Data Use for Improvement

The Data for Implementation (Data.FI) project promotes Data Use for Improvement through a technology-enabled strategy that supports decision makers to analyze data in real time and implement change management practices through situation rooms.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Despite large investments in the collection and management of health data, information is not systematically used in routine operations to unpack program performance and inefficiencies. Wider and more systematic data use faces four main challenges, each of which creates opportunities for improvement:

1. **Data access:** Critical data to support informed decisions are captured and stored across different, and often unlinked, information systems, complicating access to timely and standardized information.
2. **Developing high impact data analytics and visualizations:** Coming to an agreement on the most helpful (and feasible) analytics and data visualizations to inform a health system challenge requires strong collaboration between skilled analysts and program experts.
3. **Collaborative data review:** Decision makers may need to shift their practices and behaviors around decision making, both to consult available data and do so in collaboration with others – as decisions are rarely taken by a single decision maker or best informed by a single perspective. This behavior and process change generally requires support from a meeting convenor and moderator. Meeting moderators require data interpretation and consensus-building skills to lead an effective meeting and to identify actionable next steps.
4. **Accountability:** Poor accountability mechanisms and competing priorities result in inconsistent implementation of prioritized actions.

THE SOLUTION

Data.FI works with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Missions and host-country governments to implement Data Use for Improvement activities that are customized to both the local context and the specific health need. We apply a standardized approach for frequent, fast-paced review of data through "situation rooms" (SRs) to quickly identify inefficiencies, understand reasons for under-performance, and course-correct service delivery to improve health outcomes. The Data.FI approach is grounded in three principles.

Technology-enabled

We work with local partners to create customizable, interactive dashboards to drill down on indicators by time, geography, and implementing partner (IP) to inform program action. We build the capacity of government stakeholders in selecting indicators, storyboarding, and configuring visuals, and simultaneously seek input from decision makers to ensure we are leading with analyses aligned with national policy priorities for action. We equip government meeting spaces with technology for interactive reviews of online visualizations by participants on- and off-site.
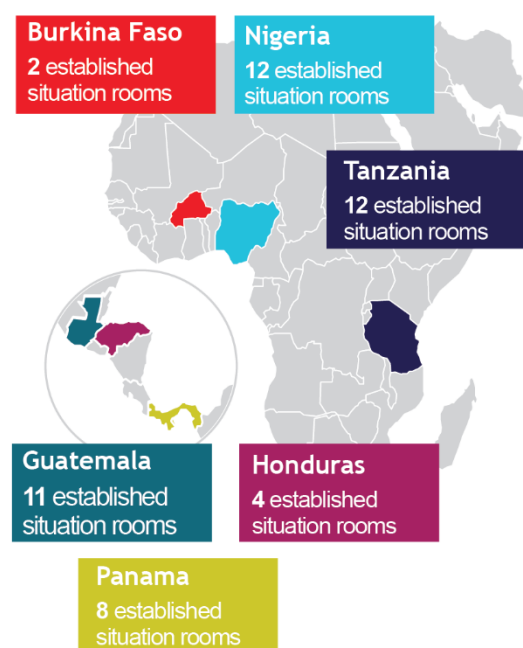
Standardized methods

Our proven, standardized approach to conducting SR meetings leads decision makers through a process of analyzing high-quality data to agreeing on meaningful actions expected to improve program performance. This approach relies on participant engagement tools to identify and prioritize problems; set targets at various levels of the health system; ask the right questions of the data; analyze root causes of performance issues; and plan actions to improve outcomes. Meetings are fast-paced and frequent, ideally integrated into team workflow for sustainability.

Rapid, corrective action

We work with governments, groups of service providers, IP staff, and decision makers from subnational and national health teams outside of SRs to build capacity for continuous quality improvement. Data.FI supports 1) accountability for implementation of action plans, 2) data-informed allocation of resources (supportive supervision, refresher trainings, essential commodities), and 3) learning networks for governments to sustain data use.

THE IMPACT

Data.FI works with USAID Missions and host-country governments to co-create national strategies embracing "Data Use for Improvement." In four years (2019-2023), Data.FI has engaged more than 30 stakeholder groups across Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Honduras, Nigeria, Panama, and Tanzania and supported more than 2,000 SR meetings. As a result, governments have documented more than 70 instances of data use, describing progress tackling persistent public health challenges and finding tangible solutions to address performance issues across the HIV cascade, in maternal health, and with COVID-19. Government collaborators have celebrated progress in national events and committed to scaling, diversifying, and sustaining this data use solution with domestic resources.

Burkina Faso
2 established situation rooms

Nigeria
12 established situation rooms

Tanzania
12 established situation rooms

Guatemala
11 established situation rooms

Honduras
4 established situation rooms

Panama
8 established situation rooms

- In 2023, SR leaders in Santa Rosa, **Guatemala** discovered that 12% of previously enrolled HIV patients had experienced an interruption in treatment. Corrective actions following the SR meeting included engaging health facility teams to clean HIV patient records and intensive field follow up, **reducing interruption in treatment to 2%**.

- Between 2019-2022, Data.FI supported Ministry of Health (MOH) leaders in Akwa Ibom, **Nigeria** to mobilize IPs to translate data to action. Antiretroviral **treatment linkage** has **increased from 84% to 99%**, and viral load suppression has **improved from 78% to 99%** in a cohort of more than 250,000 people.

- In **Honduras**, Data.FI contributed to **improved linkage** of newly diagnosed HIV patients **from 30% to 90%** and **improved HIV testing** during the first prenatal visit **from 19% to 72%**, in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, respectively, through investments in both data quality and programmatic course corrections.

PUTTING THE SOLUTION INTO ACTION

The scale and scope of Data.FI's "Data Use for Improvement" solution can be customized to a specific country's priorities and digital maturity. SRs can be implemented at subnational and national levels and can focus on any health area. Data.FI currently supports SR that target performance improvement of HIV, maternal, newborn and child health, and global health security programming. The nature of the analytics and visualization and the frequency of data review depends on data availability in each country. For this solution to be most effective, regular participation and the buy-in of stakeholders, such as country President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) teams, IPs, and MOH staff is required.

Examples of targeted Data.FI support includes:

- **Strengthening the capacity of MOH staff** in meeting facilitation, intensive program management, and quality improvement.
- Co-creation of a **data use strategy** with the MOH that prioritizes frequent, participatory data review to improve health outcomes.
- Working with decision makers to **prioritize indicators** by conceptualizing how to meet longer-term goals, seeking a mixture of process and outcome indicators to tell a visual story.
- Analyzing data and developing **compelling visualizations** that triangulate data from multiple sources and provide granular insights by time, geography, and IP to inform program action.
- Outfitting SR with **infrastructure** and equipment for internet connectivity, analytics platforms, and teleconferencing solutions.
- Fostering **local learning networks** led by government to share data use cases and discuss challenges, actions undertaken, and impact on health indicators.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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