Abt Associates, in collaboration with governments, private sector, and civil society helps prevent unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal deaths by **supporting the delivery of quality family planning (FP) products and services**. Our interventions at the community and health facility level, coupled with systems strengthening and capacity building maximizes impact for beneficiaries.

### Expanding and Improving Family Planning/Reproductive Health Services

**Abt Associates**

### An Unmet Need...Despite Progress

The developing world is witnessing a remarkable improvement in contraceptive practice. In 2012, an estimated 645 million women were using modern contraceptive methods—an increase of 42 million women from 2008. In 2012, this use of contraceptives prevented 218 million unintended pregnancies, 40 million unsafe abortions, and 118,000 maternal deaths. However, not quite half of the increase was from a greater proportion of women using a modern method; the rest was due to population growth. More than 222 million women around the world have an unmet need for contraceptives.

### Expanding Availability of Modern Contraceptives

The “best” FP method for a woman or couple depends on factors such as age, relationship status, number of children, and desire for birth spacing or limiting. Therefore a wide range of methods must be available. Long-acting and permanent methods (LA/PM) are highly effective FP methods that are often unavailable or misunderstood. Those who desire FP need knowledge of and access to a range of methods, including LA/PMs, in order to select the method most appropriate for their needs. Abt’s programs focus on:

- Creating more FP providers—including private sector providers—who can counsel clients and deliver a wide range of methods
- Increasing the capacity of providers in LA/PM clinical skills and reduce provider bias
- Working with stakeholders to make FP commodities available to private sector providers
- Introducing new products to countries

### Improving Family Planning Services

FP is optimally delivered as part of an integrated package of primary health care. Abt supports service delivery clusters that offer such integrated care. We improve the infrastructure of service delivery units; develop evidence-based clinical standards and service delivery guidelines; and introduce quality improvement systems such as medical audits, health care accreditation, and supportive supervision. We improve the continuum of care by linking health facilities and introducing referral systems.

Local conditions influence which health provider cadres are most appropriate to deliver FP. 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 ensures cultural acceptance and success. Abt has long worked with communities to:

- Identify their health needs and then 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 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 groups, including youth and rural populations, is essential to meet the Millennium Development Goal for maternal health. Abt designs programs to reach all potential FP users. 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 woman-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 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 efforts are required to help them know where and which services are available. 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 government counterparts to develop, cost, and monitor FP policies and to use public expenditure and resource management systems to improve governance.

Governments also need to partner with other groups—NGOs, faith-based organizations, provider associations, and others—to sustain provision of FP services. 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 FP services
- Work with decentralized government health units to ensure local ownership and sustainability

Contact

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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.