

Good Governance for Better Health Outcomes



Health interventions—such as distributing insecticide-treated bed nets; administering HIV/AIDS tests; and building clinics—in under-served and under-resourced communities world-wide often work around the deficiencies in a country’s health system to improve service delivery. Strengthening the pillars of a country’s health system—governance, finance, and operations—is essential to sustaining the impact of such interventions and leading to better health outcomes for citizens.

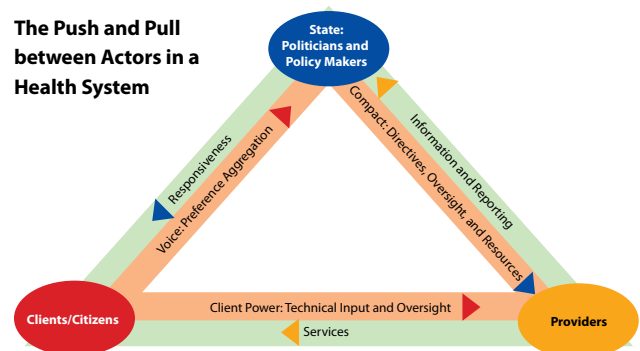
Integrating governance into health

RTI International promotes effective health governance as a team member on the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Health Systems 20/20 project (HS 20/20), led by prime recipient Abt Associates. The 5-year project integrates health governance, finance, operations, and capacity building in its approach to help USAID-supported countries develop health systems and improve the quality of population, health, and nutrition services.

As the health governance leader for HS 20/20, RTI supports institutional arrangements between governments, health-care providers, and citizens that enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes through checks and balances, decentralization, and public-private partnerships. For example, through a local Joint Action Forum (JAF), government officials can meet with providers and citizens to discuss and coordinate joint planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation of health programs. As a result, all parties involved in the forum are invested in seeing their programs thrive.

In a recent workshop for USAID staff, “Health Governance: Concepts, Issues, and Programming Options,” RTI introduced a conceptual framework for health governance, building on World Bank research, that connects the state, providers, and citizens (see graphic at right). Multiple

The Push and Pull between Actors in a Health System



In a well-functioning health system, the relationships between all actors should be balanced. However, in most health systems the government and health-care providers actually hold more power than citizens.

entry points in health governance relationships allow for a variety of options that can be tailored to resource levels, existing capacity, and objectives.

In one of its first HS 20/20 activities, RTI is assessing ways to promote stronger participation of eligible communities in a subsidy program, designed by Senegal’s Ministry of Health (MOH), to provide greater access for women to maternity services and life-saving interventions. One of the MOH’s major concerns is that users play a greater role in overseeing the subsidy program, a key element of the government’s poverty reduction strategy.



In addition, RTI has tailored health governance programs to meet the needs of reform-minded governments and communities in the following countries.

Philippines. Strengthening Local Governance for Health Project (HealthGov), USAID (2006–2011)

HealthGov supports more than 500 local governments in 23 provinces across the Philippines to strengthen their commitment and capacity to provide, finance, and manage quality health services. HealthGov promotes a demand-driven approach, with local leaders defining a health governance development plan, including financing to support planned activities.

HealthGov is strengthening elected and health officials' capacities in participatory planning, integrated with health planning at the provincial level. It is also helping to introduce performance-based budgeting, communication with the public, and improved health management information systems.

To invigorate demand for improved health services at the local level, HealthGov is training nongovernmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) in advocacy, instructing on policy issues, such as reading a budget, which will enable them to hold their elected officials accountable. The project is training Health Board members to advocate from within the local government. HealthGov also mobilized a network of in-country government agencies, universities, and NGOs, with the goal of establishing a wide range of institutional support to enable health programs to function effectively in a health system undergoing decentralization since 1991.

Rwanda. Twubakane Decentralization and Health Project (Twubakane), IntraHealth International (2005–2010)

As a partner on *Twubakane* (Let's build together), funded by USAID, RTI works in 12 of 30 districts in Rwanda to improve health governance in the country's new decentralized framework. At the central level, *Twubakane* is building the capacity of the Ministry of Local Administration, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs and Ministry of Health to improve health policy analysis, increase central resource transfers to local governments, and build information communication technology capabilities. The project is also partnering with HS 20/20 to institutionalize the production of national health accounts that track health system expenditures.

At the district level, RTI is helping local officials add performance measures to their strategic planning, raise local revenues, and improve communication about district health issues and activities. *Twubakane* is also uniting district officials with providers and service users in JAFs to oversee the allocation of local finances and the evaluation of performance-based contracts and service delivery. In addition, the project is preparing the Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities, the national organization of local appointed and elected officials, to institutionalize the work of *Twubakane* in building districts' capacity in planning.

With its comprehensive approach to health governance reform, *Twubakane* has become an entry point for other governance activities, including anticorruption, fiscal reform, and local tax reform, which emerged as problems to be addressed in order for the advancement of *Twubakane*.

Guinea. Faisons Ensemble: Projet de la Bonne Gouvernance, USAID (2007–2009)

Faisons Ensemble: Projet de la Bonne Gouvernance (Working together: A project for good governance) is a multisectoral intervention to advance democratic governance in Guinea, with a primary focus on health and education. The project works in four regions, holding more than half the country's population—Conakry, N'Zerekore, Dabola, and Kankan.

Working with the National Association of Midwives, MOH, and Ministry of Education, RTI is developing a management model for a regional midwifery school. The model includes guidelines for admitting the most qualified candidates and preparing students for job placement following graduation. The project also supports Guinea's Central Pharmacy in developing an efficient and transparent procurement system. As the value of antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV/AIDS has risen, managing the drug supply chain is even more vital to prevent stock outs and misuse of pharmaceutical commodities.

At the community level, RTI is working with the *Collectivités Rurales du Développement* to maximize the civil society's voice in the local development planning process. The project will build the capacity of CSOs and NGOs to advocate for public health priorities and ensure that allocated resources match such priorities.

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