

Building sustainability in our healthcare centres to support long-term access

Key learnings

- MSI centres are a cornerstone in ensuring women have access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, particularly abortion and post-abortion care. For years, these essential services have relied heavily on donor funding. However, as donor contributions become increasingly unpredictable, the urgency to transition towards financial self-sustainability has grown.
- While new service delivery models such as telemedicine and pharmacy access are expanding options for reproductive healthcare, the need for in-facility services remains critical. Facilities like MSI's centres provide critical choice and life-saving care, including with surgical abortions. Additionally, our centres have broadened the scope of care to encompass women's health

The challenge

Over the past five years, MSI has implemented a comprehensive strategy to ensure the financial sustainability of its centre network and to support the long-term availability of services for women – independent of donor funding. This strategy is built on four key pillars:

1
Service
diversification

2
Branding

3
Commercial
mindset

4
Health
financing

Making better use of data, using client and market insights and ensuring an uncompromising quality of care has been the foundation across this strategy. The approach has yielded remarkable results.

More than 2.2 million people now receive high-quality services annually through our centres and the financial sustainability of our centres has improved significantly – from 72% to 101% service income-to-cost over the past five years. MSI's centres continue to adapt to evolving challenges and remain a vital lifeline, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services for those who need them most, particularly women seeking abortion and post-abortion care.

What we did

We began by conducting a thorough analysis to assess the performance of all our centres. Using a set of criteria, we categorised them based on their potential to progress effectively along a financial sustainability pathway while maintaining their impact and access for women. This process resulted in the closure of several centres. Currently we have 316 centres and 21 maternity clinics. All country programmes were supported through the 'Centres Academy' platform, which consolidated all guidance, to help them implement the four-pronged strategy to drive sustainability and impact.

needs throughout their lives – from menstruation to menopause – areas that have historically been underfunded and deprioritised.

- By addressing these gaps, MSI centres continue to play a vital role in advancing equitable access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare.

What we found

1. Service diversification

We broadened the range of services available to address women's health needs across all life stages, from menstruation to menopause. By expanding services, we aim to provide comprehensive care that resonates with the women and communities we serve.

2. Re-branding

Our brand is a vital asset for our centre network. To enhance client experience and awareness, we've refreshed the look and feel of our centres and maternity clinics. In line with our commitment to expanding services and addressing broader women's health needs, we proudly launched our new re-branded message "Every Stage of Woman". This embodies our holistic approach, supporting women at every stage of their reproductive lives.

3. Embracing a commercial mindset

We are equipping our team members with essential commercial skills including financial management, effective resource utilisation, and results monitoring. To support this, we have developed a comprehensive training package tailored for all staff working in our centres. This initiative strengthens a business mindset, enabling teams to manage centres more effectively as sustainable enterprises.

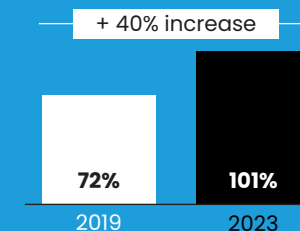
4. Health financing

We have positioned our centres' network to leverage health financing opportunities including private and public health insurance schemes and corporate contracting. With our extensive geographical coverage, full range of health services, commitment to quality and client satisfaction and data-driven decision-making, we have established ourselves as trusted partners for insurers. The development of a new health financing toolkit equipped country programmes with the tools to successfully secure contracts and accelerate financing sustainability, so that cost is not a barrier for women seeking these services.

Over the past five years, our centres' financial sustainability has improved. In 2019 our service income-to-cost increased by 40%, rising from 72% in 2019 to 101% by the end of 2023.

This growth reflects the effectiveness of the strategic approaches implemented. For example, broadening service offerings to address wider women's health has been particularly impactful. In MSI Ghana's network of eight centres, these strategies doubled both service income and client numbers.

Service income-to-cost



In the early 2000s, only 3 programmes achieved 100% or greater service income-to-cost; by 2023, this had risen to 14 programmes.

One initiative contributing to this success is the award-winning Every Stage of Woman campaign. Initially piloted in Ghana and now rolled out across 15 countries, the campaign raises awareness and destigmatises various women's health issues and highlights the importance of health support throughout a woman's life. It also engages governments and other stakeholders, encouraging them to prioritise the health and well-being of women to help them thrive.

Spotlight on maternity clinics

We've introduced a new Respectful Maternity Care Curriculum, placing the experience of clients at the core of our work. We've piloted new antenatal and postnatal classes and challenged how we address pain. Our maternity services are pioneering innovative approaches to improve women's experiences of healthcare.

"Shifting to a more commercial mindset while staying true to our mission is challenging, but this approach is vital in the evolving healthcare landscape, ensuring financial sustainability to continue delivering quality care for women."

Commercial Director for MSI Malawi

What we found (continued)

In addition to diversifying services, many MSI country programmes have successfully identified and secured domestic financing opportunities. These include National Health Insurance Funds in Kenya, private insurance funds in Senegal, Mali, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda, as well as government service contracts in Nepal. These arrangements not only generate income to support the sustainability of centre networks but also provide access to services for women who might otherwise be unable to afford them.

In Uganda, private health insurance and corporate contracts contributed 35% of MSI Uganda's service income, enabling the programme to operate above 100% income-to-cost.

Lessons learned from Uganda's success are now being used to support other countries across the MSI global partnership in identifying and leveraging similar domestic financing opportunities. The rollout of the Electronic Health Record system which provides real-time visibility of service income has also led to better management contracts and reduced financial loss due to incorrect claims. Our bespoke dashboards allow centre managers and other decision-makers to view data daily and make timely decisions, bolstering operational efficiency, ensuring services remain accessible and impactful.

Protecting access to abortion and post-abortion care

MSI is committed to ensuring that no woman or girl is ever turned away from abortion or post-abortion care services, offering waivers to those who need assistance covering the cost.

45,000 women per year, on average, receive a waiver or price discount.

35% – average discount off the cost of the service.

Our waiver clients tend to be younger: **16%** are adolescents and **21%** are students, compared to non-waiver clients, which were **8%** adolescents and **14%** students.

50%+ of waiver clients were unemployed. This was at the time they received services.

Because of the time-sensitive nature of abortion, services are often needed at the earliest possible time, so it's a key focus to ensure that services are available for all women and girls. Each country programme puts aside at least 1% of service income to cover these costs.



What this means

By continually investing in data systems, strengthening our brand, and enhancing the client experience, we aim to reach more clients and improve our financial resilience.

While significant progress has been made in recent years, further efforts are needed to secure the long-term sustainability of our centres and women's access to services. True sustainability requires not only covering direct operating costs but also supporting critical overheads such as quality assurance, marketing, and financial management. **To achieve this, we are committed to exceeding 130% service income-to-cost, which will enable us to meet these broader needs and invest in quality services for the long-term.**

Our client-centred approach combined with operational excellence are essential in building a resilient network. This will allow us to navigate funding challenges effectively and ensure continued access to reproductive health services, both now and in the future.

More information

For more information on MSI Reproductive Choices and the work that we do, please contact:

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