



Strengthening KM Capacities & Improving Quality of FP/RH Programs in East Africa

PROGRAM BRIEF

- Background information on
- East Africa regional work

Knowledge
SUCCESS

Regional Strategy Overview

The health and development context within the East Africa region has an emphasis on strengthening cross-border health systems for marginalized and cross-border populations to address health risks that transcend borders; leveraging the convening role and previous and ongoing health investments at the regional level through regional intergovernmental organizations; and complementing the regional health activities with national health programs to achieve national, regional, and global goals. Additionally, youth, and increasing their representation in decision-making roles, is a priority within the region. Gender inequity in the region continues to shape power and decision-making in the region and as such gender equality work is of high priority. Family planning and reproductive health goals need to be met within the framework of these priorities, and knowledge management has a big role to play in this work.

The goal for Knowledge SUCCESS in East Africa is to improve access to and quality of family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH) programs by strengthening knowledge management (KM) capacities for audiences ranging from FP practitioners and health care organizations to policymakers. To achieve this goal, the East Africa team is working to connect these audiences through a sustainable Community of Practice (CoP); KM platforms that provide practitioners with access to the information they need to successfully serve their communities; and partnerships with organizations across the region. These goals grew out of needs that were identified in East Africa Landscape Analysis, which was conducted at the beginning of the project.

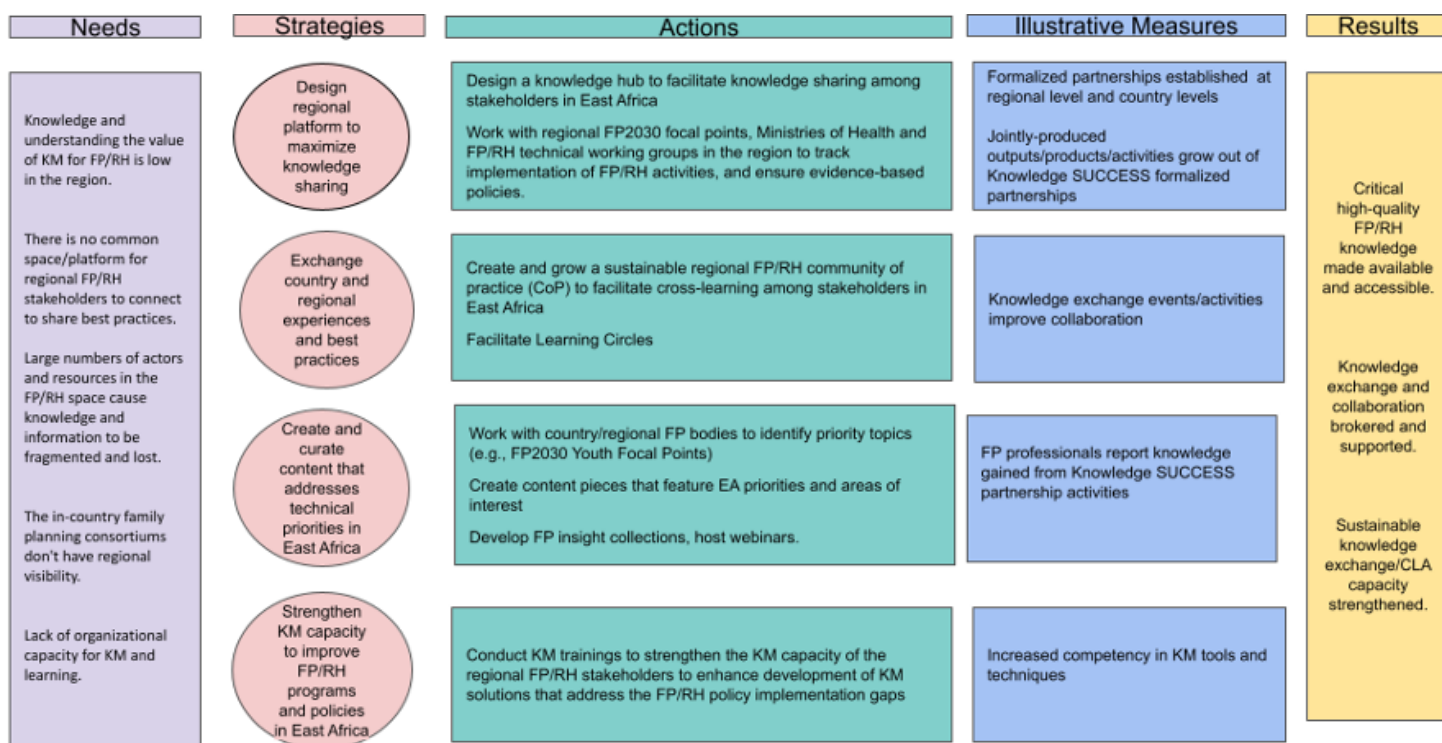


Figure 1: Knowledge SUCCESS East Africa Region: Needs, Strategies, Actions, Measures, and Results

Challenges for FP/RH practitioners in East Africa

FP/RH practitioners and policymakers face a wide range of challenges in East Africa. The strategic areas of focus that our team have selected are based on both the landscape analysis and discussions with our partners in the region. These areas include:

- 1. Increasing understanding and adoption of KM in the FP/RH community:** Many partners and health professionals in East Africa were unfamiliar with KM at the outset of the project, even if they used some KM tools or approaches in their work. We are pursuing a wide range of activities that are designed to help partners see KM as a cross-regional approach that can improve health outcomes.
- 2. Strengthening KM capacity for partners by providing platforms for documenting and sharing information:** FP/RH practitioners and policymakers also expressed concern that information was not available in one place, nor in a format that was easy to use or share with colleagues. We are helping streamline how FP/RH information is documented and shared by creating region-specific content and working with our audiences to implement KM platforms and tools. This will in turn benefit patients on the ground.
- 3. Creating networks that encourage networking and sharing of information across the region:** There are many different actors working in the FP/RH community in East Africa. However, there has been little collaboration between partners in different countries and no systematic way for these actors to share information and discuss best practices

and learnings. By building sustainable networks, we can create a FP/RH CoP that will outlive Knowledge SUCCESS and continue to help women, men, and families into the future.

Addressing these challenges: Strategies and activities

All of our work supports our primary goal of promoting greater understanding of KM and adoption of KM approaches. While not exhaustive, the strategies and activities outlined below highlight some of the ways in which we are tackling region-specific FP/RH challenges by providing our audiences with KM tools, platforms, and education.

Strategy: Strengthen KM capacity among partner organizations through education and training

KM capacity strengthening is one of our team's most important goals. When working with partners, we take a responsive approach: rather than imposing a specific KM tool or approach, we seek to understand our partners' needs and work with them to address the challenges they are facing in their work. This approach allows us to infuse KM approaches across a wide range of organizations, from governmental bodies and policymakers at the top of the healthcare system to practitioners working in small communities across East Africa.

Activities: Some of the KM capacity strengthening activities we have undertaken include:

1. **Introductory training sessions** that provide an overview of KM and explain how to integrate KM into a partner's work. These sessions are open to advocates, program implementers, technical advisors, and policymakers.
2. **Five-part KM training sessions** that cover the basics on KM, from content and storytelling to knowledge exchange and application.
3. **Creating and curating content specific to East Africa**, which involves working with national and regional organizations to identify priority topics for the region. These topics have included the FP2030 youth focal points, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), digital health, male engagement, policy, and emerging issues such as COVID-19.
4. **Quarterly webinars** focusing on an issue that is relevant to the region. Each webinar is hosted by four or five experts and is open to FP/RH professionals. So far, webinars have covered: gendered governance in the provision of voluntary FP/RH care; private sector engagement and FP/RH policy execution gaps; and the impact of COVID-19 on female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C).

By tying KM capacity strengthening to local and regional goals, we believe that KM can become both a process and a contributing factor to achieving improved FP/RH programs and policies. Something as simple as helping a local health agency create a KM document that is central to their strategy, for example, can set the groundwork for policies to be enacted in from a governmental to a grassroots level.

Strategy: Create a centralized platform for the FP/RH community to share information and best practices

One of the most striking challenges for the FP/RH community in East Africa has been the lack of a systematic way for FP/RH knowledge to be shared and documented. To date, knowledge sharing has often been carried out only when funding was available or partner organizations took on this task.

Activity: Founding TheCollaborative, a Community of Practice (CoP) platform that allows members in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda to share knowledge and learnings.

Open to FP/RH professionals, policymakers, and advocates throughout the region, The Collaborative is a CoP and a digital hub that allows stakeholders in East Africa to meet, network, and share knowledge and best practices with peers in other countries. Having started out with 20 members, TheCollaborative now has more than 200. TheCollaborative was designed from the outset to be sustainable: it is led by a steering committee of eight elected members from the four representative countries. Sustainability is one of our key approaches, because it creates a network that will outlive Knowledge SUCCESS and embeds KM in future initiatives.

Almost all of our work interacts in some way with TheCollaborative. Some of the activities that have been facilitated by TheCollaborative since its inception 14 months ago include:

1. A resource database, which hosts up-to-date FP/RH publications, including research papers, project reports, and policies, as well as a list of contacts for technical working groups in the region.
2. **New content specific to the region**, including publications have covered: self-care and youth sexual health in Uganda since COVID-19; insights from KM champions (see bullet 4, below); and how to address FP/RH issues in a culturally sensitive way in South Sudan.
3. **Online discussion platforms** for members to engage with each other. These platforms support existing discussion forums, resources, directories, and calendars of events.
4. **Knowledge Management Champions**, a platform initiated in May 2022 to host conversations related to FP/RH issues. The platform is run by 16 KM champions across Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. To date, these sessions have taken place in person, on social media, and via video conferencing, and covered topics such as access to RH in Kenya, self-care interventions in Uganda, COVID-19 in Tanzania, and youth and adolescent sexual health.

One of the ultimate goals of TheCollaborative is to provide a space for peer-to-peer learning and engagement. By creating a platform that mixes policymakers, FP/RH professionals, and faith-based organizations, we hope that TheCollaborative will foster collaboration across national borders and between different audiences, allowing KM approaches to be infused across healthcare systems in East Africa.

Strategy: Engage with partners across the region to foster cross-country collaboration

The landscape analysis was also a starting point for identifying potential partnerships that could help our team promote KM approaches across the region. By engaging with multiple organizations throughout East Africa, we hope to accelerate the adoption and understanding of KM and, in turn, establish a new network that fosters cross-country engagement.

Activities: The East Africa team has started to build partnerships with multiple institutions and practitioners in the region. Some of the ways in which we have engaged with these partners include:

1. **Content creation:** Working with experts from partner organizations to help create content that is specific to East Africa. In this area, we have engaged with organizations such as PSI Uganda and Living Goods Kenya and Uganda.
2. **KM strengthening trainings and activities:** We have initiated multiple partnerships with organizations looking to expand their use of KM to benefit the health of their constituencies. We work with grassroots organizations to MOH's to provide KM workshops, trainings, and present at meetings at conferences.
3. **Strategic advising:** We have also met with other organizations to discuss partnerships and provide KM advice on FP/RH and KM. For example, CHASE Africa, the East Africa Health Platform (EAHP), the Rwanda Interfaith Council, and the East Africa Reproductive Health Network (EARHN) and the Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS and

Health Service Organizations (EANNASO).

4. The FP2030 recommitment process:

The KS East Africa team has also engaged with the country-level FP2030 recommitment process, in collaboration with FP/RH TWGs. We successfully incorporated KM goals into a draft document for FP/RH work in Kenya and were highlighted as a supporting partner in Uganda. Members of TheCollaborative also spoke at FP2030 events in both Kenya and Rwanda. The team looks forward to engaging further in the implementation process during the FP2030 Eastern and Southern Africa Hub, which will be hosted by Amref Health Africa.

Successes and next steps

After two years, our greatest successes in East Africa has been a new acknowledgement of the value of KM and a desire for KM to be a part of the conversation when discussing FP/RH with partners and healthcare professionals. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we have also seen great success in pioneering new partnerships with stakeholders in the region and creating new KM champions who will act as advocates for KM in their country and beyond. Many practitioners have also testified that KM trainings have helped them in their work and, in turn, helped patients live healthier, more secure lives. Over the coming years, the East Africa team will continue to build on its work in order to make KM a central tenet of FP/RH in the region, from policy to a grassroots level.

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

REGIONAL ACTIVITY	HOW AUDIENCES ARE ACCESSING, SHARING, & USING THE KNOWLEDGE/ OPPORTUNITIES GENERATED	PROGRAM MANAGERS	TECHNICAL ADVISORS	DECISION MAKERS	CONVENERS
East Africa Landscaping Analysis	Informed the development and launching of the East Africa FP/RH database and the collaborative CoP	●	●	●	●
East Africa Knowledge Management Training	KM survey was carried out and then training done. Post-training, some individuals and organizations have started integrating KM in their work. For example PSI Uganda, who had their senior staff and program staff-21 trained on KM by the project.	●	●	●	
Learning Circles KM skills shot	Conducted the 1st Learning Circles cohort in 2021, currently recruiting for the 2nd cohort. Topic of discussion will be - FP/RH Access and Utilization	●	●		
The Collaborative Platform	Hosted under the East Africa FP/RH Database	●	●	●	●
FP/RH Content Curation	The Collaborative CoP members and KM Champion are supporting content curation. For example, the KM Champions in Uganda published 2 knowledge products, Living Good Uganda Kenya published content pieces on Digital Health and CHVs while our TCI-Jhpiego is currently developing 3 content pieces. The rest of the pieces are led by the project staff.	●	●	●	●
Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gendered Governance Webinar Private Sector Engagement Webinar The Impact of Covid 19 on Female Genital Mutilation in East Africa 	●	●	●	●
FP 2030 Youth Focal Points engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter Spaces Chat: FP2030 Re-Commitment Process in East Africa Family Planning 2030 Social media dialogues on the FP2030 commitments 			●	●
KM champions Engagement	KM Champions activities				●
FP2030 Country Commitments-Launch and Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kenya Commitments Launch Uganda Commitments Tanzania Commitments 	●	●	●	●

