

Improving Family Planning/ Reproductive Health Services



Abt Associates, working in collaboration with governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations in approximately 50 developing countries, contributes to the prevention of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal deaths by **supporting the delivery of quality family planning (FP) products and services**. Abt designs and implements interventions at the community and health facility level and implements system strengthening and capacity building interventions to enable our partners to effectively manage these interventions and provide the greatest impact for beneficiaries.

An Unmet Need...Despite Progress

The developing world is witnessing a remarkable improvement in modern contraceptive use. According to the United Nations Population Fund, in 2014 of the 1.6 billion women of reproductive age (15-49) living in developing regions, more than half—877 million women—want to avoid a pregnancy and thus require effective contraception. Of those women, 652 million are using modern contraceptives. In addition, use of modern contraceptives prevented an estimated 231 million unintended pregnancies, 38 million unsafe abortions, and 100,000 maternal deaths.

Expanding Availability of Modern Contraceptives

The “best” FP method for any woman or couple depends on a combination of factors including age, relationship status, number of children, desire for spacing or limiting, etc. Therefore, a wide range of quality methods must be accessible and available. Long-acting reversible contraception and permanent methods (LARCs and PMs) are highly effective FP methods that are often unavailable or misunderstood by both providers and clients. Those who desire FP need knowledge of and access to a range of FP methods including LARCs and PMs, and need to be able to select the method most appropriate for their needs. Abt’s programs:

- Educate and train more FP providers who can appropriately counsel clients and deliver a wide range of methods



- Increase the capacity of providers in LARCs and PM clinical skills and reduce provider bias
- Work with stakeholders to make FP commodities available to private sector providers
- Introduce new products to countries

Improving Family Planning Services

FP is optimally delivered as part of an integrated package of primary health care. Abt develops evidence-based clinical standards and service delivery guidelines; introduces quality improvement systems such as medical audits, health care accreditation and supportive supervision of public and private providers; and improves the continuum of care by networking health facilities and introducing referral systems.

Reaching all women and men who desire a FP method requires the participation of all cadres of health providers. The appropriate cadre of providers depends on local conditions. Abt’s programs:

- Help eliminate regulations that hamper private sector delivery of FP products and services
- Build the capacity of nurses, midwives, traditional practitioners, and pharmacists to provide FP counseling and services
- Assist not-for profit and commercial providers to offer affordable, high quality FP products and services

Active community engagement in the design and implementation of FP programs encourages local ownership and success of the program, while also respecting cultural and social mores. Abt has a strong track record working with communities to:

- Identify their health needs and work effectively with service providers and local governments to ensure that these needs are met



- Build the capacity of community extension and outreach workers to provide FP counseling, methods, and referrals
- Conduct social and behavior change communication interventions to overcome socio-cultural and religious barriers and stimulate demand for FP

Reaching Underserved Populations

Increasing access to FP among underserved populations has been essential in meeting the targets set by the UN's Millennium Development Goals for maternal and child health and gender quality and will remain critical to healthy populations in the Sustainable Development Goals. Abt designs programs to reach women and underserved populations, including youth and rural populations. Abt's FP programs:

- Develop new approaches to increase access for underserved areas and populations
- Provide policy direction to governments on adolescent health needs and reduction of barriers
- Help develop female-friendly networks of female providers
- Support local civil society organizations to provide home-based counseling and referral
- Develop innovative youth-friendly promotional strategies such as helplines, text messaging, and the Internet, to make FP information and services easily available to young women and couples

Generating Demand for Family Planning Services

Increasing the supply or "availability" of FP commodities and services will not increase use of contraceptives without a corresponding increase in demand. A growing number of women and youth need quality FP services, so consistent effort is required to raise awareness of what type services are available and where to access them. Abt's programs:

- Conduct formative research to identify information gaps and design appropriate messages

- Employ community-level volunteers and resources to increase knowledge and use of FP
- Improve knowledge of FP through mass media campaigns, public outreach activities, and public relations

Improving Family Planning Policy Environment and Health Systems

Despite political commitment and leadership, many health systems fail to respond to unmet need for FP. Abt applies evidence-based, data-driven tools such as National Health Accounts to track FP spending by governments, donors, and households. Abt builds the capacity of local government counterparts to develop, cost, and monitor adherence to national FP policies and to improve governance through appropriate public expenditure and resource management systems.

Governments also need to partner with other groups to sustain delivery of quality, reliable FP services, including NGOs, faith-based organizations, private provider associations, and local manufacturers. Abt's programs:

- Strengthen the capacity of local FP organizations to provide or support FP services
- Work with manufacturers, distributors, and contraceptive security committees to improve contraceptive security and increase access to a range of FP products
- Build partnerships between private providers and ministries of health to increase access to and availability of FP services
- Work with decentralized government health units to ensure local ownership and sustainability

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Abt Associates is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 40 countries.

