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Training data entry in TMS, supported by Shukhi Jibon | Photo: Ridwanul Mosrur

Shukhi Jibon

Learning Lab: Training Management System

BACKGROUND

In Bangladesh, the National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT) is the designated leader for training public-sector family planning (FP) service providers. An institute like NIPORT requires a systematic management information system (MIS) to support the monitoring of its training system. However, prior to 2017, NIPORT had no digital training management system (TMS)—a gap that led to planning and management challenges. Bangladesh's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's (MOHFW's) two other directorates—the Directorate General of FP (DGFP) and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)—do use an MIS and a human resource information system (HRIS). However, these systems were not interoperable as required by the operational plan of the 4th Health Population and Nutrition Sector Program of Bangladesh.

In 2017, the USAID MaMoni Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) project* developed a custom TMS for NIPORT to address these issues. The TMS is a web-based application for administration, documentation, tracking, and reporting of the instructor-led training programs at NIPORT headquarters and training institutes. It is possible for the TMS to be interoperable with other national systems, like the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2), HRIS, and the learning management system (LMS). The TMS was intended to facilitate the development of training calendars, record keeping of training participants, and generation of reports. However, the TMS was not fully functional due to technical glitches and lack of data. NIPORT staff did not receive trainings on the TMS after MaMoni HSS developed and handed it over to NIPORT, so they never used it.

SHUKHI JIBON'S APPROACH TO TMS DEVELOPMENT

USAID's Accelerating Universal Access to Family Planning project (AUAFP), also known as Shukhi Jibon, partners with the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) to continue building the responsiveness of the health care system and improve the health and human capital of Bangladesh by expanding FP services through

* The MaMoni Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) project was a five-year (2013–2018) Associate Award under USAID's Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP).

universal health coverage. The project is working to improve the capacity of the MOHFW, including NIPORT, DGFP, and DGHS, to advance the right to health for adolescents, youth, and all Bangladeshis.

When MaMoni HSS ended, the USAID-funded Shukhi Jibon project was tasked with resolving the functionality issues and deploying the TMS, which now serves as the digital registry for all training and eLearning activities implemented by Shukhi Jibon Learning Labs.

TMS LEARNING LAB

In 2019, Shukhi Jibon set out to address five common challenges that pervade development assistance and stand in the way of the project's goal—to contribute to improved health and human capital in Bangladesh by increasing use of voluntary FP services. Using a Learning Lab approach, based on USAID's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) framework, and with strong commitments from the GOB and USAID, Shukhi Jibon implemented five innovative interventions—including the TMS Learning Lab—in 39 test sites across six learning districts. Today, this robust Learning Lab experience provides a roadmap for continuous learning and demonstrates Shukhi Jibon's progress in rapidly testing, refining, and documenting innovations during a pilot phase before effectively scaling them up for greater impact.

Through a consultative process with NIPORT and DGFP, the project team agreed on the learning agenda, objectives, questions, activities, and sites for rollout of the TMS.

KEY LEARNING QUESTIONS

- **What was the process for operationalizing the TMS?**
- **To what extent are the training institutes using the TMS to manage—plan, execute, and track—training events?**

Shukhi Jibon conducted a landscape analysis of the existing systems at NIPORT, DGFP, and DGHS, which led to recommendations—to develop a digital dashboard and pursue interoperability with the personal management information system (PMIS), MIS, HRIS, and TMS.

The project then initiated the process of entering the backlog of historical NIPORT training data. The team visited training institutes to learn about existing data management procedures, orient relevant officials at NIPORT training institutes on guidelines for training data collection and entry, and encourage these stakeholders to use the TMS. The trained officials then entered the backlogged training data from all 32 NIPORT training institutes from 2017 and 2018 in the TMS—about 36,000 training data points—and the project technical team analyzed the data to identify training management gaps. Shukhi Jibon also used the data to create a dashboard prototype, which was developed into an institution-wide dashboard for training planning and management.

Today, the TMS holds valuable information. The database of FP trainees and trainers (1) informs trainer performance feedback, (2) tracks training information and trainee performance, and (3) provides a platform for eLearning activities and FP certification. System analytics—tracking logins, open pages, and time spent in the system—demonstrate active usage across Learning Lab sites.

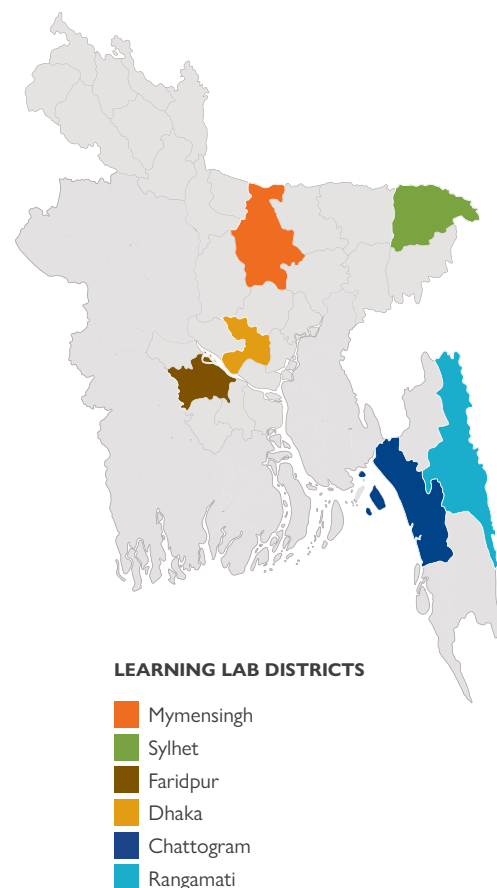
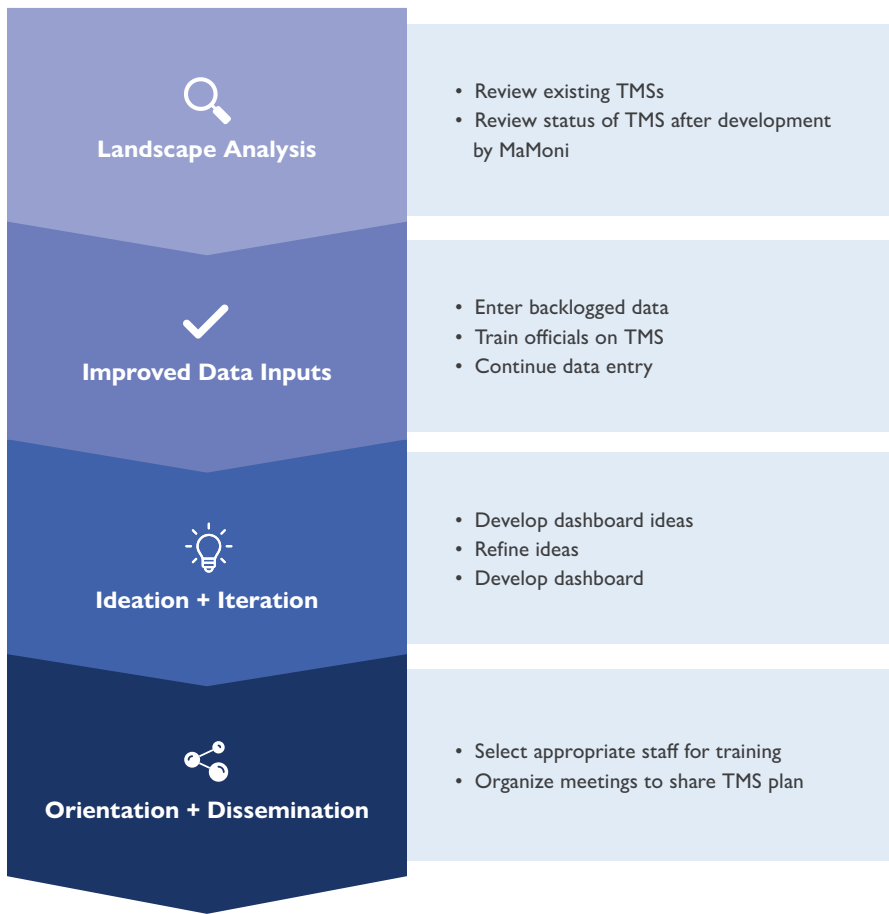


FIGURE 1: SHUKHI JIBON'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPING A TMS



LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION

Shukhi Jibon's Learning Lab experience has informed rollout of the TMS as the project replicates and scales the approach, shedding light on both facilitators and challenges of implementation.

FACILITATORS

Several factors helped to facilitate the successful operation of the TMS, including:

- **Collaboration and coordination.** Collaboration and coordination of activities with MaMoni, led by Save the Children, has been paramount to the successful deployment of the TMS. Shukhi Jibon also established a good working relationship with NIPORT, supporting its digital initiatives, including its online monitoring system, e-library, and server maintenance.
- **Buy-in from NIPORT.** NIPORT's favorable view of Shukhi Jibon's competency-based training approach facilitated NIPORT management's willingness to adopt the TMS. NIPORT formed a technical committee, including a member of the Shukhi Jibon project team, for monitoring implementation of and updates to the TMS. In addition, NIPORT included maintenance of the TMS in its operational budget. For example, NIPORT covers the cost of hosting the server in the National Data Centre at the Bangladesh Computer Council.



Photo: Ridwanul Mosrur



Training Sessions are in progress at Sylhet RPTI | Photo: Ridwanul Mosrur

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

The project encountered several challenges operationalizing the TMS, including:

DATA QUALITY

Challenge: Data entry operators at training institutions faced challenges collecting trainee information due to missing details, such as participant national ID number and permanent address. Validation mechanisms are needed to increase data reliability and quality.

Response: To ensure accurate, complete data, trainees should be informed ahead of training that they will be asked to provide the information required in the system so they come prepared to do so. In addition, the respective training institutions should validate the data to increase the functionality of the TMS. Shukhi Jibon is working with NIPORT to develop a system to achieve this.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Challenge: There is no designated training data management position in the training institutes. To address this gap, Shukhi Jibon trained training officers and back-office staff on data management after NIPORT provided administrative approval, but a long-term training data management solution has not yet been developed.

Response: Trained staff regularly enter institutional data, and the project is advocating for the creation of designated data management positions. The project will work with NIPORT to identify appropriate staff members to take on this role long term. In addition, an eight-member technical team was formed—comprising three relevant technical officials from NIPORT headquarters, four representatives from training institutes, and Shukhi Jibon's MIS and HRIS manager—to support all training institutes. The terms of references include hands-on training and technical assistance for use of the TMS in all NIPORT training institutes as well as monitoring TMS use.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES (continued)

SYSTEM FUNCTIONALITY

Challenge: MaMoni's development of and orientation to the TMS used simulated data rather than real data from the training institutions. Therefore, NIPORT staff faced software usability challenges when entering real training data into the system. During data collection, Shukhi Jibon's Learning Lab sites documented and shared challenges with the project's capacity development team.

Response: Shukhi Jibon organized a hands-on workshop for data operators. By engaging in a deeper analysis of real raw data, the team developed a better understanding of connections between key fields and were able to increase the usability of the TMS. Further refresher trainings for training institute staff using real data are recommended.

COVID-19

Challenge: The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated virtual collaboration; however, working virtually with NIPORT headquarters to develop the dashboard was challenging. During virtual discussions and trainings, it became clear that not all administrative officers had access to reliable internet connection or a smartphone. NIPORT staff faced barriers in accessing and using the software to upload the training data into the system.

Response: The project team held an in-person consultative meeting to finalize the dashboard with the support of training officers. Moving forward, the team will work closely with NIPORT and DGFP to maintain training data in the TMS, despite the challenges of virtual communication.

CONCLUSION

Use of the TMS has yielded many benefits: it is easier for training institutes to report on their training programs, prepare training calendars, and conduct trainings accordingly. Data is more easily validated, and staff can more quickly respond to queries about trainings from NIPORT headquarters. NIPORT can use training data to analyze trends, understand training patterns, and make strategic decisions. Finally, the TMS helps inform performance evaluations of both trainees and trainers.

The Shukhi Jibon team and NIPORT leadership agree that the TMS should be introduced in the remaining 16 NIPORT and DGFP training institutes across Bangladesh. NIPORT has begun working on this expansion. The MOHFW has recommended that the TMS be scaled up nationally and selected the TMS to be showcased in the annual Innovation Workshop organized to share new ideas among all directorates of the Ministry. NIPORT will complete scale-up by the end of the fiscal year 2022. Shuki Jibon will expand the use of the TMS in district offices of DGFP, soliciting nominations for training participants by the respective deputy directors. To date, eight DGFP Regional Clinical Training Centers plan to use TMS for data management.

The creation of a database is an important achievement; however, unless the database is effectively operationalized, its potential cannot be fully realized. Through this Learning Lab, Shukhi Jibon gained valuable insights and experience for how to successfully roll out a TMS in the public sector—to enhance monitoring of training systems and put actionable data in the hands of people who use it to improve overall training planning and management.

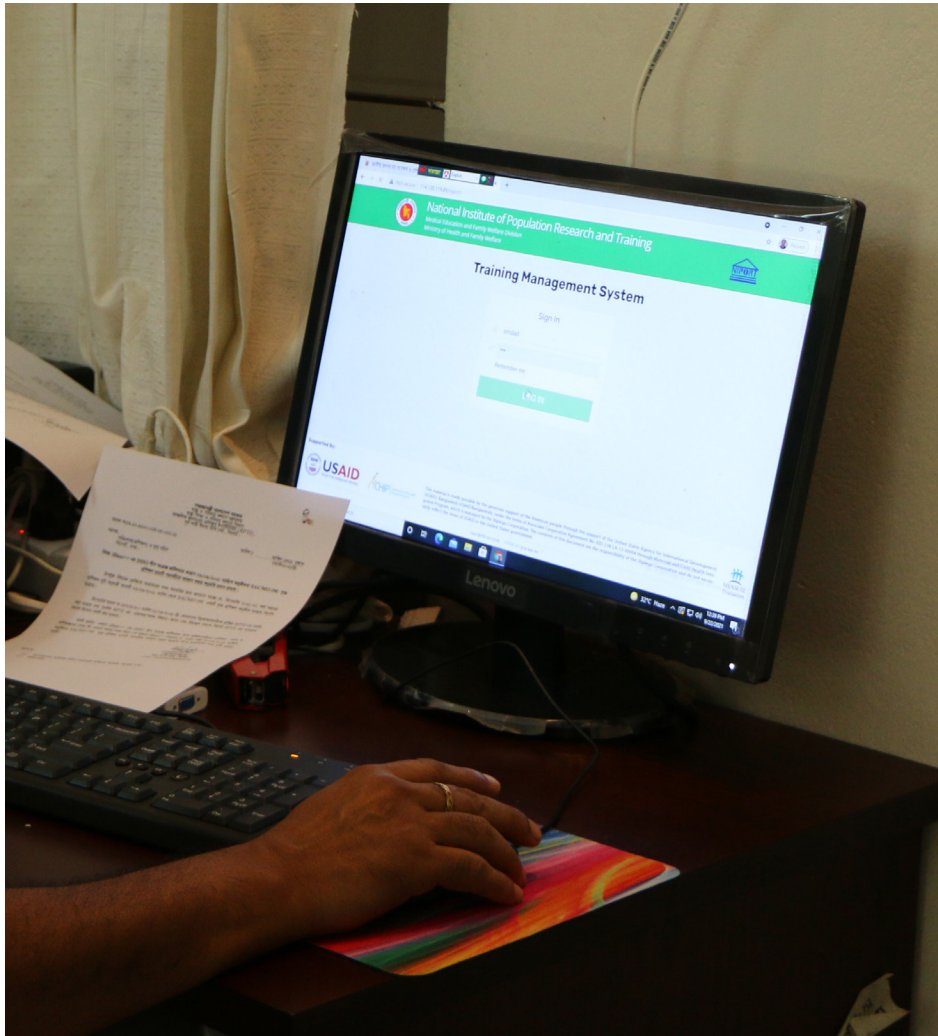


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SUGGESTED CITATION

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The USAID-funded Accelerating Universal Access to Family Planning (AUAFP) project, also known as Shukhi Jibon, contributes to improving the health, wellbeing, and human capital of Bangladeshis by improving access to family planning. Since 2018, Pathfinder International has implemented the USAID-funded Shukhi Jibon project in partnership with IntraHealth International, the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh, and the University of Dhaka.

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