

International Health Sector Governance

Improving Health Governance to Strengthen Health Systems



Recognizing that improving **governance is vital to strengthening health system performance**, Abt Associates works with countries worldwide to ensure public institutions, private sector entities, civil society, and communities are actively and effectively engaged in policy, oversight, and management of their health systems.

Improving Governance Can Ensure Health Sector Results

Abt Associates understands that to sustainably deliver high-quality, low-cost health services to its citizens, governments must steward health systems with strong oversight and institutionalized opportunities for stakeholders to voice their service preferences, contribute expertise, and oversee health sector performance. Robust governance is essential to ensure that resources dedicated to health care achieve their intended results, and information on health expenditures, services, and performance outputs is both routinely shared and used to improve decision making.

Abt's Core Competencies in Health Governance

Abt recognizes that improving health system governance is more than just adopting the right policies. Effective governance requires an understanding of the environment in which health stakeholders operate. That is why Abt's approach starts with its full suite of research and analytical skills to identify the key obstacles to effective governance, whether it is a lack of institutional capacity or misaligned incentives that fail to promote adherence to policies and procedures. Abt thinks and works politically to design and deliver technical assistance to support state and non-state actors at national and local levels. Abt advises partners on health policy, contributes to the development of national health strategies, and builds the capacity of health institutions to implement policy and effectively manage resources. Abt shapes inputs and structures that improve accountability, transparency, and decision making, including the effective engagement of communities.

Abt provides technical support to strengthen governance among provider organizations and purchasers of medical care. This includes designing, assessing, and improving management systems, organizational frameworks, accreditation systems, health information systems, and public-private partnerships.



The Public and Private Health Sector Task Force of Antigua and Barbuda, established with Abt support, brings together the public and private health sectors to address priority health policy and implementation issues.

Examples of Our Work in Health Governance

The Health Finance and Governance Project (Global)

Abt Associates leads the Health Finance and Governance (HFG) project, USAID's global flagship project for health systems strengthening. HFG supports countries as they improve governance of their health systems. The project, which works in over 20 countries, addresses a breadth of health sector governance issues at both national and local levels including:

- (a) Developing strategies for health reform, particularly in health financing, human resources for health, and health information systems
- (b) Improving transparency and accountability by assisting governments to better collaborate with civil society and private sector organizations
- (c) Constructing health accounts to improve policy decision-making, transparency, and accountability
- (d) Providing technical assistance to improve public financial management within health institutions
- (e) Building capacity within civil society organizations and the private sector so that they can better contribute towards the development of health policies, implementation of health reforms, and monitoring health system performance

Tanzania Public Sector Strengthening Project (PS3)

In this five-year, USAID-funded project, Abt supports improved delivery of health and non-health services by strengthening governance at the national, district, and local level. The project trains and mentors public officials and civil society organizations to bolster public financial management, improve human resource practices, and strengthen information system for improved transparency and accountability. This work builds on the Abt's work supporting decentralized health sector management under the predecessor Wajibika project.

Enabling Equitable Health Reforms in Albania

This program supported the establishment of a national Health Reform Implementation Support Group—a cross-cutting group of national health institutions and provider groups, administered by the Ministry of Health. Abt supported the development and testing of tools and mechanisms to implement policy changes, informed the redefinition of the roles of health institutions, and strengthened the country's monitoring and evaluation framework with systems and processes that facilitated the generation and analysis of data for subnational and national decision-making.

Health Policy Initiative in Vietnam

The populations most affected by HIV/AIDS in Vietnam now are more assured of sustained prevention, care and treatment as a result of new laws, policies, plans and programs developed by the Government of Vietnam, civil society, health care providers, and others with Abt support. Community advocates and networks improved their effectiveness so they could assume leadership in the policy process.



In Vietnam, Abt developed capacity to conduct sub-national Health System Assessments so local governments and other stakeholders could assess and monitor system performance on a regular basis, and use this data for policy and planning.



Abt staff train health sector internal auditors in Tanzania.

Strengthening Governance and Sustainable Health Reform in Nigeria

Through two projects in Nigeria, Abt introduced new supervisory procedures that allow data to be instantly transmitted and implementation weaknesses to be identified at the facility level. Improvements in program oversight enable supervisors to take prompt action to remediate problems and state-level officials to have the data to systematically track facility and localized trends to identify required interventions. These procedures supported the tracking of the identification of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis and contributed to an increased cure rate among smear positive cases from 50.5 percent to 60.1 percent. The rate of treatment completion among new smear positive patients increased from 18.7 percent to 38.8 percent.

Contact

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Abt Associates is an engine for social impact, harnessing the power of data and grounded insight to move people from vulnerability to security worldwide. We provide research, consulting and technical services globally, working in the areas of health, environmental and social policy, and international development.

