

Building Strong Health Systems to Improve HIV & AIDS Outcomes

Abt Associates and Health Systems

A health system consists of all organizations, people, and actions whose primary intent is to **promote, restore, or maintain health**.²

The health systems strengthening framework of the World Health Organization identifies six building blocks of a health system: service delivery; health workforce; information; medical products, vaccines and technologies; financing; and leadership and governance.³

Each week HIV infects nearly 50,000 individuals. Each day at least 1.3 million individuals in the world's poorest countries begin or continue treatment regimens to help them manage the world's newest and least-understood chronic disease.¹ While tools, technologies, and financial resources needed to prevent and manage HIV are increasingly available, the health systems that bring them all together are often broken.

BUILDING STRONG HEALTH SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE IMPACT

How Abt helps to build stronger health systems. Abt Associates' holistic approach to health systems, including partnering with the often-unacknowledged private sector; allows it to link research to real-world applications, and address the spectrum of HIV-related prevention, treatment, care and support needs. Abt Associates works closely with a diverse set of local partners – from central ministries of health to district health managers to grassroots private groups – to address those priorities. For example, at the national level, we work with ministries of health to apply our *Health Systems Assessment Tool* to rapidly assess health systems needs and prioritize responses; at the community level, we help local groups such as midwife

associations to provide prevention of mother-to-child transmission services.

Abt Associates succeeds when our local partners are able to do their jobs, and do them well. We help local partners to build stronger health systems by:

- **Forecasting requirements for HIV and AIDS program scale-up.** Many low-resource countries are now exploring ways of sustaining HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care and support services. Abt Associates' *HIV/AIDS Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (HAPSAT)* forecasts the needs for sustaining and scaling-up service delivery, including requirements for laboratory equipment, pharmaceutical supplies, and human resources. Health planners in **Zambia** are using HAPSAT to identify resource gaps and strategize for resource mobilization efforts.
- **Ensuring adequate human resources for health to deliver priority health services.** Abt Associates helps countries craft and implement human resource development strategies for the health sector. Our experts are working with ministries of health throughout Africa to assess available public and private resources, forecast future needs (such as for rapid scale-up of HIV programs), and identify key issues affecting program success.

The five-year human resources for health plan developed by the **Ivory Coast** with Abt Associates' assistance, maps out requirements for training new employees and retraining existing ones, for staff deployment including rotations for hard-to-fill posts, and for incentives to improve retention. The detailed plan provides a clear estimate of financing needs, which the national government and donors are working to ensure are met.

- **Preparing private providers.** In most countries, private practitioners provide the lion's share of health care services, including HIV/AIDS services. Yet, too often in-service training on new technologies and treatment protocols is limited to public and sometimes NGO providers. With Abt Associates' assistance, the government of Ethiopia invested in training providers from 20 private facilities to treat tuberculosis (TB), a common HIV-related opportunistic infection. The training both expanded the network of qualified TB providers and prevented use of out-of-date treatment protocols. Due to the success of this approach, these providers will be brought back for government-sponsored ART training.



¹ UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS). December 2007. *AIDS Epidemic Update*. Geneva.

² WHO (World Health Organization). 2000. *World Health Report 2000. Health systems*. www.emro.who.int/ASD/8GF/daytwo/drsabri.ppt

³ WHO. 2007. *Everybody's Business: Strengthening Health Systems to Improve Health Outcomes. WHO Framework for Action*. Geneva.

- Increasing financial transparency.** Transparency includes making sure people know which services the government, donors, and households are actually paying for, the very information provided by National Health Accounts (NHA). Abt Associates has helped improve the transparency of funding for health using the NHA framework in more than 50 country estimations. In **Kenya**, health advocates used this information to secure a budget line-item for antiretroviral drugs and in **Rwanda** to double government funding for health, including HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, and care.
- Improving quality of public and private service provision.** Responding to the urgencies of HIV/AIDS requires mobilizing all qualified professionals and facilities to provide care and treatment. Abt Associates is helping **Zambia** to introduce accreditation criteria that providers, public or private, must meet before offering antiretroviral therapy (ART), and to address deficiencies so that the providers indeed meet the criteria.
- Building information systems.** Abt Associates health information experts work with countries to undertake complex surveys that yield critical information for health policymaking and program planning. In **Zambia**, where the number of individuals receiving ART has skyrocketed in recent years, Abt Associates is working with the Ministry of Health to introduce an information system (ARTIS) that tracks administration of ART, thus helping providers manage complex patient treatment histories while also generating reliable reporting data for local and national authorities.

WORKING WITH US

Abt Associates is the prime holder of a number of assistance instruments that USAID missions and bureaus may access to build strong health systems that improve HIV and AIDS outcomes.

Selected assistance instruments

AIDSTAR Sector II (AIDS Support and Technical Assistance Resources Program, Sector II) Through this USAID Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC), the Abt Associates team helps build capacity of partner institutions in developing countries to improve HIV prevention and AIDS treatment, care, and support.

HPI (Health Policy Initiative) is an IQC funded by USAID as the primary vehicle for providing technical assistance for policy development across all sectors of global health.

Health Systems 20/20, a Leader with Associates award, is USAID's flagship technical assistance instrument for health systems strengthening. Its focus areas include health governance, financing, operations, and capacity building.

PSP (Private Sector Program) is an IQC designed to allow USAID missions and bureaus ready access to high-quality technical assistance and support for their activities involving the private sector in health. PSP activities promote private and particularly commercial sector strategies to expand service delivery and access to quality reproductive health and voluntary family planning and other key health products in developing countries.

TASC 3 (Technical Assistance and Support Contract III - Global Health), is an IQC that supports USAID missions and bureaus worldwide in their

efforts to improve global health in the areas of infectious disease, including HIV/AIDS, health, and nutrition.



Selected resources & tools

Atim, Chris, Lisa K. Fleisher, Laurel Hatt, Stephen Musau, and Aneesa Arur.

Health Financing in Africa Today: Challenges and Opportunities.

Washington, DC: Africa's Health in 2010, Academy for Educational Development, and Bethesda, MD: Health Systems

20/20, Abt Associates Inc.

De, Susna, Tania Dmytraczenko, Derick Brinkerhoff, and Marie Tien. May 2003. *Has Improved Availability of Health Expenditure Data Contributed to Evidence-Based Policymaking? Country Experiences with National Health Accounts.* Bethesda, MD: Partners for Health Reformplus Project, Abt Associates Inc.

Health Systems 20/20. 2007. *HIV/AIDS Program Sustainability Analysis Tool (HAPSAT) Forthcoming.* Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates Inc.

Islam, Mursaleena, ed. 2007. *Health Systems Assessment Approach: A How-To Manual.* Health Systems 20/20, Partners for Health Reformplus, Quality Assurance Project, and Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus. Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.

Corporate Headquarters

55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
T. 617.492.7100
www.abtassociates.com

International Health Division

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

Health Systems 20/20

www.healthsystems2020.org

Private Sector Partnerships-One

www.psp-one.com

AIDSTAR Sector II

www.abtassociates.com/aidstar

Health Policy Initiative

www.abtassociates.com/hpi

TASC 3

www.abtassociates.com/tasc3

Health Services & Systems Program - Zambia

www.hssp.org.zm



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