●		●
KM training with Amplify FP project (Technical staff and young FP ambassadors)	• Development of KM strategy and activity based in part on best practices shared by Knowledge SUCCESS • Engage internal staff in documenting and sharing experiences	●	●		●