



Smartphone data collection for malaria (photo courtesy of Abt staff)

## International Evaluation and Policy Analysis

**Abt Associates** is a mission-driven, global leader in research, evaluation, and program implementation in the fields of health, agriculture, nutrition, education, climate change, economic growth, democracy and governance, and social and environmental policy. Abt's International Evaluation and Policy Analysis group brings together Abt's renowned bench of researchers, policy analysts and evaluators who have been leading studies in the U.S. for 50 years and internationally for about a decade. This unique combination of expertise results in a deep understanding of the contexts in which our studies take place, with offices in more than 40 countries worldwide, and an understanding of the feasibility of evaluation recommendations. It also means we're able to focus on turning our research into actionable evidence that we synthesize to inform policy action, design our projects and disseminate widely.

### Abt readily responds to clients' needs for

- Assessments
- Data quality assessments
- Evaluation capacity building
- Impact evaluations
- Meta-evaluations
- Performance evaluations
- Performance management
- Policy analysis
- Process evaluations
- Research
- Systematic reviews/meta analysis



Market evaluations in Tanzania (photo courtesy of Abt staff)

**MISSION:** The mission of our international evaluation and policy analysis work is to increase the impact of policies and programs by applying the most rigorous methods to measure effectiveness and make recommendations for policy action, and strategic implementation efforts throughout the program cycle. We believe in user-driven evaluations that provide strategic, actionable recommendations and instigate change in policies and programs.

**OVERVIEW:** Abt offers clients the best tools for gathering defensible evidence of program impacts while contributing to the learning agenda to allow for adaptive management of current programs and to inform future programs and policies. Consistently ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and top 40 global innovators, Abt is known for creative approaches to solving complex problems. Our evaluations combine quantitative methods with equally rigorous qualitative methods. In the past 25 years, Abt has conducted more than 200 cutting-edge evaluations, both domestically and abroad, where we have applied experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental designs. We use mixed methods in all of our evaluation to triangulate findings and provide information on both the magnitude of changes in outcomes and the context and reasons behind those changes. Abt applies the same rigor to conduct cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses of policy and program options.

Abt is at the forefront of the movement to make monitoring and evaluation more flexible and rapid to inform adaptive programs. We are leading USAID's first pilot rapid feedback evaluation, which seeks to test multiple activities for reaching the same outcome, allowing for conclusions about which interventions are the most efficient and effective and can be scaled. We also employ a bench of more than 200 researchers and evaluators, including several thought leaders with experience using rapid feedback evaluations, developmental evaluations, and evaluations methods that provide quick and iterative feedback to allow adaptation within the program cycle.

## We offer our clients:

**Rigorous mixed-method approaches**, including use of experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental

designs with rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques tailored to the evaluation question. We have a team that has published widely in peer-reviewed journals on designs across the spectrum and have extensive experience using both quantitative and qualitative analysis software, including STATA, SAS, and nVivo.

**A utilization-focused approach** that seeks to actively engage all key stakeholders (or research and evaluation "users") throughout the evaluation lifecycle, beginning with finalizing the purpose and evaluation questions and concluding with developing action plans for incorporating evaluation recommendations into projects. We also work to adapt delivery mechanisms to ensure that they are tailored for their purpose and are user-friendly, often times meaning we produce policy briefs, report cards, memos, presentations, and other shorter, more easily digestible deliverables in addition to standard evaluation reports.

**Rapid mobilization of technical specialists** across a broad range of subject and methodological areas. We quickly assess client and project needs and challenges, and draw from our in-house researchers and evaluators and consultants, including expatriate and local specialists, to assemble an effective team for a variety of evaluation types.

**Multi-disciplinary in-house expertise** to provide unbiased, specialized analysis. Abt's staff includes statisticians, qualitative researchers, anthropologists, agricultural professionals, epidemiologists, sociologists, demographers, economists, climate change analysts, survey research experts, political scientists, policy analysts, GIS specialists, public health practitioners, early literacy and numeracy experts, gender experts, and agricultural economists, among other technical specialists.

**Rigorous quality control procedures** rooted in an environment of accountability and learning. Abt's company-wide product quality assurance process provides the methodological rigor, careful data management, analytic accuracy, and content expertise needed to ensure high-quality deliverables, whether we are collecting the data ourselves or collaborating with local data collection firms.

**Innovative technologies and approaches.** Abt has used Short-Message Service (SMS), social media applications and scraping, citizen engagement applications, satellite and unmanned aerial vehicles, and remote sensing to collect a wide variety of data quickly and regularly to allow ongoing information for program adaptation. Abt also has a track record of innovating to develop new tools and systems tailored to research and evaluation needs. Recent examples include a GIS database in Jordan that details local community resources and health services available to citizens; a monitoring tool that tracks and calculates carbon emissions reductions, currently being employed by the government of Mexico and the state of Massachusetts; a Google-based M&E system in Tanzania that tracks how a project is improving small grain-processing mills; and poverty assessment tools that estimate poverty rates.



**Flexibility and creativity** in all of our undertakings—to achieve superior results, meet clients’ needs, build local capacity, and deliver quality results. Abt understands the challenges of implementing evaluations in difficult settings; we always have contingency plans in case our first-choice approach proves to be infeasible.

**Protection of human subjects and confidential data** to ensure that information collected for evaluations is properly stored and handled. These protections are ensured by Abt’s U.S. Department of Defense-approved Secret Security Clearance; our own Institutional Review Board, to which we submit all research involving human subjects; and our Information Risk Management team.

### Technical expertise in

- Health
- Agriculture and food security
- Climate change
- Environment and natural resources
- Education
- Workforce development
- Water and sanitation
- Private sector development
- Trade
- Nutrition



Nigerian maize farmers engaged with the AgResults project (photo courtesy of Abt staff)

## Evaluating Program Impact in:

### Health

Abt manages three global USAID health projects—the Strengthening Health Outcomes through the Private Sector Plus (SHOPS+) Activity, the Health Finance and Governance (HFG) Activity, and the African Indoor Residual Spraying (AIRS) Activity, all of which include extensive research and evaluation arms that include numerous studies in more than 40 countries throughout the world. Furthermore, in 2011, Abt won USAID’s

Excellence in Evaluation competition for our evaluation of a health insurance program for low-income workers in Nicaragua. Through a mixed-method randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact evaluation, we revealed a comprehensive picture of the insurance program’s effect on health care use and out-of-pocket spending. Results were published in the journal *Health Economics*.

In Madagascar, USAID asked Abt to assess the impact of providing community health workers (CHWs) with pregnancy test kits to more accurately rule out pregnancy before distributing hormonal contraceptives to women. At that time, CHWs relied on a six question checklist to determine pregnancy, which had a high false positive rate. Using an experimental design or RCT, Abt found that CHWs who had access to pregnancy test kits to distribute to women in their communities increased distribution of hormonal contraceptives by 26 percent when compared to those who did not. The study’s findings prompted the Ministry of Health to include pregnancy test kits in the national essential medicines list, one of the only countries in the world to do so, and to scale up the distribution of pregnancy test kits throughout the country.

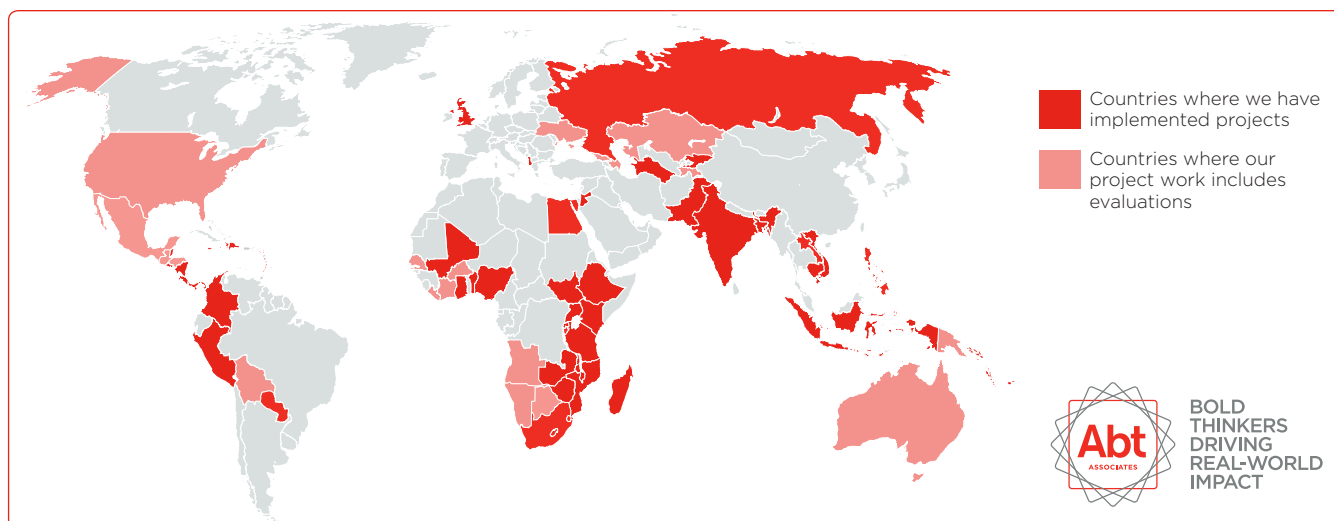
### Agriculture and Food Security

Abt is also well known for our work in agriculture and food security. For instance, under the auspices of the UK Department for International Development’s (DFID’s) Global Evaluation Framework Agreement (GEFA), Abt is evaluating the impact of seven pilot agricultural innovations as part of AgResults—a multi-donor, \$100 million food security initiative. Abt is using mixed-method experimental, quasi- experimental, and non-experimental designs to complete the suite of impact and performance evaluations, to determine how effective “pull” mechanisms are at making sub-Saharan African maize more plentiful, safer, and more nutritious. Our evaluation will also help the AgResults steering committee identify best practices for developing markets for other private sector agricultural investments.

In Mozambique, Abt recently completed an impact evaluation using propensity score matching and a spatial discontinuity design to evaluate the impact of a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) program in restoring coconut yields in disease-ravaged areas, raising the productivity of alternative crops, and boosting farmer income. We collected and analyzed satellite data on tree cover as part of this evaluation as well as completing highly technical analysis of trees to assess their health.

### Climate Change and Environment

Evaluations of climate change and environment projects require specialized expertise to quantify impacts and to model the inherent uncertainty of these impacts. Abt offers this expertise in-house. We are a lead contractor for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, for which we have conducted numerous studies involving valuation of



ecosystems and environmental quality, as well as analysis of health impacts and climate change impacts. In Colombia, Abt teamed with local partners to develop hydrological models of climate change impacts on the country's main water source, the Upper Magdalena Watershed. In Indonesia, we conducted a landscape-based ecosystem valuation for forests to inform the country's ecologically sustainable growth strategies.

### Education and Workforce Development

From preschool child development assistance to older worker training and everything in between, Abt investigates investments in human capital around the globe. For example, under a contract with USAID, we are working to help the Malawian Ministry of Education, Sciences, and Technology build a comprehensive early-grade reading assessment system. In addition, Abt researchers have scrutinized employment initiatives for people with disabilities in several countries, often using large-scale random assignment methods, and have evaluated food security and nutritional investments in workers and children.

### Social Behavior Change

Abt has extensive expertise in social behavior change (SBC) interventions and evaluations. We recently completed a formative evaluation and two experimental design rapid cycle evaluations for a USAID social behavior

change (SBC) project in Cambodia under our Rapid Feedback Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (RF MERL) contract, for which we are pilot testing rapid feedback evaluations for USAID. The mixed-method experimental design evaluations proved that SBC campaigns can shape both community and donor opinions about orphanages in Cambodia, many of which are run as businesses and take children away from their families.

### Water and Sanitation

In Rwanda, Abt conducted a performance evaluation of a pilot program designed to increase the uptake of a low-cost, liquid-chlorine-based water disinfectant using a pre-post design with beneficiary and non-beneficiary sites. Results showed that after 18 months of pilot implementation, knowledge and use of the product increased significantly in two pilot districts but remained unchanged in the non-beneficiary district.

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### **Bold Ideas. Real Results.**

**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.

