Transforming Data into Meaningful Results Using Power BI

The Skills Development Programme (SDP) Cambodia is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Swisscontact and INBAS. The SDP facilitates the delivery of skills training for disadvantaged young women and men from the rural areas to develop market relevant skills, so they can access and sustain gainful waged or self-employment. The programme also aims to contribute to the creation of an inclusive, market relevant and well-coordinated Cambodian TVET system.

Guided by the Logical Framework and Results Chains, relevant data to monitor and measure results is collected in the SDP online database at individual level. Results from the database are processed through Power BI (PBI), a Microsoft cloud-based visual analytics tool, within the Office 365 suit.

The Problem & how PBI addressed it

Initially:
- Online database provided team members with basic table reports or trainees' profile overview.
- Specific progress reports were processed by the MRM Specialist upon request.
- Results data seemed to belong to MRM team only.
- Visual reports used to be a time-consuming task, hence they were created mainly for half and annual reports.

Currently:
- Information from the database is processed through Power BI (PBI), a visual analytics tool, transforming data into different types of graphs, charts and tables organized into dashboards.
- All team members have access to the online dashboards, with which they can interact through filters and by clicking on the graphs, so as to search for answers.
- Now data is easier to understand, timely obtained and always available to all the SDP team.

Key benefits of using PBI

- The shareable and interactive dashboards enable all team members to visualize and explore data in a clear and engaging way.

- Once data is processed through PBI, online and real-time data on results becomes available for all team members at any time, from anywhere.

- Through PBI, all team members gain ownership over data and results, and information no longer lives with the MRM team only. This ownership promotes and enables knowledge sharing and an adaptive management approach.

Main costs & investments

- Hiring an expert is likely necessary as setting up the data model requires robust knowledge of how to create queries and develop data models. This is very specialized knowledge, not common among people with basic IT skills.

- Service can include: data model set up, creation of dashboards synchronized with database, training, user manual and videos, 6 hours support 3 months after completion of project for fine-tuning of system.

- PBI can be accessed as a web service for free, but it is most often acquired Although a lot can be done with the free version, the Pro version offers more features for creating visualizations and only with this you will be able to share dashboards with colleagues. The good news is that qualifying NGOs get a 70% discount, with $3 per user per month.

"Quick and easy access to results data, empowers the team to make timely decisions"

How to Get Started with Power BI?

✓ You don't need a database or CRM to get started with PBI, and having lot of data is not necessary either. You can use PBI with several independent Excel files, and you can even start with 10 rows of data from one data source.

✓ You can use the online version of PBI, but download the desktop app to work offline. The free PBI version does not require an Office 365 subscription.

✓ Microsoft offers a series of videos explaining how to use PBI in detail.

✓ If you are not knowledgeable on data models, you will need to hire a technical person for the initial set up. Afterwards, PBI is easy to use and to create different visualizations. This is particularly the case if you have good skills in Excel or in other data management systems.

Recommended Information Sources

- To download PBI desktop app for free, visit:
  https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/desktop/

- You can sign up for a free account and access online service here:
  https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/

- Microsoft instruction videos :
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c01r_pAZdk&list=PL1N57mwBHtN0JFoKSR0n-tBkUJHeMP2cP

- XL Consulting, Cambodia (PBI set up consultant)
  www.xlconsulting-asia.com, vimeo.com/user49316145, info@xlconsulting-asia.com, Phone +855 (0)89 259 248
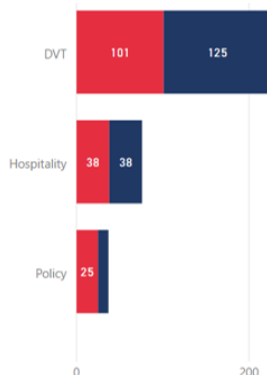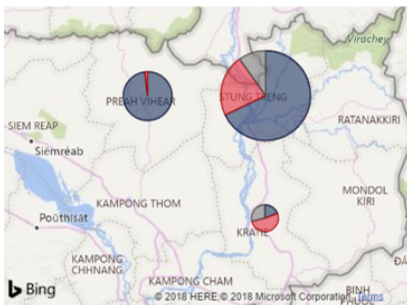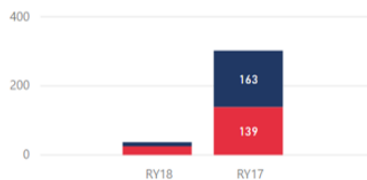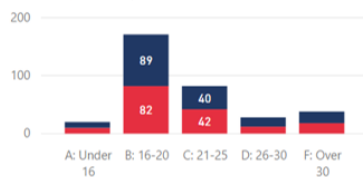

Facilitator Details

🪪	**Name:**	Adriana Mendieta
👤	**Position:**	MRM Specialist
⚙️	**Organization:**	Swisscontact
✏️	**Project:**	Skills Development Training
📍	**Country:**	Cambodia
@	**Email:**	adriana.mendieta@swisscontact.org