

OVERVIEW

The People Analytics Unit (PAU) was launched in 2018 as a TIC incubator project hosted by MSF-USA to provide data science expertise and support strategic workforce planning across the MSF movement. It aimed to offer movement-wide services in people analytics and foster a data-informed HR culture. Over six years and three TIC-funded phases, the PAU evolved from developing an “HR Pipeline Tool” to conducting strategic HR analyses such as DE&I and L&D studies. This review was commissioned to assess PAU’s value, explore barriers to its international sustainability, and inform MSF’s future approach to analytics functions. By early 2025, following unresolved funding discussions, the PAU transitioned into an MSF-USA-specific unit (WISU), ending its movement-wide function.

Results

- PAU helped build a culture of data-informed HR decision-making in MSF.
- Key contributions include impactful DE&I and L&D analytics (e.g., MSF-USA DE&I and OCB Med Staff L&D studies).
- HR data quality was a major barrier, slowing analysis and reducing reliability of results.
- Strategic goals shifted over time, moving from tool development to analytics service delivery.
- No mechanism was put in place to track the implementation or impact of PAU outputs.
- Stakeholder engagement, GDPR, and decentralized governance limited movement-wide adoption.

Conclusions

The PAU’s work proved the value and demand for people analytics across MSF, but systemic challenges- including fragmented data systems, inconsistent stakeholder buy-in, and weak governance alignment- curtailed its broader impact. As it transitions to a national unit (WISU), MSF must reflect on how to preserve and scale analytics capacity that aligns with organizational diversity and operational needs.

Recommendations

- Use WISU’s stable setup to explore new analytics offerings and inform future structures.
- Clarify whether future analytics work should be centralized, decentralized, or hybrid.
- Engage data producers early to improve HR data quality and design more effective studies.
- Explore re-billing or shared financing models to sustain an international analytics function.
- Develop an MSF-wide “Analytics Working Group” to promote knowledge-sharing and alignment.
- Consider GDPR-compliant data handling models, such as de-identified source data transfers.
- Ensure WISU expertise informs any new international analytics initiative.

Methodology

- Mixed-methods qualitative approach
- Desktop review of PAU documents and reports
- Key informant interviews with stakeholders across MSF
- Three case studies analyzed: MSF-USA DE&I, Rewards Review, OCB Med L&D

Limitations Data quality issues and lack of impact-tracking mechanisms