

# Abt Associates

## Private Sector Health Practice



Abt



*Working with  
the private  
sector to  
improve public  
health outcomes*

# ABT ASSOCIATES: SOLVING PROBLEMS, GUIDING DECISIONS — WORLDWIDE

Founded in 1965, Abt Associates Inc. is an employee-owned company dedicated to improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people worldwide. With more than 1000 employees globally, Abt has capabilities in research and evaluation; strategy, planning, and policy; consulting, implementation, and technical assistance; and survey data collection, management, and analysis. We apply our broad, multidisciplinary expertise to problem solving in four major markets: social, economic, and health policy; international development; clinical research; and business research and consulting.

Abt Associates is led by a Board of Directors that includes representatives from business, industry, and academia. In 2006, Dr. Steven Sinding, an expert on international population and reproductive health issues, joined the board. Dr. Sinding worked with the United States Agency for International Development for 20 years, and served as Population Advisor to the World Bank, Director of Population Sciences for the Rockefeller Foundation, Professor of Population and Family Health at Columbia University, and Director-General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

## International Health Division

Abt Associates' International Health Division works to improve healthcare by designing and implementing evidence-based policies and interventions, strengthening institutions, and empowering individuals and communities. With project offices in 25 countries and activities in more than 50 countries, our work has resulted in meaningful change — more effective and equitable health systems, higher-quality services, and better health. We help formulate policy, design and implement programs, train partners, and lead practical research and analysis that guide system improvements. The International Health team also draws on the skills and capabilities of Abt's other practices, particularly survey design and analysis, clinical trials, business research, and economic growth.

## Clients

Abt Associates' International Health Division assists international organizations and development agencies; multilateral development banks, corporations, foundations, and nonprofits; and governments. Clients include USAID, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the German Development Bank (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, or KfW), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF.

## Our team of dedicated professionals

Abt Associates' commitment to its staff provides real value to our clients. We maintain a large team of dedicated professionals with proven technical skills and a long history of working with private sector partners, complemented by managers who excel at implementing large, complex projects. As one of the world's largest and most respected research and consulting firms, we bring together thought leaders from a range of disciplines. We believe that it is important to nurture innovation — to invest in people who are passionate about finding better ways to deal with the world's most pressing health issues and give them a place to debate issues, combine their knowledge, and learn from each other.



# WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES



In much of the developing world, a majority of consumers rely on the private sector as their main source of healthcare. The private sector is large and diverse, encompassing a wide range of for-profit and nonprofit entities. Among these, for-profit practitioners — midwives, doctors, pharmacists, and traditional healers — are often the leading providers of health products and services, serving all income groups. And yet, despite its varied and critical roles, the private sector is often not considered in public health program planning. Government officials have an important role to play in expanding private participation, which includes convening key stakeholders and acting as partners, guides, and regulators.

Abt Associates works with private and public organizations around the world — promoting understanding, formulating strategies, providing technical assistance, and facilitating partnerships. We help governments and donors achieve their health impact goals, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations to fulfill their missions, and businesses to meet their profit and social responsibility objectives.

Abt's private sector team is made up of professionals who have dedicated their careers to developing sustainable, long-term approaches to achieve better public health outcomes. Our staff have managed field programs involving social marketing and the private sector, and have worked on some of the most important private sector health initiatives over the past 20-plus years, including USAID projects such as SOMARC (Social Marketing for Change, 1984–1988), PROFIT (Promoting Financial Investments and Transfers, 1991–1997), CMS (Commercial Market Strategies, 1998–2003), the Summa Foundation (1992–2003), and PSP-One (Private Sector Partnerships-One, 2004–2009). We are leaders in improving public-private collaboration and expanding the private sector's involvement in delivering essential health products and services throughout the developing world.



## BUILDING COMMERCIAL MARKETS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS

In India, Abt Associates partnered with professional associations, the ICICI Bank, and eight pharmaceutical manufacturers (Merck, Shreya Life Sciences, Wallace Pharmaceuticals, CFL, FDC, TTK Healthcare, Dr Reddy's, and Pharmasynth Formulations) to introduce commercially available oral rehydration salts as the first line of treatment for children suffering from diarrheal disease. This collaboration resulted in a 30 percent increase in prescriptions for all brands of ORS — and an impressive 79 percent increase in prescriptions for ORS brands that used a new, more effective World Health Organization-recommended formulation.

In Nigeria, Abt Associates brokered and supported a partnership and distribution agreement between FamyCare (an Indian manufacturer of generic oral contraceptives) and the Society for Family Health (a Nigerian social marketing NGO) to launch a new, affordable, low-dose commercial oral contraceptive, Locon. Before this, Nigerian women had to choose between a highly subsidized brand and expensive commercial products. Abt's involvement, therefore, in introducing a mid-priced oral contraceptive facilitated the private sector provision of affordable contraceptives in a financially sustainable and replicable manner.

# OUR APPROACH

Abt Associates' approach is based on first-hand experience, the latest thinking, and the lessons learned from more than 20 years of working with private and public sector partners. Our work is guided by a commitment to health impact and four overarching principles: understand the health system, design programs for long-term sustainability, leverage partners, and use evidence to guide decisions.

## Understanding the private sector within the health system

In each country where we work, Abt Associates examines the role of the private sector within the entire health system, mapping out the actors, organizations, institutions, and dynamics that influence health outcomes. We examine public and private sector roles and motivations, analyze policies and regulations, and pay close attention to the political, economic, social, and security context to best identify where the private sector can contribute.

This approach is based on lessons learned from private sector projects managed by Abt over the years. It allows us to be flexible, meet local needs, and promote collaboration. It enables us to identify market-building opportunities, champions, and potential partners. Most importantly, it helps us design context-specific programs with realistic objectives and sustainable outcomes.

## Design for long-term sustainability

Abt takes time to consider what will happen when external support ends, whether we are working on building a market or introducing a new policy, service, product, or behavior. We seek to institutionalize our activities by strengthening existing organizations, transferring skills, and establishing frameworks for ongoing learning and knowledge-sharing.

## Leverage partners

Strong partnerships are critical to achieving health impact and sustainability. In each of our programs, Abt Associates identifies key stakeholders and seeks to leverage their priorities, skills, and networks. We bring together a broad range of partners, from local businesses, NGOs, and faith-based organizations to multinational companies and international donors. We facilitate collaboration and synergy by establishing shared objectives, outlining complementary activities and responsibilities, and nurturing ongoing communication. This approach promotes broad support for our programs, builds local capacity, and establishes the relationships that are essential to long-term private sector participation.

## Use evidence to guide decisions

The Abt team is diverse, inter-disciplinary, and not wedded to a specific approach, theory, or ideology. We have deep research and evaluation expertise and use empirical information and analysis to guide our decision-making. We also take local perspectives and knowledge into account, and always incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation into our programs.




## FIGHTING HIV/AIDS

- In Guatemala, Abt Associates is working with private professional associations and HIV test kit manufacturers to improve private sector HIV counseling and testing services.
- In Ethiopia, Abt developed a comprehensive project to engage the private sector in the fight against HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Abt supported workplace programs in 65 of the largest organizations and provided training to improve the skills of 220 clinicians in the areas of tuberculosis and HIV prevention and management. As a result, employees have better access to high-quality counseling and testing, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis services. At the community level, the Abt team worked to reduce stigma, promote participation in testing programs, and increase treatment compliance. The project trained more than 800 peer educators and communicated with 25,600 employees and families on abstinence, being faithful, and other prevention messages. In addition, the project secured the participation of 30 private clinics in Addis Ababa during the Millennium AIDS campaign, reaching 20,000 people with counseling and testing services. Abt also worked closely with the Ministry of Health to implement a public-private tuberculosis treatment program, which trained clinicians from 20 private health facilities to provide tuberculosis care. This was the first time that a government tuberculosis program directly engaged private health providers.



## TARGETING AND SEGMENTATION

- Using commercial sector market research techniques, Abt Associates has developed a Client-Centered Market Segmentation Research tool. The tool, which is currently being applied in the Philippines and Azerbaijan, helps key stakeholders identify the needs and preferences of different groups of potential modern family planning users so that program interventions can be tailored accordingly. The research develops a multidimensional profile of different prospective client groups by gathering qualitative and quantitative information on a broad array of behavioral, attitudinal, demographic, geographic, socioeconomic, lifestyle, and psychographic characteristics. FP program implementers use the information to position their communications messages and FP service offerings to meet the FP needs, lifestyles, preferences, and purchasing power of different groups.  


A key feature of the Client-Centered Market Segmentation Research tool is that it distinguishes those groups that are most likely to be responsive to FP interventions from those who are not. As a result, it can help channel limited resources towards groups where the impact on FP use is likely to be greatest.
- Abt used segmentation techniques in Honduras, to help USAID develop a strategy to target subsidized condoms to high-risk populations while simultaneously improving supply to the general population. As a result, social marketing condom sales increased by 33 percent after only one year and access to condoms for all market segments improved. Most importantly, USAID was able to better allocate its resources, ensuring that assistance dollars reached those people most at risk of contracting HIV.

# ABT'S SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

The Abt Associates team includes experts in business development and market building, as well as health economists, clinicians, policy experts, and researchers. Our efforts aim to create incentives for the private sector, build demand for quality products and services, strengthen supplier capacity, and remove unnecessary obstacles to private sector growth.

## Partnership development

Abt Associates links public, private, and community actors. We broker a wide range of partnership initiatives — from communications campaigns to the development and launch of new health products and services. Our team can connect pharmaceutical and other health product manufacturers with public sector and NGO partners in order to grow market segments or product categories while improving the availability of high-quality, affordable products and services for specific population and consumer groups. Abt also supports the development of corporate social responsibility activities. We help multinational companies design strategic, high-impact programs and then link them with the local partners with strong technical skills and management expertise.

## Policy & advocacy

Abt Associates is a recognized leader in strengthening health systems, with a long history of working with policymakers to implement complex reform initiatives. Building on our existing relationships with government officials, we encourage them to be stewards of the total health system and consider the private sector in the development of policies and strategies. Abt uses its knowledge of both sectors to build mutual trust, define complementary roles, and facilitate partnerships. We can assess the effects of laws and regulations, conduct market segmentation analyses, help establish quality standards and oversight policies, and develop the necessary mechanisms and skills to contract out public health services.

## NGO capacity building

Abt Associates works with health sector NGOs to strengthen their programmatic and financial sustainability. We provide training to build business, clinical, and research skills; assess internal systems and governance structures; and assist with sustainability planning. We also help launch new products and services, improve the delivery of existing services, and increase the effectiveness of social marketing and behavior-change campaigns. In addition, Abt Associates designs grant programs and manages the disbursement of grants to NGOs.



## STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES IN JORDAN

In Jordan, Abt Associates developed a program to improve women's health by targeting their preferred providers: private female physicians. Abt partnered with local NGOs to conduct community outreach on family planning and reproductive health issues, and to identify women who might benefit from additional counseling or services and give them referral vouchers. These efforts were supported by a mass media campaign, as well as efforts to improve the overall quality of care provided by private physicians, especially in the areas of FP, breast cancer, and women's health issues. The Abt team developed training curricula and formal continuing education programs, quality assurance standards, and certification programs for a network of female physicians. Between 2004 and 2007, the community outreach program counseled more than 500,000 women. As a result, more than 45,000 women began using modern contraceptive methods and an average of 54 percent of all FP referrals, and 62 percent of breast cancer referrals, resulted in actual visits to private, NGO, or public clinics.

## Behavior change communication

Abt Associates promotes the adoption of healthy behaviors through strategic health communication programs that use proven approaches, behavior change theories, and formative research.

Drawing on Abt's whole system perspective, we incorporate interpersonal communication, peer education, community mobilization, and mass media efforts to improve knowledge, shift attitudes, and facilitate the adoption of practices that prevent or minimize disease. Additionally, we deliver public relations and social marketing programs that educate individuals, communities, and grass-roots organizations about their rights and responsibilities — and encourage them to participate in activities that improve their own health and the health of those around them.



## Improving quality of care

Improving quality of care is a continuous process that must engage all levels and actors within the health sector, from primary providers to hospitals and including both the public and private sectors. At the service delivery level, Abt Associates strengthens performance improvement systems, develops standards of care, and implements monitoring programs — all the while building local management capacity. At the central level, Abt works with local counterparts to create national quality improvement and accreditation programs based on public-private

partnerships. We can also establish quality improvement departments within health ministries, set up national accreditation boards, and help develop a cadre of impartial surveyors (which includes developing curriculum, identifying candidates from both sectors, and conducting certification training).

# ABT'S SKILLS AND EXPERTISE *(continued)*

## Networks & social franchising

Abt Associates can develop private health networks and franchises, strengthen existing ones, or help transfer management to a local entity. We conduct assessments, develop sustainability and scale-up strategies, and provide guidance on selecting (or adapting to) the most appropriate model — balancing financial viability and health impact. The Abt team can broker partnerships with pharmaceutical companies, facilitate agreements with governments to leverage public sector financing through service contracts, and help networks manage growth to achieve greater health impact.

## Social marketing

Abt Associates improves, designs, and implements social marketing programs that are tailored to the country and market context as well as to the broader health system. We adapt the management style and marketing mix based on project goals, cost considerations, local capacity, and the existence of potential commercial partners. Our market-building approach goes beyond product distribution. We assess and strengthen specific programs or organizations, propose optimal market segmentation and targeting strategies, broker the necessary public-private partnerships, and launch communication campaigns that stimulate demand, raise awareness, and promote specific behaviors. Abt has provided assistance to a range of social marketing NGOs including: Asociación Pro-Bienestar de la Familia, Guatemala (APROFAM); Apoyo a Programas de Población, Peru (APROPO); the Social Marketing Company, Bangladesh (SMC); Agence Ivoirienne de Marketing Social, Ivory Coast (AIMAS); Asociación Hondureña de Planificación Familiar, Honduras (ASHONPLAFA); and Centro Médico de Orientación y Planificación Familiar, Ecuador (CEMOPLAF).

## Access to credit

Abt Associates works to improve providers access to financing so that they can expand their range of offerings, enter new markets, and improve services. We take a two-pronged approach — reaching out to bankers and local financial institutions to address misconceptions and promote health sector lending, and helping private providers to improve their credit-readiness and business skills so that they can approach lenders with a bankable plan.

## Health financing mechanisms

Abt Associates works to improve healthcare financing options for poor and underserved populations in developing countries, to increase their access to priority services. In many of these countries, the poor make high out-of-pocket payments for health services and products in the private sector, choosing to bypass available public healthcare. Thus, our approach has been to engage with the private sector in designing alternative healthcare financing mechanisms to reach these target populations. In collaboration with providers, insurers, communities, and governments, Abt identifies, develops, and implements innovative healthcare financing schemes that expand the availability of private sector services and reduce the financial burden to consumers at the time of service. We help design, improve, and evaluate health insurance schemes (such as social health insurance and community-based health insurance), demand-side financing schemes (such as voucher programs), contracting out schemes, alternative provider payment methods, and other approaches.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

Abt Associates supported the government of Nicaragua to extend the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute's health insurance program to informal sector workers through microfinance institutions. This effort expands access to high-quality private sector family planning and other health services to low-income populations.





## OUR COMMERCIAL PARTNERS IN HEALTH

Abt works with a broad range of commercial partners in health interventions including:

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd.

Ethiopian Airlines

Exxon Mobil Corporation

FamyCare Ltd.

GlaxoSmithKline

Hindustan Lever Limited

ICICI Bank

J.K. Ansell Ltd.

Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation

Marathon Oil Corporation

Merck & Co., Inc.

Pfizer Inc.

Rio Tinto plc

Schering AG

Wallace Pharmaceuticals Pvt. Ltd.

Wyeth



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**Abt Associates Inc.**

International Health Area Office  
Private Sector Health Practice  
4550 Montgomery Avenue, Suite 800 North  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

+1.301.913.0500 tel

+1.301.913.9061 fax

[www.abtassociates.com](http://www.abtassociates.com)