
Comms/KM Plan for Data Made Simple

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**Knowledge SUCCESS
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HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

A PLAN IS ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Fundamentally, SWAG's *Data Made Simple* is a communications/knowledge management initiative. It is designed to innovate how adolescents and young people in Nigeria present and receive data on FP/RH so that it is simple, easy to understand, and easy to use. The initiative will “support the effective implementation of Nigeria’s new National Adolescent Health Policy, particularly at the subnational level, while also supporting young participation in data for decision-making.”

“...This project will focus on catchy photos, doodle arts, storybooks, infographics with less numbers and words.”

Based on the proposal submitted to Knowledge SUCCESS by SWAG and on a 20 July phone conversation, I have created a plan that is easy to follow over the next five months of the initiative. It addresses the priorities, concerns, and opportunities the SWAG team has presented...with a singular focus on communications and KM strategies. When possible, I have attempted to define terms and offer tips for success. I have also added in some guidance for gauging whether you are on track and for making course corrections if needed.

Remember that this plan is about ENGAGEMENT. You want to engage your audiences as partners/supporters/disseminators of this initiative to amplify it. As you work through the plan, be sure to listen carefully to how your priority stakeholders respond and make adjustments as needed.

STEP ONE: Outreach to Three Priority Audiences

A starting point for any KM/Comms plan is knowing who the priority stakeholders (audiences) are and being clear on what you are hoping they will do for the initiative. Your success rises or falls based on your success with this step. Because you have chosen three audiences you know well, your path is relatively easy. You speak their language – both figuratively and literally – and can make good assumptions about how much knowledge they have about the goals you have set. Even so, remember to be clear about what the initiative is, why it is important to THEM, and how Nigeria will be different if the initiative succeeds.

25 Youth Data Advocates

This is both an audience and a conduit to reach other young people. Your engagement with them should focus on both:

- Getting them excited about being active participants in this new initiative, and
- Spreading their excitement – and Data Made Simple products -- through their own networks to other young people and adolescents, as well as decisionmakers, in Nigeria.

This group is already engaged in the sector and also in SRHR data. You do not have to sell them on the idea of collecting and disseminating disaggregated data but on **simplified, youth-focused data** dissemination. Focus on getting them excited about innovation, data that is accessible to young people and presented by young people, and on finding new ways to communicate. While this group of stakeholders likely already considers themselves “change agents,” they will also be willing to embrace an initiative that helps them amplify that work.

To succeed with this group, you will need to make them comfortable with embracing an initiative that requires them to be creative and to work in a way that they may not have done before. Data presentations, even to specialized audiences, are straightforward. As Margaret has pointed out, they can also be boring. Nonetheless, it is what we know. You are asking 25 young people to leave that model behind. To ensure their comfort, you will need to provide specific guidelines and even examples of what “creativity” looks like. You will need to demonstrate that young people and adolescents will embrace data that is presented in ways that are new and different. To do this, you may want to consider providing:

- Examples of data presented via graphic novels, doodle art, storybooks, cartoons, and interactive trivia quizzes, even if it is for other sectors. Encourage the advocates to think BEYOND these examples but use them to make clear that data is effective in many different formats.
- Training in what creativity looks like and how to achieve it.

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- Interaction with a data expert who can confirm that, as long as the data is presented accurately, the way in which it is presented can vary greatly.
 - A small focus group of young people who can speak to how they best receive information – particularly data – and how they would use innovative vehicles for doing so.

Messaging

This group of stakeholders is already well-versed in the work and the data, and likely looks on the initiative favorably by virtue of being selected as a youth advocate. You will not need to spend any time educating them but rather should focus on getting them excited about this new way of presenting and sharing youth-focused data. All messaging should be designed to help them embrace the ultimate goal of developing innovative ways of reaching young people with data that “sparkles.” Whenever possible, use messages that start with the word “we” because it positions the SWAG team as true partners with the advocates. Examples of messages that will work:

1. We all know that data about and for young people is often lost in long, boring presentations about data on AYSRH.
2. Data Made Simple challenges us to find new, innovative ways of presenting data so it is meaningful, useful...and even interesting.
3. With your help, this initiative can change the way data is used to guarantee more young people access to the SRHR services and products they need.

As the youth advocates begin to create new products, remind them that the products must get into the hands of other young people and stakeholders who can use them to make change. Urge them to use their networks and many social media channels to disseminate Data Made Simple. As an incentive, SWAG might consider creating a digital representation of the five states represented by the advocates. As each advocate tweets or posts on Instagram or speaks at a meeting, they can provide the number of people they reached. You can visually show how many people are being reached by each advocate and create a healthy sense of competition.

25 LGA M&E Officers

This group of stakeholders is well versed in the issues and the data SWAG is working on, but may need reminders about the importance of their role in Data Made Simple. These are busy local government workers who will need to make time to both do data reviews and mentor the youth advocates. When working with stakeholders who are taking on a new role, you may need to remind them often that Data Made Simple will ultimately make their work easier by strengthening their capacity and presenting data in a way that is more relatable. These stakeholders are critical to the success of both the initiative and in the development of the youth advocates so it is important to ensure that they see how Data Made Simple is good for **them**.

To maintain strong relationships with this group, you might consider:

- Some sort of welcome “reception” (likely virtually or during a conference where they will be in attendance) to get them excited about the initiative and to demonstrate how their role in it will amplify the data and help a new generation of advocates develop.
- Ask each of the youth advocates to write a paragraph about their mentor and send in a photo of them working together which can be posted on the website. This will not only honor the work of each pair but also be a way of honoring the work of the M&E officers.
- Hold a special information session for this group of stakeholders with some experts who can talk about the importance of presenting data that is designed for specific audiences. As M&E officers who have likely grown accustomed to data looking a certain way, you will need to prepare them for the innovations that are coming.

Messaging

This group of stakeholders needs to know why they play a pivotal role in increasing access to AYSHR through Data Made Simple. You also need to make it clear why simplified, creatively presented data is critical. And finally, this audience needs to feel appreciated for the extra work they are doing to make the initiative a success. Local government workers rarely feel the love, and this is a great opportunity to make sure they do. Messaging for this group will evolve over the life of the initiative. At the beginning, you want to make sure they feel appreciated and understand the importance of the efforts they are putting into it. Sample messages might include:

1. Data Made Simple will innovate how data is presented and used to improve access to reproductive health services and products for young people in your state.
2. You play a critical role in both providing/reviewing the data and in mentoring carefully selected youth data advocates.
3. Your contributions to Data Made Simple will have real life impacts on improving the lives and health of young people in (name of state.)

As the initiative moves forward, find ways to publicly thank this audience for its contributions and also ask them to track how Data Made Simple is affecting local government decision-making. Because the mentorship should outlast the five months of the initiative, you should also develop ways to publicly honor them. Consider having a “Mentor of the Week” on the website or sending a short press release and photo of the M&E officers and their youth advocates to local media outlets. Remember that mentoring does not naturally come easily to everyone so you might want to do regular check-ins or offer guidance on how to be an effective mentor.

Members of the State Technical Working Groups on Adolescent Health and Development

This group of stakeholders presents a slightly larger challenge because of its size. As opposed to 25 people whose names and faces you can know in the other two groups, this one is larger and less homogenous. However, you know that they have strong knowledge of and interest in adolescent health and development and are likely to be interested in the products created by Data Made Simple. In communicating with this group, I recommend that you promote the fact that a youth-led organization has won an award for a youth-led initiative to innovate how young people present and receive data on AYSHR. They should respond well to this, particularly if the innovations will help them to achieve their goals. Getting them excited about the products that will result from Data Made Simple and keeping them informed about the process will build some buzz among the group. One note of caution is to not criticize existing forms of data. This group is likely heavily invested in, and frequently uses, traditional data reports. Instead, point out that Data Made Simple is supplementing these reports in a format and style that will be most appealing to young people and may in fact create new youth advocates to support the efforts of the Working Groups.

To build support from the Working Groups, consider:

- Providing monthly reports tailored to their needs and supporting their quarterly meetings. The reports will keep them updated on what is happening with the youth advocates and M&E officers, in a short easy-to-read format.
- Providing previews of some of the creative work as it is happening. Include an explanation of how the work is evolving and how it will be used. This should help create a buzz and will sustain their interest in what the youth advocates are doing and why.
- Getting some decision-makers to endorse the efforts of Data Made Simple to use with the Working Groups. This will support your work at the highest levels and encourage this audience to think of Data Made Simple as a valued resource.

Messaging

Most of the messaging directed at this audience should work toward getting buy-in to Data Made Simple as the initiative advances. This will increase their willingness to both use and disseminate your products, helping to build sustainability efforts. You want to ensure that they see your efforts as supplementing and advancing their work rather than in any way criticizing it. Sample messages may include:

1. Members of the State Technical Working Groups have made great advances in supporting implementation of the new Nigerian Adolescent Health Policy.
2. Data Made Simple intends to advance your work by innovating how young people receive and use the data so it is most useful to them as they support your efforts.

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3. Together we can ensure that young people who want and need access to reproductive and sexual health products and services will have them.

As the initiative advances, ensure that you have ongoing contact with various members of the Working Groups to gauge what their thoughts are on Data Made Simple. If they seem confused by the work or do not understand its value, you can assume they are not the only ones. At that point, you may want to find ways to reach out to all members to clarify and show examples of the products. You may also need to find a few members who solidly endorse Data Made Simple and ask them to promote it to their colleagues. Make sure you give them examples of the work, as “innovative” and “creative” can mean different things to different people. Most importantly, honor their time and efforts.

STEP TWO: Set Clear Goals for Each of Your Priority Audiences

Communicating with priority audiences should always result in some kind of impact, and it’s important to know what you are hoping to achieve at the very start of a communications plan. There are many ways to measure the work but the two key ones are 1) Activities and 2) Impact. Most of the time it is possible to measure both.

Activities are the ways you reach out to each audience: how many emails you send, how many meetings you hold, what kinds of feedback they give you, how many trainings you hold. These are relatively easy. It is helpful to set goals for some of these activities so you know if you are meeting expectations. You may also want to set goals for each audience’s participation to ensure that every one of them is an equal participant. This is particularly important because your initiative is dependent upon all three of your priority audiences serving as both messengers and disseminators of the Data Made Simple process and products. It is also important if you hope to scale up this innovation or share it with others. They will want to know the scope of the effort you put into it and what the return was.

Impact is of course harder to measure. It involves trying to draw a straight line between the initiative and any resulting policy changes, increased AYSHR, etc. Sometimes you have to settle for a dotted line, making an educated guess that the work you did had something to do with positive changes that happened concurrently. Since you are working at both the subnational and national levels, it is a good exercise to put on paper what the realistic impacts may be of this initiative both during the life of the project and for some time after. These will form the framework of technical briefs, reports, how-to guides, lessons learned, and presentations you develop after the initiative has finished.

STEP THREE: Developing General Materials

While the best communications and KM efforts are targeted toward specific audiences, it is necessary to have general materials for all audiences. These will likely also be used by your priority audiences to communicate with **their** stakeholders. Whenever you ask stakeholders to disseminate products or information to others, it is critical that you develop materials for them to use. It ensures that you retain some control over language and messages, making it easier and less time-consuming for your audiences to do the work. You can also post these on your website for anyone to use, and can distribute them at all meetings and conferences.

You already have the raw materials for this work. You have a catchy name for the initiative: **Data Made Simple**. You have good background on what the initiative is and why it has been created. You just need to put it into some easy-to-use formats, such as:

- A one page fact sheet that lays out the objectives, participants, funding source, mission, and goals of the initiative.
- A one pager on why traditional AYSHR data sources and formats are not typically used as a resource by young people and why that is a detriment.
- A FAQ on why Data Made Simple was developed and what it intends to do. Include in here information on you receiving the Knowledge SUCCESS innovations award.

Ensure that all these materials are branded with the SWAG logo and Data Made Simple and that they are recognizable as belonging together.

As the initiative advances, make sure you update these materials as needed and create supplemental ones that include benchmarks of success as you achieve them. Use commemorative days (International Day of the Girl Child, International Youth Day, International Women’s Day, etc) to disseminate these materials and others, and to draw attention to the initiative.

Share these materials – as well as initiative stories and updates – with partners, funders, and implementers to encourage their support and help in promoting **Data Made Simple**.

STEP FOUR: Shine a Light on Data Made Simple

There is a saying that unless we take credit for our successes, we may be defined by our failures. Take credit for Data Made Simple from implementation to conclusion. Contact friendly reporters to invite them to a “creativity” learning session. Share products created by youth advocates with FP2020 and Knowledge SUCCESS. Offer to speak to local university students about the need for data made simple. Even glitches in the initiative will be helpful when shared: Are 25 data advocates from five states the

right number? Did the mentors take their role seriously? Is there anything you would have done differently?

Innovation rarely runs in a straight line. But all steps along the way to true innovation are important and others will be eager to hear about the process and the end result.