

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Applied Research in International Health

Demand for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and applied research is at an all-time high in the international health field. Major donors and development partners emphasize that M&E and applied research are essential for maximizing the impact of aid. The Global Fund suggests that countries spend between 5 and 10 percent of their combined national HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria budgets on M&E. Countries that receive aid are striving to strengthen their ability to measure outcomes.

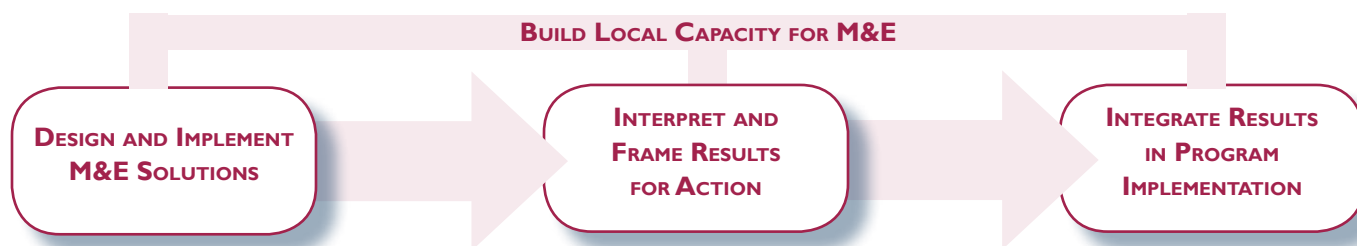
As a leader in health systems strengthening and program implementation, as well as recognized expert in M&E and applied research, Abt Associates is uniquely positioned to respond to the call for better measurement of results. We develop tools for program monitoring, measure impact through rigorous evaluation, and influence policy through applied research. Our core strengths include:

- Designing and implementing robust M&E systems;
- Framing results for action
- Integrating results into decision-management processes.



Susna De

A key aspect of our work is building capacity by collaborating with local partners in the M&E process.



### WHAT DISTINGUISHES M&E AT ABT ASSOCIATES?

- Technical expertise in public health, economics, demography, epidemiology, sociology, management, and political science
- Application of quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Customized approach to research design, in order to adapt to the realities of low-resource environments
- Proven record in applying research findings to guide health programs and policy implementation worldwide
- Nimble institutional structure that allows us to mobilize quickly even in some of the world's most challenging environments
- Successful mentoring of local research partners
- Comprehensive network of research firms and consultants in developing countries

## GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Abt Associates is one of the largest government and business research and consulting firms in the world. Since our founding in 1965, we have provided research, technical assistance, policy and economic analysis to health, education, housing, environment, international development, and business projects. Our clients include U.S. federal, state, and local governments, foreign governments, international organizations, foundations, nonprofit associations and institutions, and business and industry.

Abt Associates has 25 years of experience implementing health programs in over 80 countries. Our efforts contribute to best practices for development programming. Through our country health programs, we build the M&E capacity of government health agencies while strengthening health information systems (HIS).

Abt Associates trained Ministry of Health staff in Zambia in data collection and tracking methods. As a result, national and provincial HIS staff in Zambia produce and use a standardized health statistical bulletin to guide planning. Abt Associates has facilitated similar HIS strengthening processes in Azerbaijan, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Vietnam, Yemen, and many other countries.

Under USAID's Private Sector Partnerships-One project (PSP-One), Abt Associates synthesized results across all of the agency's private sector projects. PSP-One led a participatory process beginning in 2004 in which over 50 performance indicators were winnowed to 18 core indicators. All subsequently awarded private sector projects (task orders) reported on selected indicators from this list.

### NATIONAL HEALTH ACCOUNTS: A TOOL TO TRACK HEALTH EXPENDITURES

Abt Associates has supported implementation of National Health Accounts (NHA) estimations in over 35 countries. NHA, a standard methodology to measure the amount and sources of health expenditures, is increasingly institutionalized by countries to guide health budgets and shape policy. In Rwanda, the Ministry of Health used data from its 1998 NHA to lobby for increased health sector resources. As a result, Rwanda doubled its health budget between 1998 and 2002. In Kenya, the 2002 NHA revealed that households financed 51% of total health expenditures. Galvanized by this evidence, the government instituted policy reforms to reduce the burden on households. NHA for 2006 showed remarkable progress, with household financing reduced to 36%, even as total health expenditures per capita increased.



### WHAT ABT ASSOCIATES DOES IN M&E AND APPLIED RESEARCH

- **Program Monitoring:** Monitoring is the routine tracking of key elements of program performance. Monitoring involves collecting data and analyzing it to verify whether programs were implemented according to plan, financial resources and inputs were applied as intended, expected outputs were realized, and intended beneficiaries were reached.
- **Impact Evaluation:** Impact evaluation involves analyzing and documenting the extent to which changes in the well-being of a target population can be attributed to a particular program or policy. This allows program managers and policymakers to determine the value of the program and make informed decisions about next steps, such as program scale-up.
- **Applied Research:** Applied research efforts collect, analyze, and disseminate data to influence the scale, scope, and direction of national and international health projects and policies.

## INNOVATIVE TOOLS

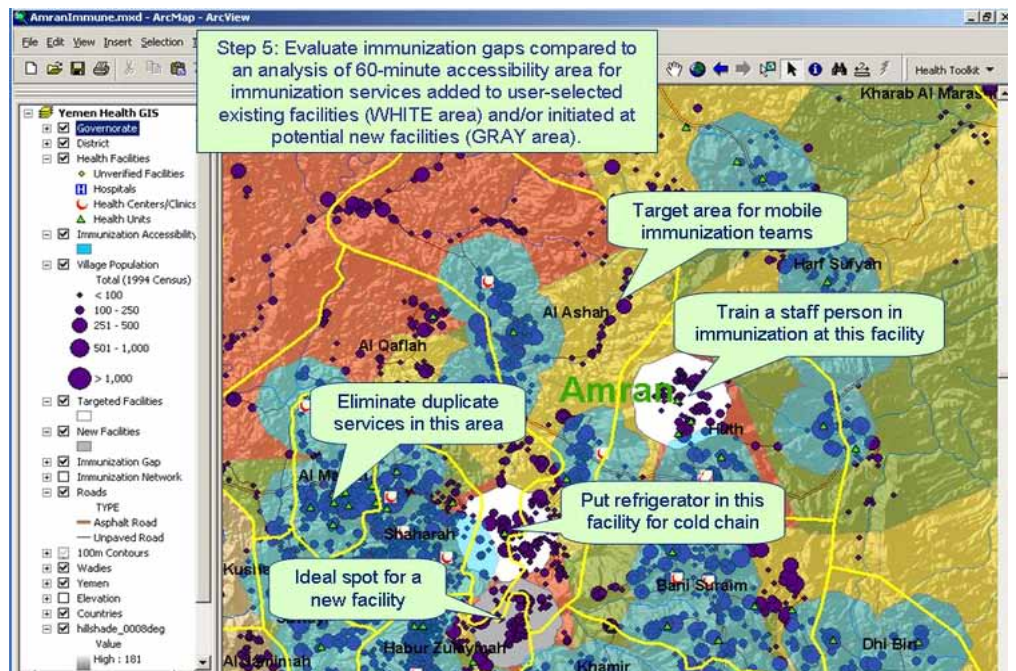
Abt Associates customizes state-of-the-art research methods to identify workable solutions for improving health programs in low-resource settings.

Abt Associates' Client Centered Market Segmentation Tool was introduced in the Philippines and Azerbaijan to apply techniques long used by commercial companies to the family planning market to increase market share. The tool provides rich detail about shared characteristics, preferences, and motivations of different segments of the population. It helps the public and private sector more effectively reach their target populations with tailored health promotion and marketing messages.

Abt Associates built a comprehensive monitoring system for the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI). We worked closely with staff to develop appropriate indicators for success in the context of IAVI's strategic plan, specific donor work plans, and the broader HIV/AIDS vaccine field. The web-based reporting system contains checks and balances that ensure data quality. It also produces performance reports according to the various needs of IAVI's donors, management, and board of directors. We trained IAVI staff and built capacity within the organization to fully utilize the M&E system.

### CUSTOMIZING GIS FOR YEMEN

Abt Associates' Health Systems 20/20 project developed geographic information system (GIS)-enabled health information systems and mapping tools to support Yemen's government. The customized GIS application utilizes scalable tools tailored to meet local, district, governorate, and national needs. These tools include health atlases, technical reports, and a stand-alone Health Sector Analyzer tool. Abt Associates' continues to build capacity in Yemen for better data management and decision-making. The screen shot at right reveals how the tool was used to analyze accessibility to immunization services.



Immunization Services Accessibility and Gap Analysis, Yemen. (USAID/Yemen, Health Systems 20/20 project.)

### ABT ASSOCIATES INCORPORATES QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS

The PSP-One project employed a rigorous mixed-methods approach to ascertain the quality of HIV counseling and testing (CT) in the various sectors of Zambia's health system: public, private, NGO, and faith-based. PSP-One researchers utilized five quantitative and qualitative methodologies to benchmark CT quality: quantitative client intercept surveys with clients receiving HIV CT results; qualitative in-depth interviews with exiting clients; qualitative and quantitative interviews with facility managers; a review of facility HIV service statistics; and an observation of the physical environment for CT in each facility. Qualitative findings provided nuance and detail about gaps in CT quality and counseling content, while quantitative findings provided generalizable information about utilization, access, coverage, and costs of CT across the health system.

## RIGOROUS METHODS

From household surveys on health care utilization and insurance uptake in Ghana to qualitative research on the use of zinc for the treatment of diarrhea in Nepal, Abt Associates uses sound research methods to inform policy reforms. We develop and implement impact evaluations to help clients measure program results and identify areas for improvement. In 2008, Abt Associates led an evaluation of the GAVI Alliance global programs. The evaluation findings guided the development of enhanced GAVI Alliance structure and future program design. Our multi-pronged approach included quantitative analysis of immunization coverage data across 72 countries and 10 years, as well as comprehensive qualitative field research including key informant interviews.

In 2007-2008 Abt Associates, under the PSP-One project, conducted a randomized evaluation of a health insurance pilot project in Nicaragua. The pilot extended the Social Security Institute's health insurance program to informal sector workers, using microfinance institutions as insurance distributors. We randomized over 4,000 vendors from 7 markets in Managua into groups that received either insurance subsidy or an informational brochure, and used quantitative surveys to assess differences between the groups in insurance uptake and changes in health services utilization. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews added qualitative depth and context to the quantitative evaluation results. Findings were used to inform next steps for the program.

### EVALUATING A MATERNAL HEALTH VOUCHER PROGRAM IN BANGLADESH

Hirshini Patel

In 2009, Abt Associates conducted an evaluation of a maternal health voucher program in Bangladesh, funded by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). We used a mixed-methods approach including key informant interviews, facility surveys, focus group discussions, and a household survey with approximately 2,200 women in intervention and matched control districts to assess differences in rates of skilled attendance at delivery and out-of-pocket expenditures on delivery care. We also assessed voucher operations, use of the vouchers, and cost-effectiveness of the program. The evaluation concluded that the voucher program has had an unprecedented positive effect on the utilization of maternal health services in the short time since its initiation.



### ABT ASSOCIATES AT A GLANCE

- Abt Associates is an employee-owned company whose mission is to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people worldwide.
- Abt Associates has more than 1,500 employees worldwide, with over 600 in the International Health Division and a consultant roster of more than 3,800 professionals with direct technical experience in international development.
- Abt Associates' health specialists are currently working in over 45 countries and are implementing projects that are collectively valued at more than \$750 million.
- Abt Associates serves a wide spectrum of clients, including governments, international organizations, multilateral institutions, private foundations, and business and industry, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS), the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), the World Bank, the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the GAVI Alliance, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

#### Corporate Headquarters

55 Wheeler Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
T. 617.492.7100  
[www.abtassociates.com](http://www.abtassociates.com)

#### International Health Division

4550 Montgomery Avenue  
Suite 800 North  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
T. 301.347.5000  
F. 301.913.9061

#### Abt Associates Flagship Programs

**Health Systems 20/20**  
[www.healthsystems2020.org](http://www.healthsystems2020.org)

**Strengthening Health Outcomes  
through the Private Sector  
(SHOPS)**  
[www.shopsproject.org](http://www.shopsproject.org)

**AIDSTAR Sector II**  
[www.abtassociates.com/aidstar](http://www.abtassociates.com/aidstar)

**Health Policy Initiative**  
[www.abtassociates.com/hpi](http://www.abtassociates.com/hpi)

**TASC 3**  
[www.abtassociates.com/tasc3](http://www.abtassociates.com/tasc3)



Abt Associates Inc.

For more information about all of Abt Associates international health programs visit [www.abtassociates.com/internationalhealth](http://www.abtassociates.com/internationalhealth) or contact [IHResourceCenter@abtassoc.com](mailto:IHResourceCenter@abtassoc.com)