



Effective and
Innovative
Communications
Strategies for the
COVID-19 Pandemic:

How Abt Can Help

— March 2020 —

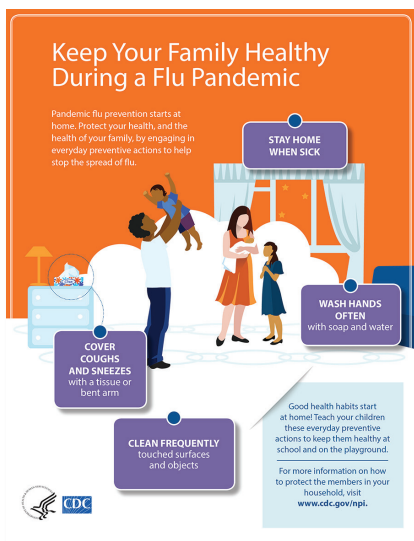


The Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global emergency demanding drastic changes in personal and community norms and behaviors to stem outbreaks. As a result, to protect the public's health, it's urgent for the U.S. government to develop and implement a behavior change and risk communication campaign. This campaign could geo-target the general public and at-risk populations (e.g., elderly, healthcare workers, those who are immunocompromised, pregnant women) in areas of sudden outbreaks.

The government also needs rapid understanding of how different people perceive COVID-19 to effectively promote broad uptake of recommended health behaviors such as social distancing—including among those who do not perceive COVID-19 as a “real threat.” Beyond the immediate danger of infection, the government must also look longer-term at the effects of social isolation on mental health, potentially generating damaging behaviors within households and communities.

When infectious disease outbreaks like COVID-19 occur, people immediately want to know how to respond, recover, and protect themselves, their families, and their communities.



Critical Questions for a Communications Campaign



1. How can we motivate people who do not think they are at risk to take protective measures?
2. What messages should target health care providers on the front lines?
3. If detected cases diminish, what messaging will prevent complacency and recurrence?
4. What tools can enable hyper-targeting of at-risk populations?
5. What are the best tools for gauging campaign success or the need for mid-course corrections?
6. How do you cut through the noise so people respond to your information?
7. How can you reach a senior with one message and a millennial with another? What if they live in the same house?

The government can work with and alongside the media on communications that shape and influence the public's awareness, beliefs, and behaviors.

Abt Associates is a leading expert in outbreak response, pandemic preparedness, and risk communications. Through our trusted collaboration with federal agencies, states, territories, and health systems, we have created successful communications and behavior change campaigns to combat public health dangers. Abt developed strategies, media, digital content, and materials for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) **Pandemic Influenza Communication Planning** and designed and implemented cutting-edge, geo-targeted, multi-modal campaigns for CDC's **Zika Domestic**

Readiness Initiative for the continental U.S. and Puerto Rico. Our health communications draw on our five decades of research, implementation, evaluation, and capacity building for infectious disease interventions. Our behavior change campaigns have accelerated TB testing and treatment in Nigeria. They also improved cooperation when we encountered residents' refusal to allow indoor residential spraying for malarial mosquitoes in Africa. And our mental health work includes foundational research to link alcoholism and depression with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Solutions

Abt recommends a comprehensive COVID-19 communications campaign using proven frameworks and principles that explain how and why people look for and use health information to manage risk of infection. These include message development, audience outreach, research-based campaign planning, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and strategies for overcoming complacency.

Message Development

Innovative message development is critical for a risk communications campaign's success. A public health emergency calls for succinct information about transmission, risk, and preventive behaviors. Initial messaging to protect against COVID-19 has ramped up sharply, and now is the time to develop, test, and disseminate health messages focused on perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, and barriers, such as:

- Who is at risk of COVID-19
- What it means for others if you are asymptomatic
- Which [symptoms](#) require immediate medical attention
- Positive effects expected from prevention actions (e.g., slowdown of transmission, avoiding overcrowding hospitals, saving lives)
- Clarifying information (e.g., what is and what is not social distancing and quarantine)
- Physical and mental health consequences of COVID-19

As testing becomes widely available, the public will need accurate information on it, including where to

Innovative Rapid Message Testing During Zika Pandemic



During the Zika outbreak Abt Associates, in collaboration with CDC, worked quickly to develop and test communications messaging with audiences at the greatest risk for experiencing health impacts from Zika. Abt developed and rapidly deployed A/B testing on CDC Facebook and Twitter channels. We learned A/B testing was the most efficient means to rapidly gather feedback from a large number of people to determine how best to combat message and risk fatigue without inciting panic. The resulting messages clearly characterized who was at risk, that Zika was still a problem and promoted a sense of urgency to take action.

request a test. If at-home testing becomes available, the public will need step-by-step instructions on how to use the test and what results mean. For *CDC's Influenza Studies*, Abt produced a successful video on how to collect nasal swabs with an at-home test kit and package it properly.

Developing and testing messages in real time are imperative to get ahead of fast-paced COVID-19 developments. We recommend a combination of approaches to give the government rapid, action-oriented feedback about messages and materials:

- **Analysis of real-time social media** engagement to guide initial development of messages and concepts.
- **A/B comparative social media testing** of campaign messages and creative concepts through partner Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter channels.
- **Online surveys** to rank message concepts, deliver feedback on campaign messages, and obtain initial data on an audience's knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAPs).

- **Online interviews and focus groups** to generate in-depth understanding of anticipated KAPs that could result from campaign exposure.
- **Identify different sources of secondary data** to understand an audience's media habits as well as KAPs. Publicly available, non-proprietary market data—including from Pew, Gallup, or Scarborough—offer complementary audience insights.

Audience Outreach

A communications campaign must use multiple media platforms to reach all audiences. News media and social networks have amplified awareness of COVID-19 and preventive behaviors. These platforms are critical to providing millions of people accurate and up-to-date information that addresses public health needs—especially when people are spending more time inside with TV, radio, and online devices.

However these channels alone do not reach the entire population. A multi-component media campaign that repeatedly exposes individuals to health messages within different environments and where they learn best increases adoption of health messages. Understanding various audience segments—gender, geography, generation—and where they consume information will optimize results.

Research-based Campaign Planning

Using accurate insights about a campaign audience is critical to executing the right strategy. After identifying audiences by geography and demographics, national research on where audiences consume information—online, newspapers, magazines, radio, etc.—enables the government to target the right message to the right audiences and ensure spending money on the right tactic.

Zika Multi-Tactic Campaign Strategy



Abt used a research-driven, geo-targeted and multi-tactic approach to address the Zika outbreak. As the campaign launched, we geographically targeted audiences with different messages. As the health crisis expanded, we delved into audience media usage to tailor specific messages to the right audience at the right place. Research showed our audience engaged often with video, so we launched an informational video. Our audience spent time shopping, so we displayed messages in malls. We targeted messages to recent travelers to airports with traffic to high-risk Zika locations.

Messages about COVID-19 should be tailored to audiences during message development and campaign planning. Considerations should include:

- Geographic areas with heavy outbreaks and lockdown restrictions will need more messages discussing the benefits of these measures on channels that reach individuals in their homes not in public locations.
- The large percentage of the public that still do not consider COVID-19 a “real threat” will need messages about the risk in multiple channels, including out of home.
- Older adults and those most at risk in areas with fewer outbreaks might need reminders for who is at risk through channels where they consume information, like newspapers.

Abt launched a geo-targeted, multi-tactic campaign to address the Zika outbreak in the U.S. and Puerto Rico



Created nearly 370 creative pieces in two months



Over 400 million digital and social media impressions



101 million radio and out-of-home impressions

Using the right tactic to target audiences has a higher probability of boosting adoption of COVID-19 preventive behaviors.

Media monitoring can generate valuable insights. Social media provide insights directly from the target audience as captured through engagement metrics (e.g., likes, shares) and can show, for example, that a message performs better on a particular platform with a specific audience. For instance, messages on Facebook may perform better with older adults than they would on Instagram. As detailed in the next section, these insights can help the government refine and target a campaign for the best results.

Innovation, creativity, and relevance should be the hallmarks of a COVID-19 risk communications campaign. A retargeting tactic would show messages about handwashing to recent visitors at public locations. Updated travel information could be sent to users searching travel-related sites. During the Zika campaign, Abt targeted prevention messages to women who had recently visited baby stores.

Scanning the online landscape around COVID-19 leading up to a campaign launch is imperative for campaign planning. This analysis and report could include:

- Trending hashtags relevant to COVID-19 and prevention or testing
- Misinformation about the transmission and prevention of COVID-19
- Social influencers' remarks on prevention of COVID-19
- Audience interaction with CDC handles on Twitter (@CDCgov, @CDCTravel) and Facebook (/CDC, /CDCTravelersHealth)

Partnerships

Partners can amplify messages in ways that working alone can't. Abt recommends reaching out to community-based organizations, the private sector, universities, and faith-based organizations to disseminate campaign messages through partners' media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and email.



Additionally, as social distancing moves events online, the government should explore partnerships with webinar companies, publishers, entertainers, schools, and universities, or smaller local groups with large community followings. And as more people remain indoors, the government could team with companies that offer smart speaker devices, like Amazon Echo and Google Home, to disseminate content using voice-activated commands.

Partnering with Influencers

To target influencers to promote preventative messages during the Zika campaign, CDC-led a workshop at a women's blogger event, BlogHer. The team provided materials and worked with CDC's Partnership group to design and update a Zika Action Day toolkit for partners to hold Zika-related education events. For COVID-19, we would seek out influencers at online events.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Flexible media M&E of campaign strategies delivers vital knowledge in a fast-moving pandemic environment. A nimble, multi-pronged M&E strategy for the COVID-19 risk communications campaign will enable the government to identify lessons learned quickly and obtain rapid feedback loops with critical information for measurable campaign improvements. The strategy should be designed for fast pivots that respond to changing needs, new evaluation findings, the fluid nature of the pandemic, and the chronic risk of complacency. Elements of a nimble M&E campaign strategy could include:

- Media monitoring through social and digital media analytics, landing page web-traffic, partner media, and outreach data
- Behavioral intent studies
- Online survey panels
- Random-digit dialing surveys

Social and Digital Media Analytics

Social and digital media analytics offer powerful, real-time insights for course corrections and to pinpoint successes by ad and target audience. For instance, performance of ads may vary by geographic areas, languages, and target groups. During the Zika campaign, we found ads targeting parents in Spanish were engaging for Miami Beach, while ads targeting parents in the rest of Florida engaged better in English.

- **Social media offers a platform to engage with users** and possibly learn about their intent. Audiences use Facebook and Instagram to share, comment, and react to ads as well as click-through for more information. This type of ad format helps illustrate audience interest and gauge sentiment toward specific preventive action messages.
- **Google Search enables users to search COVID-19 related information.** The frequency of words used by target audiences can impart additional understanding on keywords related to COVID-19 to drive traffic to government landing pages and adjust the media plan.

Raising Awareness During the Zika Epidemic



- The continental U.S. Zika campaign generated approximately **325 million digital and social media impressions** and **101 million radio and out-of-home impressions**; the Puerto Rico Zika campaign generated an **additional 83.5 million impressions**.
- Over **37 million people were reached** with CDC Zika messaging in the continental U.S. and Puerto Rico.
- These impressions yielded a saturation rate of **144% in the continental U.S. and over 200% in Puerto Rico**, far exceeding the criteria set for awareness.

Web-traffic of Landing Pages

Monitoring and analyzing web traffic is crucial for assessing campaign success and the need for changes. A primary campaign goal is converting a passive ad viewer to a website visitor to learn more about COVID-19. Clicking an ad represents information-seeking behavior. Web traffic from landing pages (e.g., [CDC COVID-19 prevention page](#)) offers insights into who is visiting the website page (e.g., unique or returning, demographics) and how they behaved once there (e.g., amount of time users stay on page, whether they click to other pages). Click-through rates of a digital ad may be high, but if target audiences are staying on a page less than a minute and not engaging with other pages, that may indicate an issue with the presentation of the information.

Behavioral Intent Studies

Behavioral intent studies during the COVID-19 pandemic can quickly deliver useful information on audience intent to change behavior and brand lift (i.e., awareness of a brand or message).

Under CDC's *Zika Domestic Readiness Initiative*, Abt collected data for behavioral intent studies through Google Health (using YouTube and Search), Nielsen Vizu, and Facebook and Instagram platforms. Google Health and Nielsen Vizu can measure brand recognition and intent to engage in protective behavior with exposed and control groups. An intent study via Facebook and Instagram can measure awareness and intent. Two ads can be deployed with messaging prompting users to 'Like' the post as a representation of responding 'Yes' to the messaging. We can then measure performance through engagement (e.g., like, share, comments, and click-through-rates).

Online Survey Panels

Timely online survey data for a COVID-19 campaign will be essential to establish in-depth trends and continuous monitoring of KAPs. CDC could use data quickly to adjust existing campaign efforts as well as lessons for future infectious diseases. Survey panels can include audiences recruited from large, pre-existing, opt-in internet panels.

Random Digit-Dialing Surveys

A random probability telephone survey in the geographic target areas for a campaign can garner deeper insight into participants' KAPs. For a telephone survey, Abt recommends the use of both cell phones and land lines to ensure wider coverage. Evaluation design could compare different locations with varying levels of campaign activity (i.e., long-running active campaign, current intensive active campaign, new campaign area, and a control). Data could be collected at three time-points in English or Spanish. To ensure a representative sample and improve greater coverage, Abt recommends the use of **Address Based Sampling** and **Multi-Mode Data Collection** strategies as part of a survey design.

Using Online Survey Panels To Reach Specific Audiences



For CDC's Flu Monitoring Projects, Abt Associates developed web surveys for pregnant women and healthcare providers and administered them twice in five flu seasons between 2011 and 2016. Abt attained survey completion rates of over 90% among both pregnant women and healthcare providers.

Strategies for Overcoming Complacency

Message fatigue, risk fatigue, and compassion fatigue all decrease behavior change and lead to complacency. As the COVID-19 crisis evolves and new scientific information emerges, reports of COVID-19 infection may decrease, media reports may become less urgent, and more people may forgo preventive behaviors—possibly triggering a recurrence of infection. To address complacency, it is vital to understand evolving beliefs of the public to determine messaging and tactics.

Gap Analysis

As an initial step to gauge complacency, a gap analysis can quickly deliver needed insights to inform a refresh of campaign messages and media tactics. The gap analysis can include previous message testing data, media monitoring campaign data, survey data that measures KAPs, and a scan of reports from CDC, Gallup, Pew, or Scarborough.

People who saw the CDC Zika Messaging

86%

more likely to believe they were at risk

147%

more likely to believe they could protect against Zika

150%

more likely to use repellent



Messages That Address Complacency

Developing new messaging to address complacency is critical for a COVID-19 campaign. Messaging that COVID-19 is still a threat will need to:

- Resonate with target audiences
- Promote a sense of urgency to take action
- Educate on how to prevent COVID-19 and motivate target audiences to adopt and consistently perform preventive actions
- Overcome complacency by better defining risk

Controlling the Media Mix

A campaign media plan will control the media mix to “meet people where they are.” Results from the gap analysis, continuous media monitoring, and geo-targeting to high-risk regions can steer new and refreshed multi-component media plans that address complacency. As social distancing and mobility restrictions lessen, high-visibility tactics like billboards or bus shelter posters could reach large audiences and head off the potential for complacency.

Google Trends

Google Trends, an innovative free tool, could uncover complacency of COVID-19 preventive behaviors. Google Trends analyzes top queries entered in Google Search worldwide in various languages and over time. As of this writing, the top three questions entered related to COVID-19 were: 1) How did the coronavirus start? 2) What is the coronavirus? 3) How many cases of coronavirus are in the U.S.? Most top searches related to coronavirus were in metropolitan areas, with a recent spike in coronavirus testing-related searches.

Technological Solutions

Using technology will be key to overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. Abt offers customizable technological solutions that include: data visualization and reporting, development of mobile applications, and machine learning, among others.

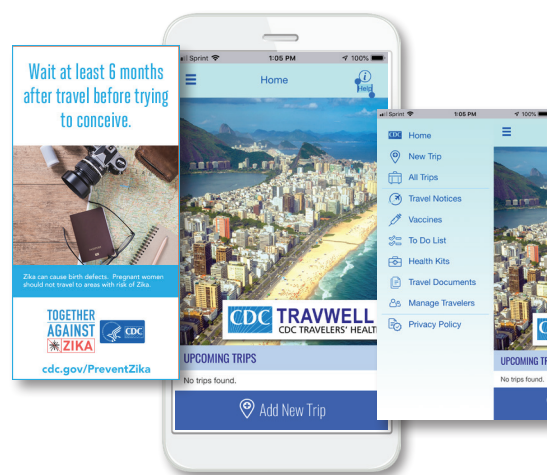


Data Visualization and Reporting

Data visualization software tools, like Tableau, can be a valuable element of media monitoring as COVID-19 unfolds. It can streamline vast amounts of data generated by various media channels, and it offers user-friendly visual campaign summaries to enable real-time decision-making about the media mix. Using this tool with regular measurements, Abt gauged public complacency during the Zika campaign.

Mobile Applications

Mobile applications can be developed for the government to provide the public with geo-targeted COVID-19 prevention messages and the latest tailored information on COVID-19. In addition, a contact tracing mobile application could be developed to enhance contact tracing in the U.S.



Contact tracing entails finding every person who came in contact with a person infected with COVID-19. Abt has extensive experience developing mobile applications for data collection and prevention messages.

Machine Learning

Machine learning enables Abt to analyze quickly a large volume of data. Abt is using machine learning to analyze the COVID-19 Open Research Dataset, a repository of 29,000 research journal articles on COVID-19 and similar respiratory diseases. Abt aims to answer research questions that focus on COVID-19 risk factors, transmission, diagnostics, geography of spread, and virus genetics. Abt used machine learning for CDC's *Pilot to Assess Cognitive Computing to Analyze Immunization Program Data*. The pilot developed a vaccination-specific, language-based platform--or lexicon--for custom analytics of unstructured text. The lexicon was well developed and epidemiology specific (e.g., to separate shingles as a virus from shingles used for roofing), and is unique in that it is designed to work with formal (e.g., state or federal vaccine guidelines) and/or informal (e.g., social media). In addition, Abt explored multiple processing algorithms for lexicon creation and assessed data quality by looking at the volume of vaccination-related discussion on Twitter as well as exploring algorithms for bot-detection.

In Summary

Now is the time to mount a comprehensive risk communications campaign to combat the lethal spread of COVID-19 using proven, evidence-based approaches. Abt Associates stands ready to assist the government in its effort to protect the public's health.



Countering the Perils of Infectious Diseases



COVID-19 is the latest deadly disease to threaten populations and challenge experts and government leaders around the world. Every day, Abt counters dangers to global health security through innovative detection methods, surveillance, behavioral communications campaigns, and groundbreaking prevention strategies, as well as research and evidence to strengthen treatment and care.

About Abt Associates

Abt Associates is a consulting and research firm with a 55-year record of improving the quality of people's lives worldwide. Over four decades, Abt has worked on multiple fronts to combat infectious diseases, including avian influenza, H1N1 influenza, TB, malaria, and Zika. For clients including CDC, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Health Organization (WHO), we deliver evidence-based, leading-edge solutions. Our staff crosses geographies, methods, and disciplines to bring the best thinking to global challenges.

Our communications campaigns and messaging have helped reduce avoidable disease transmission. Our national preparedness roadmaps and training have enabled the U.S. and other countries to plan for spikes in demand for healthcare. Our critical research has informed policy and practices to assess vaccine effectiveness and quickly implement data collection at the start of a pandemic. Our innovative digital tools include a real-time safety monitoring system for CDC for mass vaccination during pandemic influenza. Please see below for details about our experience and our impact in protecting millions of lives every year. You can also find relevant information for the COVID-19 pandemic on [our website](#) and in our recent [health impact report](#).

Health and Behavior Change Communications

Changing public behavior in a pandemic is crucial to limit disease spread. Abt's social and behavioral change communications specialists rapidly rolled out effective, targeted messaging to help control the Zika outbreak in the southern U.S. and increase private sector TB screening in Nigeria. We also developed communications strategies for CDC's Pandemic Influenza Community Mitigation Planning Guides.

CDC's Zika Domestic Readiness Initiative

Abt carried out [cutting-edge formative research](#) to inform culturally appropriate messages and materials and designed multi-modal campaigns to maximize reach and coverage. With advance testing, we published ads within two days of the announcement of the first U.S. case in Wynwood, Fla., and responded even faster to cases in Miami Beach. The campaign used Google Ads to hyper-target audiences through animated banner ads, video, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram ads and reached broader audiences through in-flight magazines, newspaper and radio ads, billboards, bus shelters, and posters in malls. Abt evaluated performance metrics to inform mid-course corrections and lessons learned for future risk communication campaigns.

Communication, Dissemination, and Evaluation Strategies for 2015 Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States

Abt developed [strategic communications and dissemination strategies](#) for quick implementation of CDC's six pandemic influenza community-mitigation planning guides for key community decision makers. These multi-modal strategies included media, social media, marketing materials, and a comprehensive evaluation plan with a framework of metrics and tools. Abt raised awareness about the availability of the guidance and the planning guides by developing strategic communications and dissemination strategies for quick implementation.

Zika Communications Campaign Awards



65th Annual CDC and ATSDR Honor Award - Excellence in Communications

2016 CDC OADC Innovative Communicators Award

2016 Digital Health Award

2016 Hermes Creative Award

2016 MarCom Platinum Award

2017 NAGC Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Award (Mobile)

2017 Platinum PR Award Finalist (Public Affairs)

Sustaining Health Outcomes through the Private Sector (SHOPS) Plus Nigeria: TB Behavior Change Communications Campaign

Abt's [behavior change communication campaign](#) aimed to increase uptake of private sector TB screening, diagnosis, and treatment services by addressing barriers to proper health-seeking behavior through multi-language brochures and flipcharts for health care providers and community health workers. Our multistep process included situation analysis, formative research, strategic design, materials development, dissemination, and monitoring in five local government areas.

SHOPS Plus TB Communications Campaign



The multistep process for the campaign included: situation analysis, formative research, strategic design, materials development, implementation, and monitoring. The campaign distributed 8,400 brochures in five local government areas.

Preparedness

Abt helps governments analyze strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in testing, treating and infrastructure in advance of pandemics and other health emergencies.

Health Finance & Governance Project

Abt and USAID conducted the first regional Joint External Evaluations to produce a multi-sectoral, five-year roadmap to [increase capacity to address pandemics](#) in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras. Abt also assessed entomological monitoring capacity in nine areas, from finance and human resources to implementation and data-collection capacity.

Strengthening Health Outcomes through the Private Sector (SHOPS) Project

Abt and USAID mapped private sector health resources in the Caribbean to supplement government health facilities in a pandemic, yielding information to meet a sharp rise in demand for healthcare.

2018 CDC/WHO Workshop in Tunisia

Abt partnered with CDC and the WHO to [develop training materials](#) for regional pandemic preparedness activities. We also facilitated training with participants from Ghana, Morocco, Oman, Tanzania, and Tunisia to improve their action plans and infrastructure.

Community Resilience, Centralized Leadership, and Multi-Sectoral Collaboration in Pandemic Preparedness and Response White Paper

In collaboration with the University of Texas' Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, Abt authored a [key chapter in this white paper](#) on effective local-level prevention, detection, and front-line responses to pandemics that require participation and coordination at the local level.

Innovation

Abt's practical technological solutions have enabled CDC and USAID to establish a surveillance system for pandemic influenza vaccination, inform travelers about the Zika outbreak, and inform messaging to counter refusal of malaria spraying. We:

- Developed a [Zika Text Message Notification System](#) for CDC's Travelers' Health Branch, launched in advance of the summer 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. In seven months, it served more than 25,900 users and earned CDC a first-place Blue Pencil and Gold Screen mobile award from the National Association of Government Communicators.
- Developed and pilot tested [CDC's Integrated Vaccine Surveillance System](#) to establish a real-time, electronic safety monitoring system for mass vaccination during an influenza pandemic.
- Replaced CDC's TravWell mobile app with a next-generation app with an intuitive user interface and push notification capability to send destination-specific messages to affected travelers.
- Developed a [mobile app](#) that uses computer vision and artificial intelligence to replace [manual counting](#) of mosquito eggs, enabling governments to allocate resources quickly to mosquito breeding hotspots.
- Use field-based [mobile data collection](#) for malaria spraying so we can immediately intensify mobilization activities, including tailored messaging, in response to high rates of refusals by residents to allow spraying.
- For the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, analyzed Google searches by Vietnam veterans to reveal patterns of post-traumatic stress disorder more than 40 years after the conflict, as well as subsequent debilitating health behaviors.

Research

As one of CDC's leading infectious disease research partners, we have analyzed vaccines' effects on target populations and created standardized protocols to accelerate studies at the start of a pandemic. We are a trusted USAID partner in the ongoing effort to overcome insecticide-resistant malaria and protect 20 million people a year from the disease.

Pregnancy Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness Network

For CDC, Abt coordinated an [innovative retrospective study](#) that produced the first evidence that influenza vaccination reduces hospitalization risk for pregnant women. The study analyzed 2 million pregnant women's medical records during six influenza seasons in Australia, Canada, Israel, and the U.S. The study found vaccination cut hospital risk by 40 percent.

The Epidemiology of Novel Influenza Virus Infection and Evaluation of Antiviral and Vaccine Effectiveness

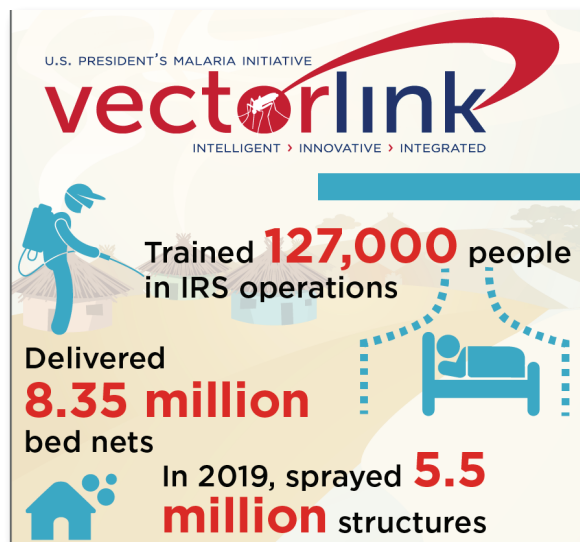
Abt partnered with CDC to [establish a research infrastructure](#), a network of 17 large U.S. healthcare systems that supports studies of novel influenza viral infections and vaccine effectiveness. We created standardized protocols with CDC for populations such as pregnant women to implement studies and data collection quickly at the start of a pandemic. CDC is considering using the network for COVID-19 research.

Evaluation of Novel H1N1 Influenza A Virus Infection and Vaccine Effectiveness Among Pregnant Women

Abt used a combination of [prospective population-based study designs](#) in the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 influenza seasons to assess the effectiveness of the H1N1 influenza vaccine in pregnant women and how the virus and antiviral treatment affect health outcomes for pregnant women and their babies.

VectorLink Project

Abt systematically collects, analyzes, and presents [high-quality entomological data](#) from 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to inform selection of insecticides and quality and efficacy of indoor residual spraying, guiding the transition to more effective insecticides in 14 countries. Abt shares the data with global malaria control communities and the WHO.



Capacity-building

To enable countries to protect their citizens, Abt expands local capacity to carry out best practices in prevention and treatment of vector-borne and other infectious diseases, including avian and pandemic influenza, malaria, and TB.

Capacity Building to Prevent and Control Avian Influenza in the Greater Mekong Subregion

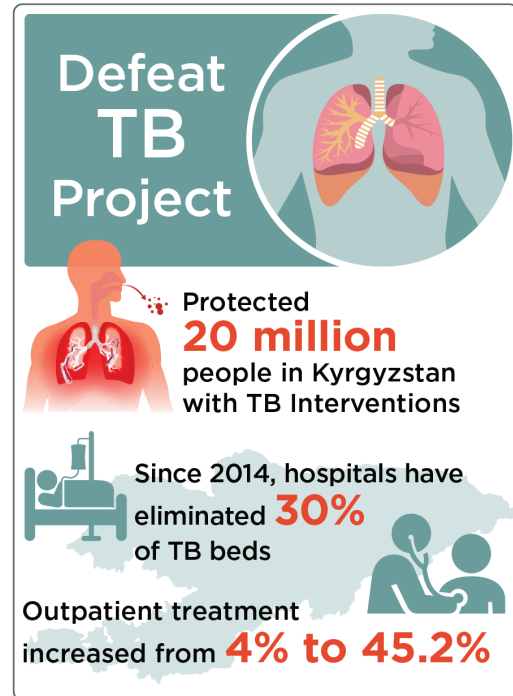
In Vietnam and the Greater Mekong subregion, Abt designed and helped implement innovative [community-based surveillance programs](#) for avian and pandemic influenza. The project also enhanced the knowledge, skills, and resources of animal health and agricultural extension workers, improved infection control programs and procedures down to the commune level, and used sub-national lessons to inform national policies and programs.

Zika Africa Indoor Residual Spraying Project

For USAID, Abt collaborated with governments in a dozen Latin American countries to plan and [implement vector control strategies](#), trained more than 5,200 vector control and entomology technicians, and protected more than 700,000 people from Zika.

Health Reform Programs in Ukraine and Central Asian Republics

Since the 1990s, Abt's partnership with USAID has contributed to a nearly 80 percent decrease in TB mortality in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. In Kyrgyzstan, we strengthened community supports for the most vulnerable and helped transition from expensive hospitalization to outpatient care. Since 2014, hospitals have eliminated 30 percent of their TB beds and boosted outpatient treatment from 4 percent to 45.2 percent in pilot areas.





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