

Sustaining Rivers State’s Family Planning Program: Use of TCI’s Novel Performance-based Tracker to Trigger Positive Changes

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TCI Rivers State Program Coordinator Uduak presenting to the Honorable Commissioner, Principal Secretary and other policy makers on TCI’s performance-based tracker, reviewing financial and program implementation data to improve engagement with TCI and inform plans forward. April 2019. Photo credit: Ola/TCI.

Public health programs can only deliver benefits if they are able to sustain activities over time. Most donors require implementing partners to factor in strategies aimed at sustainability into proposals; however, few projects are designed to be sustainable from the beginning. Family planning in Rivers State provides a good example of this lack of planning for sustainability from the beginning. In Rivers State, family planning service statistics dropped between 2015 and 2017 when implementing partners exited the State due to the closeout of a donor-funded program.

TCI entered the picture in 2018 with its business unusual approach, which requires State ownership; promotes resource mobilization; provides technical support; and facilitates sharing and learning for rapid scale-up of evidence-based family planning interventions. The novel performance-based tracker pioneered by TCI Nigeria looks at States’ financial commitment to TCI proven approaches and its results/outcomes and provides States the opportunity to unlock additional financial resources through TCI’s Challenge Fund for fulfilling and exceeding its commitments and targets.

The tracker is a novel strategic tool that documents TCI’s and the government’s financial resources – both in cash and kind – committed to the implementation of TCI proven approaches. It allows government to place financial value on in-kind resources, which helps government to better

understand the broad resources required for program implementation and what all that it can already contribute without seeking outside resources. In addition, the tracker helps both government and TCI to monitor progress being made and better appreciation how that progress compares to the resources mobilized and expended. The use of this tool promotes accountability, resource sustainability, and government ownership of programs.

Between December 2018 and April 2019, the TCI Rivers team facilitated two feedback sessions or roundtable meetings with government representatives, using the performance-based tracker. The aim of these meetings was to increase government ownership and subsequently government funding of TCI proven approaches by reviewing performance as well as financial commitments and costs to date. During the meeting, TCI reviewed the tool, compared Rivers State to other TCI-sponsored States, and promoted a discussion about how Rivers State could do more among key decision-making stakeholders, which included the Honorable Commissioner for Health, Permanent Secretaries of State Ministry of Health and Primary Healthcare Agency, Saving One Million Lives (SOML) Representatives, and Directors and Program Managers across the different health agencies.

As a result of these meetings using the performance-based tracker, TCI has witnessed a significant mindset change among key policy makers which will help to ensure sustainability of Rivers State's family planning program. These changes have led to:

- *A dedicated budget line of 10million Naira created for family planning program area in the River State's Primary Health Care Management Board's (PHCMB's) budget for the first time.*
- *Increased funding for family planning in PHCMB's costed workplan (5% local government areas derivation fund).*
- *Increase in current SOML budget by 129% for implementation of proven family planning programs.*
- *Production and dissemination of over 2000 copies of family planning-specific IEC materials by government through SOML funds.*
- *Increased spending of committed government funds from 31% to 47% within a 3-month period.*

As a result of TCI engagement, Rivers State has not only increased its funding commitments towards proven family planning interventions but also increased its release of these funds. Rivers State policy makers have reported greater trust in TCI as a result of its openness in sharing its performance-based tracker and better appreciation of the value that in-kind efforts can contribute towards development, motivating them to do more which ultimately ensures greater likelihood of sustainability.

Based on the Rivers State experience, TCI recommends that government replicate these feedback sessions or roundtable meetings with other levels of government as well as partners to further identify resources for leveraging and to improve coordination. Based on TCI's successful use of its performance-based tracker for family planning, it can be modeled and adapted for other primary health care programs as well.