GOVERNANCE & JUSTICE

BOLD THINKERS DRIVING REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Abt ASSOCIATES
Thinking and Working Politically

Successful development requires effective institutions and adaptation to local needs and changing circumstances. Development always takes place within a certain political context, requiring responsiveness to strategic changes in partner government frameworks, donor requirements and an evolving political environment. Abt Associates applies a governance lens to our programs to understand what interests are at stake and identify solutions that are politically feasible as well as technically appropriate.

Our management approach balances adaptability and accountability—incorporating flexibility into budgeting and the pace of implementation and activity design, while maximizing government ownership where possible. We use our contextual knowledge to judge what networks we can support to further policy and institutional reform.

In Papua New Guinea, for example, we strengthened systems and local capacity for improved service delivery by supporting the Church Partnership Program, which provides a significant amount of the country’s health and education services. In Nigeria, we ensured that legislators kept their commitments on health funding to the most vulnerable by working with federal and state ministries of health to design and implement a strategic media engagement plan.

“Thinking and working politically does not guarantee success. It guarantees only that we work in the same way that the real world works.”

Graham Teskey, Abt Principal Global Lead, Governance
Justice, Rights and Empowerment

Trafficking. Drug use and markets. Interpersonal violence. Mass incarceration and recidivism. Equal justice. The impact of contact with the justice system on individuals and societies. At Abt, we study some of the most difficult public safety and justice issues—and challenges—and offer practical solutions to policymakers, practitioners and funders. We conduct research that informs real-world practices and provide technical assistance to support skill development and implementation improvement.

“Justice is at the heart of a civil society. For over 40 years Abt has worked to inform the critical issues related to the full range of the nation’s justice policy—prisons, community supervision, courts and sentencing practices.”

Dana Hunt, Ph.D., Abt Principal Associate/Scientist

For the Administrative Office of United States Courts and the United States Bureau of Justice Assistance, we designed and implement advanced data systems to maximize clients’ monitoring and information capabilities. The systems also provide corrections reporting and outcome assessments. Through data-driven strategies, our work aids service providers, programs and communities in making policy decisions. For the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, we assemble, manage and link large, complex criminal justice datasets to analyze trends and emerging issues, such as the impact of racial bias on federal sentencing decisions. We applied an innovative and rigorous method in a study funded by the National Institute of Justice to identify facilitators of transnational organized crime.
Decentralization and Institutional Effectiveness

Across the world, state and local governments are taking on more ambitious and demanding roles in service delivery and economic regulation. Authorities aim to increase revenue, engage civil society and be responsive to local needs and aspirations. Meanwhile, trust in government is declining, and the growing middle classes are demanding more affordable, responsive and higher quality public services.

Abt is keenly aware that every country is different; constitutional provisions, legal frameworks, administrative systems, financial resources and human skills and competencies all vary country by country. We tailor decentralization strategies and plans to the unique circumstances of each.

Based on our extensive international work, we have learned that successful decentralization is primarily a political project rather than merely a technical one. It is about the sharing or redistribution of political power and authority. Only when financial resources, human skills and competencies, legal responsibility and political authority are co-located can any level of government discharge its roles and responsibilities effectively. This approach underpins all our work on subnational governance systems.

In Indonesia, Abt implemented the KOMPAK project in 26 districts and 311 villages in seven provinces, reducing poverty through improved decentralized services and economic opportunities.
The Abt Advantage

Abt’s global and domestic approach to governance and justice emphasizes evidence-based solutions that produce institutionally and politically sustainable results. We achieve these results by working with all critical institutions—upstream at the policy level and downstream at the service delivery unit level—to incorporate citizen engagement, foster accountability, enhance technical capacity and promote sustainability and political feasibility. Abt applies these guiding principles to our work across a broad governance and justice portfolio, which includes the following technical specialties:

- Cross-sectoral governance integration for public service delivery
- Legal and policy reform
- Transparency and anti-corruption
- Public financial management
- Criminal justice reform
- Land and resource rights
- Rule of law and human rights
- Civil society strengthening
- Decentralization and local governance

Please visit Abt’s webpage to read more about our projects, expertise and findings in governance and justice.
Abt Associates is an engine for social impact, dedicated to moving people from vulnerability to security. Harnessing the power of data and our experts’ grounded insights, we provide research, consulting and technical services globally in the areas of health, environmental and social policy, technology and international development.