

Advancing Family Planning and Reproductive Health



Abt Associates—in collaboration with governments, the private sector and civil society—contributes to the prevention of unintended and unsafe pregnancies, unsafe abortions and maternal deaths by **advancing the quality, accessibility and affordability of family planning (FP) products and services**. Abt designs initiatives at the community, facility and national levels and implements system strengthening interventions to ensure high impact for beneficiaries.

An Unmet Need

The United Nations Population Division estimates that in 2016, 711 million married or in-union women globally were using modern contraceptives, which demonstrates a positive trend in use. However, an estimated 204 million married or in-union women still have an unmet need for modern contraception. “Unmet need” describes a state in which a woman wants to prevent or delay childbearing but is not using any method of contraception. Unmet need for contraception also is high among unmarried and adolescent women and girls. Meeting this need is a global priority and requires a nuanced, multi-faceted approach.

Increasing Access to Modern Contraceptive Methods

The “best” FP method for a woman or couple depends on the woman’s fertility intention and a number of other social, economic and cultural factors. A wide range of methods must be accessible and affordable to support “informed choice.”

Abt’s programs:

- Work with manufacturers, distributors and contraceptive security committees to improve contraceptive security and increase access to a range of FP products.
- Introduce new products and expand markets through social marketing and pharmaceutical partnerships.
- Support supply chain management and logistics.
- Design sound public-private partnerships to increase access.



Improving Family Planning Services

Abt develops evidence-based clinical standards and service delivery guidelines, and improves the continuum of care by introducing referral systems. Reaching all women and men who desire FP requires the participation of all cadres of providers.

Abt’s programs:

- Help the public sector develop, disseminate and implement clinical protocols on FP quality.
- Train public and private providers to improve FP knowledge and skills and reduce provider bias.
- Introduce quality improvement and management systems.
- Strengthen provider networks and franchises to offer quality services.
- Build the capacity of community outreach NGOs to provide FP counseling, methods, and referrals.

Reaching Underserved Populations

Increasing access to FP among underserved populations is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Abt designs programs to reach youth, people living with HIV and low-income and rural populations. Vulnerable adolescents in particular are a priority population for addressing unmet need.

Abt’s programs:

- Develop new approaches to improve equity and gender equality
- Help governments prioritize and reallocate resources to better reach the underserved
- Create female- and youth-friendly networks of female providers
- Develop innovative youth-friendly services and support including helplines, peer outreach, and text messaging, to make FP information and services easily available to youth.



Ensuring Informed Voluntary Decision-Making

Increasing the supply of FP commodities and improving the quality and availability of services is important, but demand-side action is needed to break down social and cognitive barriers to FP use. Myths and misconceptions around contraceptive methods must be addressed and accurate information is needed about effectiveness and side effects.

Abt's programs:

- Conduct qualitative and quantitative research to identify information gaps and design appropriate messages.
- Use proven social behavior change communication methodologies, including broadcast media, interpersonal communications and marketing and branding to address harmful social norms, promote gender equity and empower women.
- Employ community-level volunteers and resources to increase knowledge and ensure informed decision-making.

Incorporating Innovative Technology

Technology is rapidly evolving how people communicate about FP and even what contraceptive options are available. From mobile phones to digital supportive supervision to novel contraceptive technology, innovative technology has a role to play in the advancement of FP.

Abt's programs:

- Communicate contraceptive information and support behavior change through mobile phones.
- Leverage digital financial tools to increase FP provider access to finance and decrease financial barriers for beneficiaries.
- Develop collaborative partnerships with technology and telecommunications firms to co-create and co-finance FP innovations.
- Lead research efforts to improve understanding of the cost and effectiveness of technology-enabled programs.

Improving the Policy Environment and Health Systems

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.

Abt's programs:

- Enable public sector stewardship of private sector FP services by promoting dialogue and integrating health information systems.
- Advocate for and implement policies that enable different cadres of providers to provide FP services.
- Create forums to promote dialogue around policy reform and address regulations that hamper a total market approach to FP.
- Assess the private health sector for improved understanding of the private sector's role in FP and greater public-private collaboration
- Strengthen the capacity of local NGOs for improved financial, programmatic and organizational capacity to provide FP services.

Contact

bdu@abtassoc.com

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' insights, we provide research, consulting and technical services globally in the areas of health, environmental and social policy, technology, and international development.

