





**KATHLEEN L. FLANAGAN**

As CEO, I'm often asked what sets Abt Global apart. It's our will to adapt. For almost 60 years, Abt has tackled society's toughest, most entrenched problems. Doing that has always meant taking intentional risks and bold steps to align our business with the social and environmental progress we and our clients believe is imperative.

We know we can't create change for people or the planet without embracing change ourselves—evolving Abt's solutions and expertise to respond to the challenges people in communities around the world face every day. In the early 1980s that meant standing up an unrivaled research practice to support fundamental shifts in U.S. government programming and funding. In 2023, it means ambitious changes to amplify and accelerate our impact worldwide:

- Because nothing threatens human health now more than climate change, we launched Abt's Climate Office, led by Chief Climate Officer Eric Reading. This positions our world-class climate, environment, and energy experts to integrate climate solutions portfolio-wide, helping all clients assess and mitigate risks, confront inequities, and strengthen resilience to climate shocks.
- And, knowing the world's problems aren't siloed, we've transformed how we connect Abt's expertise—in health, housing, economic growth, environment, governance, and more—to the digital, data, research, equity, and program design and implementation solutions needed for today's connected challenges. With the introduction of our new Solutions Organization, our teams are primed to innovate together to deliver the next generation tools, systems, and support our clients and partners need.

As we evolve, I am deeply proud of our teams' commitment to impact. Whether contributing to the adoption of one of the most ambitious climate action plans in U.S. history or analyzing the role that racism plays in employment processes—our 3,600 global staff work with urgency to lead change, build resilience, and center equity across our partnerships and programs.

When crises emerge or contexts change, Abt adapts. When war broke out in Ukraine, we helped rapidly expand the use of telemedicine and remote surgery tools to facilitate critical health services at nearly 300 facilities. When cyclones and COVID-19 shocked Mozambique's health system at the start of a five-year HIV/AIDS program, responsive, locally-led data and service delivery innovations led to astounding improvements in HIV care quality and continuity. When the largest population experiencing homelessness in America lost access to shelters during COVID-19, our housing team joined California authorities in a novel approach to temporary housing that will inform national strategies for years to come.

Excellence, equity, and progress are equally evident in our operations and culture. With a company-wide framework for integrating sustainability across Abt, this year we set ambitious science-based greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, closed the gender pay gap for our employees worldwide, and became the first-ever company to earn a rigorous new sustainability standard.

The launch of this 2023 Mission Impact Report comes almost 40 years to the day of my first week at Abt Global, as a health policy analyst. What attracted me to the company then—pioneering the evidence and innovation that can improve policy, systems, and lives—is still what motivates us today. And improving the health and economic well-being of people worldwide has always been what brings us to and keeps us at Abt. Our north star. This will never change.



Kathleen L. Flanagan

# Our Work

Our world's problems are not siloed. Whether we are addressing climate change, vector-borne disease, health policy and systems, or economic growth, equity, and homelessness—our global teams cross boundaries and disciplines to bring integrated solutions for equitable outcomes and lasting change.



SCAN TO  
VIEW GRAPHIC

## Explore Our Work: 2023 Impact Stories

Click on the map below to explore a sampling of Abt's interdisciplinary projects across the globe featured in our 2023 Mission Impact Report.

# GOOD HEALTH

## Improving Health through Evidence-based Local Solutions Around the World

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### Tailoring Local Solutions to Control the HIV Epidemic in Mozambique.

It was, Paula Manual thought, a routine antenatal appointment at a local clinic. It wasn't. The 27-year-old mother of two emerged with an unexpected diagnosis: HIV positive. The community sprang into action to help.

After the visit, the clinic assigned her a "mentor mother," who coached Paula through the emotional process of disclosing her diagnosis to her husband, Armando. A community health worker and lay counselor together visited the couple at their home, testing Armando and their two children. Armando tested positive, while the two children were negative. That was not the end of it. "When I took the HIV test, the mentor mother gave me all the support so that I could continue with the treatment and actively participate in the prenatal consultations," said Armando, who is taking antiretroviral therapy (ART). "Because of that, my wife and I had a healthy baby."

Credit the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), a community-based organization in Sofala province that deploys community health workers to link patients and health facilities, even bringing services directly to families when the need arises. CCM's partnerships with health facilities ensure high-quality and empathetic counseling and clinical care. During Paula's pregnancy, the family received frequent visits from their mentor mother, who offered consultative and emotional support to both Paula and Armando. Once their son was born, the couple administered medicine to their newborn and brought him to at-risk child consultations.

CCM can provide these crucial services thanks to technical and financial support from the Abt-led USAID Efficiencies for Clinical HIV Outcomes (ECHO) project, which began in 2019 when many of those living with HIV were abandoning treatment and identifying them was a challenge. ECHO supports basic care and treatment for people living with HIV and strengthens community capacity for outreach, treatment, and counseling.

This collaboration shows how community-level localization works. ECHO partners directly with CCM and other community-based organizations to train and deploy mentor mothers and community health workers. We also support these organizations on administrative functions—from budgeting to human resources activities to prepare for eventual direct donor funding.

The results were remarkable as treatment drop-outs and mother-to-child transmission rates declined precipitously from 2019 to 2022. In Sofala, where CCM operates, patient drop-outs plummeted from 15 percent to 1.4 percent of Sofala's active patients per quarter. Across ECHO-supported provinces, we saw these quarterly numbers fall from 15 percent to just 1.7 percent. Positivity rates for at-risk children whose mothers were diagnosed with HIV dropped by nearly 50 percent, from 5 percent to 2.6 percent.

At the community level, ECHO empowers health workers to test eligible members of their community, engage in follow-up to ensure that at-risk patients start and maintain treatment, and connect with their family members and sexual partners to offer them testing services. The strategies require an immense level of trust, and community-based organizations are well placed for this work.

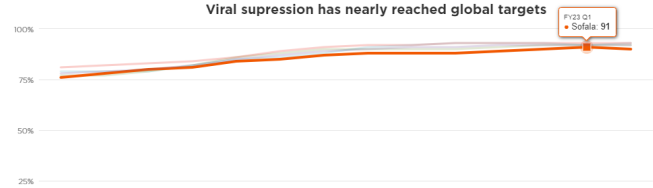
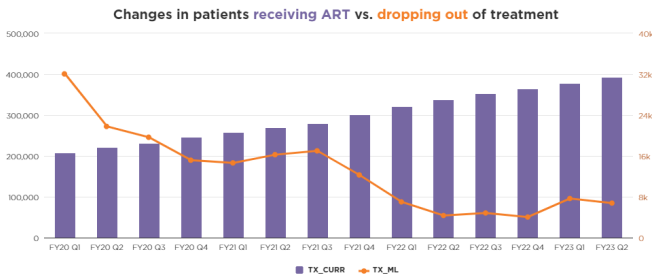
ECHO isn't working only with community organizations in its localization approach. It also collaborates with local government entities trying to control the HIV epidemic, such as the Provincial Health Directorates (DPS), Provincial Health Services (SPS), and the Ministry of Health (MOH). ECHO's collaboration with the SPS, notably, is evolving towards local self-sufficiency. The project has transitioned from providing simple in-kind grants to these local health departments to standard grants, which come with robust procurement, financial management, and technical support that is embedded directly in SPS offices and offers a path toward greater stability and autonomy.

ECHO also worked with the MOH to implement differentiated service delivery models, a recognition that patients in different situations need different care. The models include intensive and non-intensive models. Intensive models require monthly visits to health facilities while non-intensive models allow patients with stable health conditions to visit facilities less often.

A key change was expansion of three- and six-month drug distribution and community-based distribution. The COVID-19 threat and concerns about crowded health facilities prompted a change in the requirement that limited ART prescriptions to one month of medicine. Many patients simply couldn't get to distant facilities monthly. When the MOH considered expanding a policy to allow more patients to get three months of prescriptions at once, ECHO provided crucial clinical evidence that supported the case for expanding the popular policy. Years later, the MOH is now transitioning patients to six-month distribution after seeing the model's great success.

The results were dramatic. Enrollment in the six-month program in Tete skyrocketed from 172 to 17,112 in about eight months. A six-month supply led to an 83 percent decline in unnecessary clinic visits, a reduction in overcrowding at facilities, and a lightening of the load for overworked staff.

More importantly, after just a few months of offering differentiated services, ART adherence shot up and the number of treatment dropouts plummeted to record lows. In early 2020, for example, three-month retention was just 78 percent in Tete province and 70 percent in Niassa. By July 2022, that figure shot up to 99 percent in Tete and 96 percent in Niassa. Both provinces also saw steep drops in patients leaving treatment. In a single quarter, the number plunged 94 percent, from 10,210 to 632, in Tete, and 70 percent, from 2,175 to 648, in Niassa.



More patients staying on treatment means more people living productive and healthy lives with a greatly reduced chance of passing HIV to others. All of this shows the strengthened capacity of Mozambique’s national and provincial government entities and community-based institutions and workers to lead efforts to stem the spread of HIV.

SCAN TO VIEW GRAPHIC

**LEARN MORE:** Controlling the HIV Epidemic in Mozambique | Caught Between HIV+ and Climate Change: Mozambique’s Cyclone Victims Maintain Treatment Through Community Support  
**PROJECT:** Efficiencies for Clinical HIV Outcomes  
**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Engaging Community Leaders to Improve Health in Tajikistan

On any given Friday, the Mosques of Bokhtar zone of Tajikistan’s Khatlon Region welcome over 65,000 men for prayers. Afterwards, the Senior Imams, like Usmonali Nurov, set aside 20 minutes to talk with male congregants about maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) as well as gender equity.

Local traditions don’t make it easy for men to speak about these important issues, which have been generally left to women. However, religious leaders like Imam Usmonali are making considerable inroads, breaking taboos by using Friday prayers to address them. “Well-formed male involvement approaches have significant potential to generate positive changes in mindsets and behavior of men according to religion,” he said.

The Abt-led USAID Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby (HMHB) Activity works with the religious leaders and religious activists to make this happen—supporting HMHB’s broader goals of working in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population to improve health and nutrition outcomes for women and children. The religious connection is key in prevailing Tajik Muslim society. Religious leaders and their mosques play an influential role in reaching communities, especially those in remote areas where access to broadcast media is limited.

HMHB and local Imams partner with the District Religious Committees to organize events during Friday prayers and call on men to enhance MNCH, explore gender-sensitive topics, and prevent domestic violence. Our project team conducted training on gender, equality, and social inclusion in eight Khatlon districts. They trained 526 facilitators, who afterward engaged in relevant awareness raising for village populations through community health teams.

HMHB collaborated with the Committee of Religion, Regulation of Traditions, Celebrations, and Ceremonies under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan to develop the guidelines for Imams and religious leaders based on Khutba. This formal occasion for public preaching in the Islamic tradition is designed to explore knowledge of and attitudes and behaviors toward MNCH topics and to deepen men’s involvement and support. To reinforce knowledge and further open dialogue with men, HMHB printed 5,000 religious journals spotlighting key messages on improving nutritional status, gender, and family engagement. The messages and journals reached over 500,000 men in all 429 officially registered mosques.

Since 2022, HMHB has trained over 300 male religious leaders—influential local men from 12 target districts—on MNCH, gender-sensitive and gender-based issues, including supporting the care of pregnant and lactating women.





**SBCC CAMPAIGN**

**SCHOOL EDUCATION**

**COMMUNICATION**

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

**KNOWLEDGE HUB**

Over 700,000 com... were reached on Loc... Joint Decision Maki...

**SCAN TO VIEW GRAPHIC**

USAID's HMHB Activity works with the MOHSP to improve the quality and services of maternal, newborn, and child health and nutrition in Tajikistan. Click o... the activity's integrated solutions and results.

HMHB has also helped build the Committee of Religion, Regulation of Traditions, Celebrations, and Ceremonies website and develop a package of informational materials. The collaboration will be ongoing. “For the first time, religious leaders had a chance to learn more and gained new knowledge on gender equality and the role of women and men in family and community. Religious leaders outlined their commitment and interest in raising such an important topic in daily prayer time, Nikah ceremonies (marriage ceremonies), and social events within the community,” said National Religious Committee spokesperson Afshin Muqimi. “We are sure that the process of this support will have a beneficial effect on behavioral changes of our Tajik community.”

With this support, trained religious members like Imam Usmonali became a conduit for awareness and advocacy for women and equity among healthcare providers, families, and communities. “The believers who show the most perfect faith are those who have the best behavior, and the best of you are those who do the best to their wives,” Imam Usmonali recited on a recent Friday.

He speaks about the health and rights of girls and women and their respected status in the context of Islam. Congregants listen to his words closely. After prayers, smaller groups of men gather. The conversations continue. In Khatlon, the responsibility to speak and support the health, nutrition, and rights of women and girls is now shifting to include men.

**LEARN MORE:** Improving Nutrition for Tajik Mothers and Children  
**PROJECT:** USAID Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby (HMHB) Activity  
**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Strengthening Local Health Systems in Nepal

When USAID Nepal awarded USAID’s Strengthening Systems for Better Health Activity to an Abt-led consortium in 2018, it could not have come at a better time. Nepal’s shift away from centralized administrative and political structures to a federal system was gaining momentum. We embraced localization, partnering with provincial and municipal governments to help strengthen the capacity and systems they needed to deliver equitable and quality maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) and family planning services. With equity at the forefront, we focused on some of the most disadvantaged and remote communities. We strengthened data-driven planning, implementation, and monitoring of health interventions to advance equitable and accountable health-system governance.

The results are promising. Improvements in safe delivery and newborn care have been significant. In the districts where we work, institutional deliveries jumped from 76 percent in 2017 to 93 percent in 2022. In the same period, the percentage of pregnant people who received the four antenatal checkups that protocols recommend rose from 56 percent to 73 percent. The percentage of deliveries attended by skilled health service providers increased from 65 to 84 percent.

Our local teams provided tailored technical assistance to 138 municipalities. We helped local actors develop progressive health policies and undertake annual health planning, budgeting, and budget execution that routinely incorporated community input on service availability and quality. We worked with government partners to train local players to generate and use accurate, on-time health data and ensure a steady supply of essential medicines. We also helped them give health service providers, including private sector providers, the clinical skills, tools, and support needed to deliver quality services. Our capacity assessments—to measure municipal level capacities to manage the health system—have shown an overall improvement in these critical domains since the project started. The overall capacity score increased from 46 percent in 2018 to 82 percent in 2022. And it continues to improve.

### Strengthened Health Systems and Capacity





Since 2018, we strengthened the capacity of over 600 health facilities to offer an appropriate range of high-quality, client-centered health services, particularly in MNCH and family planning. We supported training for 945 health workers on integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses, 568 health workers on family planning, and 336 skilled birth attendants. Just last year, over 3,200 health workers in over 500 health facilities received coaching and mentoring in clinical and information systems priorities.

As a result, new local governments are better able to meet the needs of their local constituents for basic MNCH and family planning services. Service use has increased, and more women and their families are accessing potentially life-saving interventions such as safe delivery and essential newborn care. Progress to date shows that the health system is adapting successfully to federalism.

**LEARN MORE:** [USAID's Strengthening Systems for Better Health in Nepal](#)

**PROJECT:** [USAID's Strengthening Systems for Better Health Activity](#)

**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Improving Health Systems Resilience

### Expanding Access to Services through Telemedicine in Ukraine

Dr. V., a surgeon in Ukraine, vividly remembers the day the call came from a colleague in another city. A patient had arrived with gallstones and urgently needed surgery. But no one at the hospital had the required expertise. Could Dr. V. help?

“There was no time for me to make a trip to the hospital the patient was at,” he recalls. “I decided to use [the] recently installed telemedicine platform. I was able to join the surgery in real time, see the issue, and assist my colleague in conducting the surgery remotely.”

Increased use of telemedicine was global during COVID-19 lockdowns; for Ukraine, the Russian invasion in early 2022 made its use imperative and urgent. As of March 2023, more than 1,151 health facilities had been damaged or destroyed, according to Ukraine’s Ministry of Health.

Aggravating matters, thousands of health providers—often the most highly trained—had become internally displaced or fled the country. The fighting discouraged Ukrainians from traveling from rural areas to larger cities to seek medical help. And a new category of patients has arisen amid the war—what *Dr. V.* described as “*complex cases with explosion and burn injuries.*”

Amid this crisis, telemedicine has become an essential tool for connecting people to health care. Digital technologies enable doctors to meet remotely with patients, view medical imaging results on a screen, and consult via video conference with specialists located elsewhere. That means many Ukrainians continue to receive high-quality care despite the constraints of combat.

Foreign companies eager to assist the country donated much of the telemedicine equipment and licenses to Ukraine’s Ministry of Health. The USAID-funded and Abt-led Local Health System Sustainability Project (LHSS) helped the ministry create a standardized process to safely deploy appropriate technologies after systematically selecting, assessing, and testing them.

Telemedicine training for **1000** medical workers in **300** health facilities

**3,000** patient sessions

The infographic features a background image of a medical professional in a white coat and blue cap looking at a computer monitor displaying a telemedicine interface. A red arrow points from the top text to the bottom text.

Sustainably and systematically increasing use of telemedicine can strengthen the health system. To achieve that goal, LHSS supported the Ministry of Health in creating the country's first interagency working group focused on developing and expanding access to telemedicine. LHSS collaborated with the working group to analyze the status of telemedicine implementation in Ukraine; develop recommendations on organizational and technical solutions for telemedicine implementation; and convene state authorities to agree on priorities and improve policies on telemedicine development.

LHSS provided a structure to organize, govern, and channel private sector engagement and foster the expansion of access to quality care through telemedicine. The formation of the interagency working group was a major development in making healthcare services more accessible to the people of Ukraine.

To ensure appropriate telemedicine use, Abt holds training sessions and provides 24/7 technical support for patients and health providers using the technologies. As of March 2023, LHSS had supported training for more than 1,000 medical workers in nearly 300 health facilities, resulting in more than 3,000 sessions with patients.

One of the telemedicine solutions was the remote surgery tool Dr. V. used. Advanced cameras, monitors, software, and a secure network enable an off-site specialist to watch a live surgery in progress, see the patient's vital signs, and provide direction to the surgeons in the operating room.

Dr. V. was skeptical of the equipment at first, thinking that mastering a new technology would be time-consuming and overwhelming. But he changed his mind once he began using it to save the lives of patients he'd never even seen or touched.

Patients also are accepting this new way of receiving care. "It has become extremely inconvenient and often unsafe to go to medical appointments since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine," said a pregnant patient who used remote fetal monitoring at a district hospital to connect with an obstetrician. "To minimize the security risks, my obstetrician gave me an electronic device through which I can get examined from my home. The device connects to my smartphone, and once the examination is completed, the results are sent directly to my doctor's phone."

The patient added, *"I was hesitant at first, because I did not quite understand how one can get examined from home. But after the first remote examination, I realized how safe and convenient this is."*

Together with the Ministry of Health, Abt's work has provided the Ukrainian people with a safe and reliable way to receive critical health care. Over the coming year, Abt will gradually transfer the job of supporting use of the donated telemedicine solutions to a local entity. By supporting this localization, Abt aims to ensure sustainability for Ukraine's telemedicine program throughout the war—and in the post-war period that will follow.

To avoid jeopardizing the safety and security of the health provider and patient interviewed for this article, their names and locations have not been disclosed.

## Reinforcing Resilience through Private Sector Engagement in Jamaica

The Government of Jamaica didn't have enough health workers to manage a rapid rollout of COVID-19 vaccines last year. So, the government decided to collaborate with the private sector, an initiative that could help address urgent needs and also establish sustainable long-term partnerships. But this was complex terrain. The USAID-funded and Abt-led Local Health System Sustainability Project (LHSS) helped facilitate the partnership, bolstering health sector resiliency for the future.

Abt used our LHSS grant-making authority to provide \$556,000 in grants to pharmacies, faith-based health organizations, private medical practices, and a private health care network. Between March and May 2022, these trusted providers delivered more than 9,000 COVID-19 vaccinations to their clientele. They included many people in underserved communities who likely would not otherwise have gotten vaccinated due to poor access and hesitancy fueled by misinformation.

In the process, LHSS provided the grantees individually tailored capacity-strengthening support on such topics as cold chain management, marketing and communications, administrative procedures, and reporting mechanisms.

The grants did just what they were supposed to do. They engendered mutual confidence and trust between the Jamaican Ministry of Health and Wellness and the private health sector. And they equipped the grantees with the know-how to support the government in future large-scale vaccination efforts and delivery of other important health services. "LHSS allowed me to think in the long term—where I wanted my company to go and what I need to do to get it there," said Dr. Alex Tracey, the founder of a growing company, Online Medics, the first mobile app in Jamaica to provide virtual medical care for patients.

Abt knows well that Jamaica is not an anomaly. Other resource-strapped public health systems can join forces with the private sector to expand access to medical care. It's good for business and good for a nation's health.



**LEARN MORE:** Local Health System Sustainability Project  
**PROJECT:** Local Health System Sustainability Project  
**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Strengthening Policies and Programs to Improve Health Outcomes in the U.S.

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### Prioritizing Maternal and Child Health in the U.S.

Eighty-eight years ago, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt established an agency to address the worsening health of mothers and babies during the Great Depression. Today, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), part of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), is the oldest part of the nation’s public health system—and a sprawling one. Its fiscal year 2024 proposed budget is just under \$16 billion, and its patchwork of mandates, added to through various legislation over the decades, ranges from perinatal health to capacity building in quality assurance.

Now under an executive order, MCHB is taking a step back to reimagine its vision and develop a streamlined strategic plan for the next decade to strengthen the health of mothers, children, and families. The need is great. The maternal mortality rate jumped from 17.4 per 100,000 births in 2018 to 23.8 in 2020. Maternal mortality is three times worse for Black women than white women. The infant mortality rate is the worst of our economic peers, more than double the rate of Portugal and Spain. Black infant mortality is more than double that of white infants.

Equity underlies MCHB’s objectives as this venerable agency overhauls bureaucracy and pursues a digital transformation to make it more efficient. And as part of its ambitious 10-year strategic plan, the agency tasked Abt with helping craft these new goals and objectives.

Abt engaged with interested parties in focus groups and interviews, gathering input from people who focus on maternal and child health and those who serve disenfranchised communities, including people with lived experience. We brought perspectives from working with other agencies grappling with maternal and health issues. For example, after scanning federal agencies working on those topics, we created a matrix that showed where MCHB could encourage collaborative partnerships, such as the National Institutes of Health, Administration for Children and Families, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The resulting plan, released in 2022, helps position MCHB to be a leader in addressing maternal and child health, including initiatives like the White House Blueprint for Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis.



Among other things, we conducted an organization assessment to determine readiness to implement the strategic plan and recommend transformations MCHB needs to meet the new goals. With different offices operating from different legislative authority, MCHB needed to align programs with collective objectives. The underlying expectation is ambitious: make real change for the more than 60 million people MCHB supports. The goals:

1. Assure access to high-quality and equitable health services to optimize health and well-being for all MCH populations
2. Achieve health equity for MCH populations
3. Strengthen public health capacity and the workforce for MCH
4. Maximize impact through leadership, partnership, and stewardship.

MCHB names equity as a goal in and of itself, an issue that interested parties were adamant about. “Public agencies have responsibility for programs and related inequalities,” said one interviewee. “There is an untapped opportunity at this time of an historical reckoning on racism in practices and policies. MCHB should become more anti-racist.” Added another: “We must center equity in our work.”

Interested parties also called for more and better data. “There is a need for more data capacity—better data, analysis, and use,” said one. “We (need more) racial/ethnic specific data overall and from programs. These data are critical in tackling equity.” But other focus group members noted that much of what MCHB does is hard to measure because it’s qualitative not quantitative. It’s “important to remember the adage: Not everything measured is worthwhile,” said one focus group member. “Not everything worthwhile can be measured.”

MCHB and Abt will continue collaborating on ways to come up with meaningful metrics. Data will be one way, but not the only one, to show that the new strategy is working for equitable improvement in the health of mothers, children, and families.

Abt looks forward to supporting MCHB as it transforms to realize its ambitious new vision.



**LEARN MORE:** Updating the Maternal and Child Health Bureau’s Strategic Plan

**PROJECT:** The MCHB Strategic Planning, Implementation and Organizational Transformation Contract

**CLIENT:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Services and Resources Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau



## Improving Child Nutrition in the U.S.

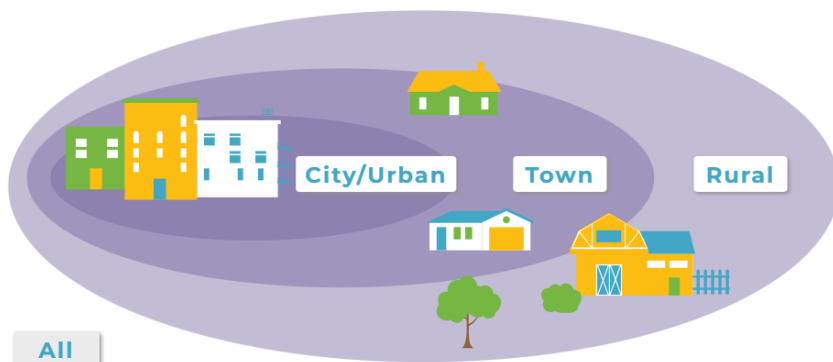
How do kids in the U.S. who get subsidized school lunches fare in the summer when school’s out? Not well. Except for some who were part of a decade-long Food and Nutrition Service pilot grant program, the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) program.

Families in 10 diverse states and three Tribal Organizations received support in the summer from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to buy the same kind of groceries approved for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs. “Fruits and vegetables aren’t cheap,” notes one Summer EBT parent, and the benefit “allowed us to have better quality food.”

The results were clear: A \$60 monthly benefit reduced the most severe category of food insecurity by a third compared with those who received no funds. The benefit also meant more nutritious eating—with children in the program consuming 12 percent more fruits and vegetables and 23 percent more whole grains than those not in the program.

How do we know? Abt’s decade of evaluations. We assessed the benefits and examined approaches that worked in different contexts for families, retailers, and grantees. The findings paved the way for Congress to pass a bipartisan bill in December 2022 that created a permanent nationwide program for more than 29 million families. That’s impact.

States, Tribal Organizations, and Territories will start to roll out their Summer EBT programs in 2024, and the knowledge we accumulated provides a playbook for how to do it. We generated insights that states can consider implementing, plus an intuitive, interactive digital dashboard to help officials understand granular program use and trends. It includes information from grantees who know local needs, thus enabling customized solutions.



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The **availability of authorized retailers** and **travel distances** to them were key metrics in the Abt evaluation team's spatial analyses. Click on the graphic above to explore some examples from our findings.

## Top Recommendations:

- 1 **Allow for flexible food choices.** If electricity is unreliable, for example, consumers can't buy food that requires refrigeration. This can require training retailers.
- 2 **Use spatial analysis and mapping data.** States, Tribal Organizations, and Territories need to know where eligible households live, how far they have to travel to shop at a participating store, and whether transportation is available. They may need to enlist more retailers.
- 3 **Decide which communication tactics will increase use of benefits:** outreach via text messages or mobile apps; an online shopping app; or using schools to send out information.
- 4 **Monitor redemption rates.** To boost redemption rates, text benefit balances twice a month and send other texts weekly. Buying is higher after texts.

The evaluations showed that Summer EBT is beneficial—and the way forward for States, Tribal Organizations, and Territories. In the future, millions of children nationwide will be well served, both figuratively and literally.

**LEARN MORE:** Evaluating Summer Nutrition Assistance for Children

**PROJECT:** Evaluation of 2019–2022 Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Program

**CLIENT:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service



## Strengthening Responses to Mental Health Crises in the U.S.

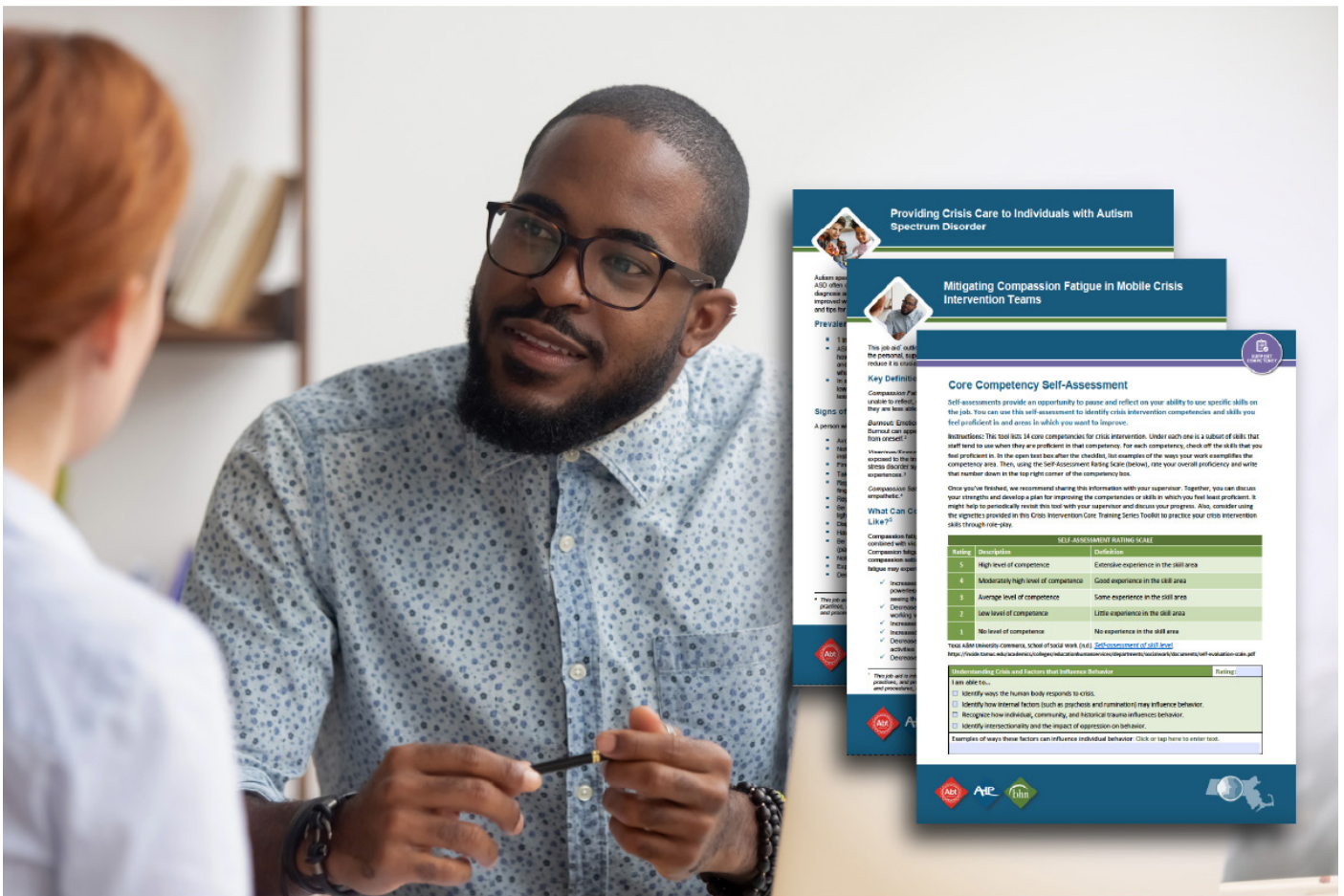
Someone to talk to, someone to respond, and a safe place to go. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the U.S. has established these three components as essential for a fully developed crisis response system. When states ensure access to local crisis call centers, mobile intervention services, and short-term receiving and stabilization centers, people in crisis can get the evidence-based care they need at the right time and in their community. Meeting people where they are can reduce avoidable emergency department visits, law enforcement involvement, and preventable tragedies.

With recent catalysts including the COVID-19 pandemic and increases in suicide and drug overdose rates, U.S. federal and state agencies are allocating more resources to behavioral health crisis services than ever before. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) received a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Abt and our partners, Advocates for Human Potential and Behavioral Health Network, helped the agency develop training materials for the mobile crisis intervention (MCI) workforce at the state's 25 Community Behavioral Health Centers, including peers and family members trained to respond to crises. As one of only 15 grantees nationally, EOHHS is leading the way in improving these important services.

The Abt team's self-paced training and virtual webinar events focus on topics such as de-escalation, crisis intervention for youth, and promoting workplace wellbeing. We also developed toolkits to support clinicians leading peer-to-peer events. Toolkits enable clinicians to conduct experiential learning through role play and skills-based behavioral rehearsals. We created job aids to address a range of topics such as autism spectrum disorder, self-injury, trauma-informed interventions, motivational interviewing, and post-stabilization follow-up.

A key part of developing the material was input from the clinical staff at Behavioral Health Network, a regional crisis service provider in Massachusetts and partner on the project. Their expertise and lived experience ensured that the learning materials were relevant and accurate. We also pilot-tested one of our initial training sessions with nearly 100 MCI staff. Using a survey and participation incentive, we were able to collect feedback and incorporate their suggestions in the final products.

In addition, we focused on equity by engaging a reviewer skilled in assessing products for equity content and incorporating discussions of racism, systematic oppression, and how these experiences affect mental health and individuals' access to services. We also used American Sign Language interpreters and live captioning for webinar events.



Because of our efforts, we consistently received positive feedback from stakeholders. “Our MCI leadership spoke very positively about [Abt’s] MCI training that recently rolled out,” says a vice president of a Massachusetts community behavioral health organization. “As seasoned Emergency Services/MCI managers, they felt the content very thoroughly and thoughtfully covered foundational concepts in a very efficient way. They heard positive feedback from new MCI staff and seasoned staff alike.”

All participants who completed a satisfaction survey after attending our two virtual webinar events agreed or strongly agreed that attending was a good use of their time and that they would be able to apply what they learned to their work. As people continue to access these resources, it’s more likely that Massachusetts residents in crisis will get the right help at the right time in the right place.

**PROJECT:** MassHealth Crisis Intervention Training and Technical Assistance for Emergency Services Programs and Mobile Crisis Intervention Providers

**CLIENT:** Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services



## Improving Quality of Care for Cancer Patients in the U.S.

When a cancer patient on chemotherapy missed several appointments and was hospitalized repeatedly, a social worker at the patient's cancer clinic decided to investigate. It turned out that the patient had no car, lived alone, and had trouble paying for taxi rides to the clinic, 30 miles from his home. He relied on his closest hospital emergency department when his nausea led to dehydration, and emergency department (ED) staff often admitted him to the hospital.

When the clinic's oncology team met for one of its frequent huddles as part of its coordinated care effort, the team discussed the transportation challenges. The oncologist described a more potent, though more costly, anti-nausea drug. And the financial counselor found foundation support to cover the higher drug copays. The result: lower costs through avoidance of expensive ED visits and hospital admissions and better care at no additional cost to the patient.

The incident was not enough to make a major dent in overall Medicare costs in the U.S., but is an example of how lower costs don't have to conflict with high quality of care. That's one of the lessons from Abt's evaluation of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) innovative Oncology Care Model (OCM), which covers care for Medicare beneficiaries undergoing chemotherapy.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S., resulting in more than 600,000 deaths annually. An estimated 1.9 million individuals were diagnosed with cancer in 2022. With the median age of patients 66, Medicare covers a big proportion of care, which was estimated at \$200 billion in 2020 and is expected to rise to \$246 billion by 2030. And chemotherapy is likely the costliest treatment component, with some new treatments costing more than \$10,000 a month.

CMS launched OCM to assess whether investing in higher-quality care for oncology patients would help mitigate rising costs of cancer care. Under OCM, oncology practices were able to bill Medicare for enhanced oncology services for a chemotherapy episode. An episode includes all payments for health services provided during a six-month period, starting when patients begin chemotherapy. CMS made performance-based payments if practices met cost and quality goals.

Abt's evaluation of the model found that patient care ratings of their cancer care teams began at a high nine out of 10, and that the high levels were sustained amid other changes during OCM's six-year span. For example, practices reported increased activity in screening for pain and depression. The study found statistically significant cost savings for Medicare, though not enough to cover the costs of the new payments under OCM (for enhanced oncology services and performance-based payments) to the approximately 200 oncology practices that participated in the model.

**"The return on investment [from OCM] is not necessarily monetary,"** says one participating oncologist. **"It's the satisfaction of high-quality care and sense of pride that we have an organization that can provide for patients in every way."**

Participating oncology practices transformed their practices to be more person-centered, with 60 percent of practices surveyed describing OCM as an opportunity and impetus to make meaningful improvements:

- Better and faster access to clinicians, including a dedicated phone line, especially for supportive care (e.g., pain, nausea, other side effects)
- Reorganized care teams, workflows, and communication to support patients more holistically
- Patient navigation through confusing treatment protocols
- Attention to psychosocial needs, pain, and depression
- Person-centered end-of-life care
- Expanded same-day and after-hours supportive care
- More financial counseling about treatment plans, out-of-pocket costs, and resources to cover them.

The evaluation's equity analyses showed that the proportion of low-income patients treated under OCM didn't drop over time. This meant the models didn't avoid low-income patients to increase the odds of success, despite incentives to do so. Evidence also indicated that adherence to high-cost drugs improved for historically underserved populations; better financial counseling and connections to resources may have been the reason.

Our evaluation also showed that total episode payments rose 23.8 percent overall between 2015 and 2020. But OCM payments increased more slowly, by 21.8 percent. This translated into a savings of \$499 per episode.

High-risk cancers are where the greatest reductions in total episode payments occurred. Savings amounted to \$1,092 for lung cancer total episode payment, about \$1,531 for lymphoma, \$1,166 for high-risk breast cancer, and \$1,290 for colorectal/small intestine cancer. Our finding that practices achieved the biggest impacts on certain high-volume, high-risk cancers helped inform the design of CMS' new Enhancing Oncology Model, which launches this summer. It focuses on seven high-risk types of cancer instead of the more than 20 included in OCM.

More work remains to improve quality and rein in costs for cancer care. Abt's mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis provides policymakers with the insights needed to refine future cancer-care models. And that might bring us ever closer to achieving those goals.

**LEARN MORE:** [Analyzing If An Oncology Care Model Will Improve Care and Lower Costs](#)

**PROJECT:** [Evaluation of the Oncology Care Model](#)

**CLIENT:** [U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#)



## Responding to Emerging Malaria Risks

Combatting malaria requires scientific sleuthing. It's what helped mortality from malaria drop 36 percent between 2010 and 2020. But the number of deaths worldwide still exceeds 600,000 a year. And 3.2 billion people remain at risk. So the scientific inquiry—entomology—has to continue.

For a decade we have worked in dozens of countries on three continents to protect people from malaria through the delivery of life-saving mosquito, or "vector," control interventions, like insecticide-treated nets and indoor residual spraying (IRS). **In the past year alone, we protected 17.6 million people under the President's Malaria Initiative's (PMI) VectorLink project.**

Abt is also at the cutting edge of the mosquito detective work. A lot of factors—rainfall, temperature, humidity—influence mosquito density, longevity and malaria transmission risk. Insecticide resistance poses a challenge. So does the interplay between human behavior and mosquito behavior. That's why malaria control programs need to tailor mosquito control approaches to meet different communities' needs.

Now we are facing a new threat. In 2019, the World Health Organization issued an initial vector alert, updated in 2023, about the invasion and spread of *Anopheles stephensi* in Africa, an efficient malaria vector. This menacing mosquito thrives in urban environments, putting millions at risk. The WHO urged countries to enhance their surveillance to be able to monitor this mosquito's presence and spread. Abt was already doing so: When *An. stephensi* was first found in Ethiopia in 2016, Abt was already there as a key partner for surveillance and risk modeling.

As this grave risk in Ethiopia increased, PMI asked Abt to figure out how to protect communities that might be affected. But the core vector control interventions that we implement in other geographic areas of Ethiopia are not the best options for this mosquito. That's because the majority of *An. stephensi* mosquitoes don't rest indoors like other malaria vectors do, so IRS might not kill them. They also bite early in the evening, before people go to sleep, so bed nets might not offer adequate protection.

But while *An. stephensi* behavior is not amenable for vector control interventions that target the adult mosquito, other vector control options that target the aquatic stage could work. And Abt was prepared. In 2022, we worked quickly with the Ethiopia National Malaria Program and PMI to launch a targeted larval source management program in several urban communities where malaria risks were increasing. This activity focused on quickly finding mosquito breeding sites preferred by *An. stephensi*—mostly manmade containers that can hold water like jerry cans, buckets, cisterns, barrels and old tires—and addressing them. We mobilize households to get rid of containers where these mosquitoes might breed, a process called source reduction. And we use a biological larvicide (safe for humans) to treat water containers that can't be discarded or that households need to keep. It kills the mosquito larvae before they can turn into adult mosquitoes, a process known as larviciding



We work with communities and the local government to make our approach effective. We set a goal of hiring at least 50 percent women and achieved it. We collaborated with local leaders to hire people from the community where we are supporting larval source management. Homeowners are more receptive to community members rather than strangers coming into their homes.

The good news is that the data show that over time, larval and pupal density have dropped. This means fewer immature mosquitos are making it to adulthood where they can infect people. But unanswered questions remain. For example, other factors, like environment or weather, could have played a role in the density reduction. But it's likely the intervention was effective because through our surveillance, we found higher larval densities in nearby locations where there was no intervention.

Has larval source management reduced malaria cases and mortality, the ultimate goal? It's too soon to tell. However, our work in Ethiopia is paving the way for the global response to An. stephensi, which is critical, considering some estimate this mosquito has the potential to put upwards of 120 million additional people at risk of the disease.

That's not the end of our sleuthing. PMI VectorLink conducted modeling to predict where the vector's presence could spread from the areas in Ethiopia that provide a suitable climate for its survival. The modeling will have to evolve as the mosquito's behavior changes, particularly because this mosquito species is adaptable and might continue to change. "That's why this vector is such a challenge," says Matt Kirby, PMI VectorLink Entomology Director. "It's less predictable than the more established malaria vectors in Africa."

Our entomologists worldwide are on the case, keeping tabs on this new threat with national malaria programs in dozens of countries under PMI VectorLink and the new PMI Evolve project. And we will adapt our approaches as needed to protect communities and make further progress toward eliminating the malaria scourge.

**LEARN MORE:** Climate Change, Malaria, & Data: Getting Ahead of the Spread  
| Spotlight On: Climate and Health

**PROJECT:** U.S. President's Malaria Initiative VectorLink Project

**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)





# Economic Security

## Increasing Egyptian Farmers' Incomes with Climate-smart Practices



A **MANGO FARMER** from the Aswan governorate in Egypt discusses **the impacts of climate change** and how the project helped him learn agricultural practices that **improved the productivity and resilience of his farm**.



**SEVERAL FEMALE FARMERS** in Egypt describe how the project helped them learn about **climate change impacts on soil, weather, and other growing conditions** and how practices like planting, irrigation, pruning, and composting can **improve production**.



SCAN TO  
WATCH VIDEO

“Change is not easy,” admits Mohamed Farag, an Egyptian mango farmer from Kom Ombo, Aswan. “I needed a lot of convincing to take the first step, roll my sleeves, and start implementing.”

Farag knew he had to do something: Climate change was devastating the quality and quantity of his harvest. He decided to attend a farmer field school provided by Riad El Saleheen Community Development Association in partnership with the Feed the Future Egypt Rural Agribusiness Strengthening Project (ERAS), funded by USAID and implemented by Abt Global.

Now he prunes his mango trees to allow more sunlight to filter through. And he convinced his father that they needed to uproot 12 old trees. The trees represented many years of investment but were no longer very productive. “You can imagine this was no easy task,” Farag says.

The trainings taught Farag and other farmers to implement a balanced fertilization program, use irrigation management techniques to conserve water during very high or low temperatures, and protect plants during sandstorms and heavy rains. The training proved fruitful for Farag, who doubled his orchard's revenue from EGP 7,000 (\$227) to EGP 15,000 (\$487) in a year. "Results speak for themselves," he says, "and I am only getting started."

Farag is not alone. More than 43,000 farmers for 11 value chain crops have applied improved management practices and technologies to a total of 31,000 hectares. The impact has been significant. For example, average mango yields increased from 7.24 metric tons per hectare in fiscal year 2018 to 13.75 in fiscal year 2022, an increase of nearly 90 percent. And this has translated to sales as well, with the average sales for a mango farmer increasing from \$1,192 to \$3,701 over the same period.

The primary goal of the project is to help the horticulture industry in Upper Egypt and the Delta establish connections to domestic and international high-end markets, gain access to finance, and adhere to food safety practices. But an additional and critical benefit has been addressing the effects of climate change through a tailored and customized technical support program for the targeted crops in the different regions.

ERAS has introduced a number of low-cost, climate-resilient technologies and practices:

- We introduced a solar drying greenhouse for tomatoes and herbs in Luxor and trained 45 female producer organization members to use it. The technology enhances product quality and minimizes losses by protecting against climate change effects such as unexpected rain and dust. Producers delivered the first shipment of commercially-produced tomatoes to a five-star hotel in Luxor in March 2023.
- We showed farmers a low-cost, climate-smart cold chain technology that can reduce post-harvest losses, maintain produce quality, extend shelf life, create jobs, and increase smallholder farmers' incomes. The technology, CoolBot, "converts any off-the-shelf, window-type air-conditioning unit into a turbo-charged refrigeration machine, saving installation and repair costs and reducing electricity consumption," said Atef Elansari, the project's post-harvest lead. "It is also installed quickly in just one day and represents a sustainable low-cost solution to help us overcome several food safety and hygiene issues."
- The team also helped reduce post-harvest loss by designing a new hermetic bag to store wheat using a local material. The bags preserve the moisture content of stored grains and prevent them from being damaged by insects, fungi, rodents, or birds.
- To address changing water levels, we expanded adoption of low-density polyethylene (Poly-Pipe) drip irrigation systems to improve water management on land used to grow tomatoes in Beheira. The components, connections, fittings, valves, and all required accessories are produced by local companies in Al-Sadat, Menoufia. "I already witnessed huge savings in the cultivated land" says Samy El Demiry, an Alexandria farmer who switched to the Poly-Pipe irrigation system. "I saved between EGP 5,000 (\$162) and EGP 6,000 (\$194) at a minimum."

In addition to introducing technology, we taught environmentally friendly farming techniques. We used the messaging app WhatsApp to show farmers of mango, artichoke, onion, and other crops how to counter heavy rains by spraying aspirin, adding humic acid and balanced fertilizers such as potassium silicate, and controlling irrigation. Farmers received regular weekly weather forecasts and recommended practices for crop protection from pests such as aphids and diseases such as rust.

Conscious of farmers' limited resources, we promoted production and use of compost as a low-cost and environmentally friendly alternative to chemical fertilizer. The project launched a vermicompost training program to empower women, introduced initially to 307 female and 77 male smallholder farmers in six governorates. Red wiggler worms transform organic household and field waste into an excellent soil amendment and conditioner called vermicompost: over one year, 5 kg of red wiggler worms can produce 75 kg of worms and 1,000 kg of vermicompost. The vermicompost production program will enable women in a household to earn an annual economic return 15 times their initial investment.

Even techniques as seemingly simple as shifting planting dates can have a major impact by avoiding crop damage in increasingly severe winters. For example, instead of planting fennel in mid-November in Assiut, we recommended planting in mid-October to avoid slow growth and damage from low temperatures during the initial stages of plant germination and growth. This resulted in well-developed plant growth and branching before waves of low temperatures in December and January. Farmers who planted as usual in mid-November had weakened plants by comparison. Among the 3,280 fennel farmers surveyed during the 2022 season, average productivity rose from 1.28 tons per feddan to 2.34 tons after applying climate change resilience and good agricultural practices, and average income nearly doubled from EGP 21,375 (\$694) to EGP 42,156 (\$1,369) per feddan.

Like Farag, many Egyptian farmers—both men and women—are taking concrete steps that increase production, reduce costs, and protect the environment at the same time. ERAS is helping them start a new era in Egyptian farming for Upper Egypt and the Delta.

**LEARN MORE:** [Feed the Future Egypt Rural Agribusiness Strengthening Project](#)

**PROJECT:** [Feed the Future Egypt Rural Agribusiness Strengthening Project](#)

**CLIENT:** [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#)



# Building Integrated Community-level Resilience in Uganda

The infographic features three circular images with corresponding text boxes. The first image shows people at a market stall, with text: 'STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS 142,627 people received support to increase their incomes'. The second image shows a woman in a field, with text: 'IMPROVING NUTRITION 272,907 children under the age of five reached with nutrition interventions'. The third image shows a group of people in a community meeting, with text: 'INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE 102,202 participants engaged in community governance forums'. To the right is a video player showing the USAID logo and the title 'USAID's Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition Activity'. Below the video is a QR code and a red button that says 'SCAN TO WATCH VIDEO'.

In Uganda, many households lack access to financial resources, markets, and social capital, as well as the ability to advocate for their needs in local government. Among children under five, 29 percent are stunted as a result of chronic or recurrent malnutrition. Ugandans also face additional challenges specific to where they live, such as droughts, wildfires, or human-wildlife conflict near game parks. Communities and households need to be able to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from such shocks and stresses, but many lack this resilience.

The Abt-led USAID Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition (ICAN) Activity focused on community-level resilience in eight districts that have some of the country's highest levels of poverty, malnutrition, and vulnerability to natural disasters. Since 2018, USAID ICAN reached more than 200,000 people through activities that improve incomes, nutrition and food security, water and sanitation, school enrollment and retention, and natural resource management.

The project took a localized, multi-sectoral approach that put local communities front and center. Our local team worked hand-in-hand with trusted local partners across government institutions, the private sector, and civil society. These community structures included village health teams, business service providers, governance champions, and cultural leaders. The project especially focused on addressing gender and power imbalances that undermine the economic opportunities and community influence of women and youth. As agents of behavior change, USAID ICAN's partners spearheaded local commitment to inclusive resilience actions across sectors. By embedding this work within existing structures, we ensured the work will continue even after project activities ended.

To improve economic livelihoods, we helped create jobs and market opportunities to boost farmers' income and make food available in the household and marketplace. Over the course of the project, 142,627 people—74 percent of whom are women—received support to increase their incomes, including skills training and linkages to markets. For example, from 2018 to 2023, we connected over 60,000 farmers with formal agricultural markets to help them grow nutritious, climate-resilient crops. We also helped activity participants access formal financial services: A survey found that participants accessing those services increased from 650 in 2019 to 21,000 in 2022. And we worked with about 6,300 adolescent girls and young women who had dropped out of school. We enabled them to build their confidence and entrepreneurial skills, learn how to advocate for themselves in their families, establish businesses and group enterprises, and, in some cases, return to school.

To improve nutrition for women and children, we worked through business service providers to connect local firms to community groups and offer nutrition-sensitive training. Our nutrition initiatives also worked through village health teams, reaching 14,115 pregnant women, 52,467 lactating women, and 12,378 care takers over the last five years of the project. And they helped assess the nutritional status of 272,907 children under five (163 percent of our 2022 target), referring 7,604 who were moderately or severely malnourished to nearby health facilities for care. Good nutrition is critical for children to reach their educational and economic potential.

Strengthening local and community governance was a pillar of the project, especially in ensuring that governance structures engaged vulnerable populations. Overall, 102,202 participants engaged in community governance forums. We also helped communities develop Resilience Committees, which typically include representatives from local government, local leaders, village health teams, business service providers, and other community members, especially women. Through these committees, we collaborated with district local leaders to preserve hills in Kigezi, conserve soil and water in remote and arid Karamoja, and control wildfires by encouraging live fencing in Karamoja.

USAID ICAN's multi-sectoral approach has been critical to helping a generation of Ugandans to not only better survive shocks and stresses, but also seize economic opportunities and contribute to the country's socioeconomic development priorities.

**PROJECT:** Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition (ICAN) Activity

**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Equipping U.S. Communities for Climate Resiliency Planning

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If you live in U.S. states like California or Louisiana, or so many coastal areas around the world, you know from all-too-personal experience the horror of natural disasters like floods. Community leaders try to prepare for them—how to prevent them and how to develop resilience plans to respond to them. Nature all too often outsmarts those plans.

But now communities far from the coast also feel climate change's impact and its economic disruption far more frequently. In the United States, inland flooding and wildfires affect communities across the country. Low- and moderate-income communities disproportionately bear the brunt, as do communities of color. Their homes are more likely to be in harm's way and in areas with inadequate infrastructure. They're more likely to have limited financial resources to prepare for, respond to, or recover from the impacts of extreme events and natural hazards. And they're more likely to have health conditions, such as respiratory disease, that magnify the impact of extreme weather events.

An interdisciplinary team of Abt housing and environmental experts has worked with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop tools for community planners to identify resources to help them increase their climate resilience. HUD asked Abt to examine climate hazards such as drought, flooding, and rising sea levels, explain the risk factors, and then suggest initiatives that can help communities increase their resilience to these hazards. Many of these initiatives may be eligible for HUD or other federal funding.

The suggested initiatives include housing and community development policies designed to enhance resilience. Requiring homes to be on stilts is already fairly common in flood-prone areas in the U.S., especially for beachfront property. Other measures to address a variety of climate risks include:

- Raising building infrastructure above ground level to avoid flooding
- Installing cool roofs, which decrease heat from the roof's surface and surrounding air
- Removing flammable vegetation around structures to reduce wildfire risk
- Encouraging water conservation and reuse measures to alleviate drought conditions
- Assessing how natural hazards may affect creation or improvement of public facilities and infrastructure in low- and moderate-income areas
- Relocating residents living in at-risk areas
- Using resilient building materials for new construction or rehabilitation.

Abt created a Community Resilience Toolkit that details these natural hazard risks and corresponding resilience actions. The toolkit has been available to the public through the HUD Exchange since 2020.

Then in 2022, we developed a series of step-by-step guides to implementing climate resilience actions. These implementation guides include a list of possible interventions, HUD and other funding options, and resources with more information. More recently, we've launched accompanying videos that include interviews with community leaders who have implemented these resilience actions.



The primary audience for the toolkit and implementation guides is community leaders and their partners who receive or are eligible for HUD grant funding. Funding can be used for housing and broader public services and infrastructure, such as parks and recreation facilities: One funding source, the \$5 billion Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), includes more than two dozen eligible activities. Grantees are already required to spend at least 70 percent of their CDBG funding in low- and moderate-income communities. If they integrate climate resilience into their work, they will strengthen the resilience and economic security of the communities most affected by climate change and environmental injustice.

Some local planning agencies in the U.S. haven't thought about using the HUD resources they already get for activities related to climate resilience. But they can no longer escape climate-related hazards—or the need to plan for how they'll respond to them. Now they have tools to help address the effects of climate change and make their communities stronger and more resilient.

**LEARN MORE:** [Increasing Climate Change Resilience Among HUD Grantees | Why Is a Housing Agency Focused on Climate Change?](#)

**PROJECT:** Community Resilience Toolkit

**CLIENT:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)



## Identifying Solutions for Emergency Housing in California



California had 161,548 people experiencing homelessness when COVID-19 broke out in 2020—the largest unsheltered population in the United States. People experiencing homelessness both in crowded shelters and living unsheltered on the streets faced extreme health risks, especially if they were already medically vulnerable due to chronic health conditions.

In March 2020, California’s Health and Human Services Agency leaders, public health experts, and health clinicians came together to develop Project Roomkey (PRK) as a response to COVID-19. The program provided people experiencing homelessness an alternative to staying on the street or in congregate shelters. Instead, PRK placed people temporarily in hotel or motel rooms or groups of trailers accompanied by limited supportive services.

*Congregate shelter, also known as emergency shelter, traditionally congregates people in one space with the use of cots and bunk beds. This type of shelter was especially problematic during COVID-19 because the disease was transmitted by close proximity to another person. Communities across California used motels and hotels as non-congregate shelter options where individuals and couples would be sheltered in individual rooms with individual bathrooms.*

Abt is evaluating the program to understand its successes and challenges across the state and the experiences and outcomes of PRK participants. The evaluation focuses on housing, healthcare, and supportive services provided to PRK participants. It also examines the coordination needed at multiple levels of state and local governments to implement such a large-scale and time-sensitive program. The speed of the PRK response, and the multiple partners convened, brought substantial benefits, but the evaluation is also identifying lessons that communities can apply going forward.

Due to stay-at-home orders across California, the tourism industry was at a standstill early in the pandemic, leaving hotels and motels unoccupied. State and local leaders quickly repurposed as many of these rooms as possible for PRK. There was some initial resistance, however, from both hotel/motel owners and communities. Some owners feared that housing people experiencing homelessness could harm their brand. Others worried about staffing and wear and tear on the rooms. Some interested owners could not participate because their insurers would not cover involvement in the program. In one instance, a city even said it would shut off utilities if a hotel became a PRK site. One notable exception to this resistance was the motel chain Motel 6, which agreed to a mass leasing agreement across the state.



In addition to offering non-congregate shelter, PRK provided short-term wraparound services that could include 24/7 staffing, three daily meals, sanitation and janitorial services, basic supplies, personal protective equipment, and laundry services. State leaders recommended that all PRK sites have onsite medical services, including nurses for daily medication, temperature monitoring, and symptom checks (though not all sites were able to implement all of these).

Most communities across the state prioritized people experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness and who were at high risk of mortality or suffering medical complications if they contracted COVID-19 (e.g., age 65 years or older, with underlying health conditions). Community leaders in the homeless service and health systems knew that PRK participants would have high medical and behavioral needs. However, leaders in several communities stated that participants were more medically vulnerable than anticipated. PRK sites responded to this need in a variety of ways, including referring participants to skilled nursing facilities and creating specific PRK sites for clients with higher needs. Some participants needed help with daily living activities, and some sites struggled to find funding or providers to support those needs.

Abt's evaluation found that numerous system leaders and homeless service providers thought PRK broke new ground for how emergency shelter and interim housing should be offered in California. For many people experiencing homelessness, PRK had benefits not found in other programs. It offered features often unavailable in other emergency shelter or interim housing settings, including individual rooms where people could keep their possessions and did not have to be separated from their partners or pets. This gave people autonomy, privacy, and safety as well as protection from COVID-19's spread.

With the pandemic lasting longer than anyone anticipated, implementation challenges predictably cropped up. No one knew how long PRK would be needed or how long reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) would last. Communities often needed to braid together funding from federal, state, and local sources.

However, communities with available resources were able to take what started as a medical emergency program and turn it into a bridge to permanent housing. Some communities and sites allowed participants to stay in PRK as long as they needed or until the site closed. If a participant exited the program or the site was closing, program staff worked to transition that person to another hotel/motel, another form of emergency or temporary housing, or permanent housing.

Across California, helping PRK residents move into permanent housing was challenging because of the lack of affordable, available housing units. Many communities cited the high cost of housing and low vacancy rates as barriers to helping people move from PRK to stable housing, even when rent subsidies were available. PRK has unlocked some options for policymakers trying to address the homelessness crisis across California, especially for people living unsheltered. Abt's evaluation will provide lessons about successful approaches and insights into how to address challenges.

**LEARN MORE:** Evaluating California's Project Roomkey

**PROJECT:** Project Roomkey Evaluation

**CLIENT:** California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation



## Strengthening Evidence for Innovation in U.S. Education



There are persistent gaps in academic achievement in the U.S. Students with low economic status lag three academic years behind their peers in higher socioeconomic status communities, according to a 2022 National Bureau of Economic research paper. And the U.S. doesn't fare well when compared with other countries, either: In 2018, American 15-year-olds ranked 37th in math and 18th in science out of the 78 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment.

To address these gaps, three consecutive federal administrations have spent a combined \$2.4 billion on grants to fund innovative strategies for improving educational outcomes, particularly for high-need students, in what's now known as the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program. It's critical to know if these innovations actually work to help students.

Recognizing this need, EIR requires grantees to carry out independent evaluations of the effectiveness of their strategies. But the evaluations can only really help if they determine whether it was the innovations, and not other factors, that caused students to improve. How else can we know whether an initiative actually improved student learning and should be scaled up?

When the program began in 2010, few evaluations in education used methods that could identify whether innovations were effective for students, teachers, and schools. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) turned to Abt to provide technical assistance to EIR grantees to strengthen their evaluation methods. As a group, the evaluations that Abt supported are stronger than others in the field. ED's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) establishes standards for strength of evidence and reviews evaluations in education against those standards. Twice the percentage of Abt-supported grants met WWC evidence standards compared with those that did not receive Abt's support.

**How did we do it?** In partnership with ED’s Institute of Education Sciences, EIR contracted Abt and invested in strengthening the independent evaluations. Abt designed a multi-faceted program that included just-in-time, individualized assistance from a senior evaluation expert; tools, templates, and guidance to support the design and implementation of the evaluations; and small and large group workshops, webinars, and presentations. Since 2010, we’ve conducted over 20,000 monthly calls with evaluation teams and reviewed over 1,300 evaluation plans. We’ve convened more than 150 group technical assistance sessions to tackle common challenges. And we alerted the EIR team to over 1,000 issues threatening the success of the evaluations so that they could be addressed and mitigated. Through this intensive relationship with evaluators and grantees, our team anticipated and solved problems as they happened.

“Asking educators to try out innovative ideas without testing whether they work is not enough. Abt has worked hand-in-hand with the U.S. Department of Education to learn what innovations do work and are worthy of being expanded across the country,” says Abt’s Barbara Goodson, principal investigator for the project.

We now have a substantial evidence base to inform efforts to improve educational outcomes. The independent evaluations we supported help educators and policymakers understand what worked, what didn’t, and why. They help identify which ideas to continue investing in—and which ideas to abandon. And unlike a decade ago, ED can provide lessons to the entire U.S. education sector and help close the country’s intractable education gaps.

**LEARN MORE:** [Technical Assistance for Education Innovation and Research Evaluations | The National Evaluation of Investing in Innovation \(I3\) | Abt’s Evaluation Technical Assistance](#)

**PROJECT:** [Technical Assistance for Education Innovation and Research Evaluations](#)

**CLIENT:** [U.S. Department of Education \(ED\)](#)



# Effective Governance

## Strengthening Evidence and Governance in Health

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Governments have limited resources for healthcare, and the needs of the people they serve are significant and complex. Allocating health resources equitably and efficiently, establishing national health priorities that take diverse population needs into account, and ensuring those priorities are reflected in plans and budgets are critical to enhance health outcomes across the globe.

### Global Evidence to Inform Local Change

The Abt-led USAID Local Health System Sustainability Project (LHSS) collaborates with governments and other stakeholders in low- and middle-income countries to achieve sustainable improvements in affordability, access to, and quality of health care. We also generate knowledge and promising practices on health systems strengthening issues many countries share.

Although health sectors have limited resources, their challenges are not just about resource scarcity. Countries often struggle to establish national health priorities in a way that consistently uses evidence-based, transparent, fair, and inclusive decision-making processes. We recently generated important insights on how to institutionalize such processes for setting national health priorities. Establishing an evidence-based, fair, and accountable approach to priority setting helps ensure that a country's health investments are aligned with national health goals, such as universal health coverage, and that the needs of underserved groups are fully considered.

Health financing and governance go hand-in-hand, as sector resources need to be spent in the best way possible. This requires strong public financial management, among other things. Last year, LHSS advanced global learning on health budget execution by compiling lessons learned from eight countries that have made good progress. Experts met as part of the LHSS-Joint Learning Network for Universal Health Coverage Health Budget Execution Learning Exchange. They reached five key conclusions on how to improve budget execution:

- Health and finance ministries must collaborate for better budget execution
- Government-wide health budget reforms must account for health emergencies, uncertain utilization, and varied financing arrangements
- The Ministry of Health must engage with stakeholders to gain acceptance of health budget reforms
- Reforms require capacity development at all health-system levels
- Governments must commit and invest over the long term to improve budget execution.

## Strengthened Governance: Foundational for Resilience

Effective governance is especially important when a country faces an unexpected system shock that disrupts health care services or increases the number of people needing access to health care, or both. Such shocks can include conflict, natural disasters, health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, or economic crises.

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have faced such a shock amidst recent widespread migration flows, including the influx of migrants leaving Venezuela due to the country's economic, political, and social crisis. An estimated 5 million people and counting have left Venezuela since 2015, many of whom transit through or stay in communities in nearby countries like Colombia and Peru. Helping health systems respond to this challenge is part of the LHSS Project's work in the region.

In Colombia, our work with national and subnational governments has increased access to health care for migrants and host communities and has helped include migrants' needs in health planning. The LHSS "Comunidades Saludables" (Healthy Communities) activity supports government partners in addressing the needs of migrants and other people who are underserved by the health system, especially in areas with high concentrations of migrants and/or low capacity to respond to their arrival.

With LHSS support, migrants participated in the development of Colombia's Ten-Year Public Health Plan for the first time. This was significant in ensuring their voices were heard and considered as part of health system planning for 2022–2031. Our support led to the inclusion of migrants in national and regional health priorities.

LHSS also identified key community-based organizations in strategic cities like Cali and worked with them to improve people's awareness of how to access integrated health care services. Our technical support and grants helped expand the healthcare system's inclusion of Venezuelan migrants, Colombians who have returned after migrating abroad, and others in host communities. Since 2021, we have helped Colombian health authorities enroll more than 90,000 Venezuelan migrants in Colombia's national health insurance system.

Peru has also received an overwhelming number of migrants: By the end of 2022, Peru had received approximately 1.4 million Venezuelan migrants, including about 490,000 asylum seekers, the highest number of asylum claims from Venezuelans in any country. More than 320,000 Venezuelans in Peru are expected to need some form of assistance, including health care, and the influx of migrants is expected to continue.

In response, LHSS helped establish a new mechanism to improve access to the data required to prepare and respond to the growing need. The Peruvian Observatory of Migration and Health was launched in 2022, through a grant awarded to the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia. This rich database gives Peru and other countries on the migration path timely data that helps them plan and coordinate efforts to deliver health services to people who need them and strengthen cross-border continuity of care.

Since its launch, over 2,360 people have accessed the observatory data and over 300 people or organizations have received newsletters with migration and health insights. And this has led to action. For example, in May 2023, the Observatory hosted an online forum in partnership with the Chile migration observatory to discuss the migrant crisis at the Peru-Chile border, and called for action.

In other important work, LHSS collaborated with UNAIDS and the ministries of health in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Chile to assess cross-border HIV-related information and develop a road map to facilitate continuity of HIV care for Venezuelan migrants along the migration route. The road map was validated by the HIV program directors of Chile, Ecuador, and Peru, and USAID and UNAIDS representatives.



Building bridges with the community: Installed capacity in civil society organizations in Colombia

Watch la

SCAN TO WATCH VIDEO

**LEARN MORE:** Local Health System Sustainability Project Overview | Institutionalizing Explicit Processes for Setting National Health Priorities: Learning from Country Experience

**PROJECT:** Local Health System Sustainability Project (LHSS)

**CLIENT:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Adapting to Emergency Conditions in Ukraine

It has long been said that in war, no plan survives the first contact with the enemy. It is also true for plans to improve governance. When war broke out in Ukraine and the environment changed radically, Abt’s Good Governance Fund Technical Assistance Facility Eastern Partnership (GGF TAF EP) project responded to accomplish our mission in a variety of critical areas, including economic recovery, energy policy, and war damage assessment.

It was not the first pivot for GGF in the region. Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), GGF TAF EP was supposed to provide technical assistance and capacity building in four countries: Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia. In 2021, FCDO budget cuts eliminated the work in every country except Ukraine.

Then in 2022, Russia invaded. That posed a major challenge to the program. Our team of a dozen people adapted to address Ukraine’s new needs. In-country clients that the British Embassy Kyiv had identified and Ukrainian ministries set the priorities. It was an achievement to do any work at all in the conflict-affected country, much less complete projects. We were able to do so thanks to our adaptive management approach.

## Business Revitalization

The war wreaked unimaginable havoc on Ukraine's economy. Estimates of documented damage ranged as high as \$143.8 billion as of February 2023. Planning for rebuilding was an understandable priority. Abt partnered with the Kyiv School of Economics to promote the growth of the often overlooked Ukrainian small- and medium-enterprise (SME) sector. But many SMEs had fled Ukraine during the war, so the project and Ukraine's Ministry of Digital Transformation started supporting them in Poland as well.

While the forced migration to Poland may have been heart-breaking, it also opened opportunities for businesses. "The geographical position and common history of Ukraine and Poland create a powerful potential for business development and partnerships," noted Valeria Ionan, Deputy Minister of Digital Transformation. "We believe that Ukrainian and Polish companies will be able to successfully develop the established partnerships and mutually strengthen each other's results."





Among other things, Abt has:

Supported an analysis of the SME sector and worked on SME support policies, including an SME Support Strategy. Those policies suggested ways to address the institutional problems and practical challenges faced by SMEs led by women and underserved individuals and included gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) indicators in monitoring and evaluation.

Helped update the outline of the SME Support Strategy to include post-war recovery needs and budget estimates. The strategy focused on the needs of unoccupied regions and underserved individuals such as disabled veterans and female veterans, family members of those Missing in Action, and internally displaced persons.

Piloted export support initiatives. The project team selected 20 SMEs and promoted their exports by developing an online Ukrainian Exporters Catalogue for each SME with dedicated pages about their business and the goods they produce. GGF TAF EP also supported promotional activities in the Polish market.

## Energy Modelling

The war particularly strained Ukraine's energy sector. Ukraine's energy infrastructure was significantly damaged by the hundreds of bombs Russia had dropped, and the country's dependence on Russian energy was exposed when Russia cut supplies. "Once again, women are forced to light potbelly stoves, look for firewood, portable gas burners, and other improvised means to provide warm food, water, and heating to their loved ones," says Nataliya Boyko, a member of the supervisory board of state-owned Naftogaz, Ukraine's largest oil and gas company.

Ukraine had launched the development of an Energy Strategy for 2050 (ESU2050) before the war, then had to switch gears to take the conflict into account. With feedback from key Ukrainian stakeholders and international energy organizations, Abt and its delivery partner KPMG Ukraine supported the Ministry of Energy with models, data, capacity development workshops, and energy-relevant updates to the National Recovery Plan. We also helped draft the implementation plan for the ESU2050. The ESU2050 was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 21 April 2023.

We also conducted a pre-feasibility study of the reconstruction of the existing thermal power generation facility, changing the energy source to biofuels. The shift toward decarbonization and climate neutrality will be crucial for attracting future investors to secure the new direction of Ukraine's energy sector.

## War Damage Assessment

Russia created punishing conditions for Ukraine’s civilians. Cities such as Mariinka and Bakhmut in Donetsk region were completely destroyed. It was critical to understand the scale of what Moscow had done and determine the enormity of the rebuilding task and the scope of legal claims for international courts. So Abt and the Kyiv School of Economics developed a methodology for and performed a war damage assessment.

At a national level, the sectors most affected by the war have been housing, infrastructure, and industrial businesses. After a year of war, Russian armed forces had destroyed or damaged more than 150,000 residential buildings valued at \$54 billion; \$36.2 billion of infrastructure, including more than 25,000 kilometers of roads and 344 bridges; and \$8.1 billion of energy infrastructure, including all Ukrainian-controlled thermal power plants, hydroelectric power plants, 13 combined heat and power plants, and 30 oil depots. Russia didn’t spare any sector, though. The Russian military struck businesses, agriculture, education, healthcare, cultural and religious institutions, transportation, and finance.

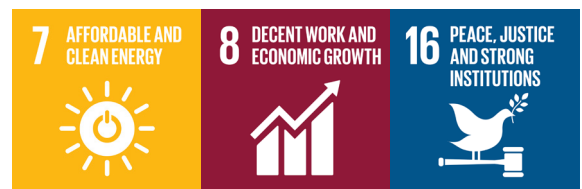
The scale of the war and the constant destruction as Russia tries to create the maximum humanitarian, energy, and financial crisis has been unlike anything the European continent has seen since World War II. It has required a new approach to planning donor aid projects; the usual risk matrices and long-term indicators have become irrelevant. In response, GGF TAF EP developed seven standardized methodologies to assess damage and losses, in the process taking GESI and environmental considerations into account. The team provided consultation, data collection, and analysis to nine ministries and trained 123 civil servants on the use of the Geo Informational System in assessments.

GGF TAF EP’s work has earned widespread recognition. The team was asked to join the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the Consequences of the War, a consultative and advisory body that reports to the president. Government of Ukraine representatives—the Invest Ukraine Office; Ministry for Communities, Territories, and Infrastructure Development; and Ministry of Justice, among others—used the results of GGF’s war damage assessment. The project team explained the assessment methodology at the request of the World Bank, the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions members, and the National Bank of Ukraine.

If the war continues, GGF TAF EP may have to pivot yet again. But for now, Ukraine has the tools to start planning to rebuild the energy sector and other parts of the economy with strategies that just might survive the first contact with peace.

**PROJECT:** Good Governance Fund Technical Assistance Facility Eastern Partnership (GGF TAF EP)

**CLIENT:** U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)



## Building a Blueprint for Inclusive Policy Making in PNG

Government capacity to plan, manage, and deliver quality education is a key building block for sustainable development, especially where there are stark equity gaps. And the most effective way for policymakers to know what to do and how to do it involves working and consulting with the people and organizations most affected. This process helps ensure that solutions are designed with and tailored to the unique needs of communities. This is why the Partnership for Improving Education (PIE) program in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has focused on helping government officers learn about and undertake participatory policy making.

Funded by the Australian government and implemented by Abt, PIE works to improve the delivery of, access to, and quality of education for children in early primary grades. The program supports PNG's National Department of Education (NDoE) in its efforts to promote equity throughout the education system. We provide training and technical support that helps the NDoE develop and implement a Gender Equity, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) in Schools Policy.

We're not writing policies for our government partners, as many externally-funded programs do. Instead, PIE takes a long-term and participatory approach. We helped the NDoE by developing tools and training so that a network of NDoE GEDSI staff could undertake comprehensive stakeholder consultations. To understand different perspectives, the NDoE staff consulted a wide range of stakeholders, including provincial and district education authorities, school leaders, teachers, parents, and even students.

The consultations sought input not only on the content of the policy, but also on the capabilities and resources required to implement it. Involving school-level stakeholders helped build momentum and instill confidence that the policy would be taken forward in meaningful ways. The NDoE Policy Planning Division was so impressed by the process that it plans to develop a new policy development manual using the GEDSI in Schools Policy process as a blueprint.

PIE's collaboration with the NDoE has helped strengthen skills and processes that will lay the foundation for more equitable education services.



**LEARN MORE:** Partnership for Improving Education Program

**PROJECT:** Partnership for Improving Education (PIE)

**CLIENT:** Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)



# Equity & Inclusion

## Changing Gender Norms in Southeast Asia

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In 2022, the World Economic Forum (WEF) estimated it would take 151 years to close the global gender gap in economic participation and opportunity. The economic impact of gender inequality is particularly problematic among low- and middle-income countries, where women account for a third or less of human capital wealth. The WEF estimates it will take 168 years to eliminate this gender gap in Asia and the Pacific.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is working to help address these issues by supporting women's economic empowerment and inclusive economic growth in Southeast Asia. From 2016 to June 2023, the Abt-led Investing in Women (IW) program employed an innovative approach in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar. IW partnered with the private sector, business leaders, impact investors, and gender advocates to increase women's economic participation and shift cultural barriers that limit women in the economy.

The issues IW addressed are significant. In Southeast Asia, women are much less likely to work full-time than men and are less likely to progress their careers. They earn much less than men on average, even with similar education levels, skill sets, and working hours. They also bear a much higher burden of unpaid work at home, especially in a crisis. What's more, women-owned businesses face systemic barriers to their growth, including financial institutions' unwillingness to provide adequate services.

The program had three pillars: workplace gender equality (WGE), impact investing, and influencing gender norms. To advance WGE, IW established and supported four business coalitions that have worked with 128 influential businesses representing over 1 million people. The coalitions are helping to shift workplace cultures, practices, and policy barriers to achieve WGE. To do so, they support companies in measuring progress on WGE through WGE assessments and employee surveys and address identified action areas through training and policy advisory services.

Under the second pillar, IW partnered with impact investors to incentivize investors to adopt a gender lens and provide access to capital for women-led small and medium enterprises (WSMEs). Using AUD 15.4 million in DFAT investment funding, IW brought in AUD 291.4 million in co-investment from private capital and other public sources. The program not only led to 83 WSMEs accessing capital, it also increased regional gender-lens investing activity by seven-fold.

The program's third pillar focused on influencing prevailing gender norms. Phase 1 focused on communication and advocacy, working through eight advocacy partnerships to reach 18.6 million people through social media. In Phase 2, IW partnered with 12 local organizations to implement campaigns aimed at shifting attitudes and practices to support women in the world of work.

The second phase of campaigns reached 242.6 million people through traditional media and 89.3 million through social media, far exceeding the target of 70 million. Campaigns aimed to raise awareness of the impact of gender norms; promote informed conversations related to gender and work; and show how gender norms limit women's economic opportunities. Communication formats included social media campaigns, online magazine articles, webinars, online learning modules, books, digital photo-sharing contests, and crowd-sourced content for online competitions.

In Indonesia, for example, where about 87 percent of the population is Muslim, IW's social media campaign promoting Islamic narratives supportive of women working reached 3.2 million people. IW trained 236 preachers on how to use these feminist narratives. A local partner, Yayasan Rumah Kita Bersama (Rumah KitaB), created an online community that promoted robust discussions on appropriate behavior and whether to comply with traditional social norms. Rumah KitaB also developed the Fiqh for Working Women book, which presents alternative narratives about Muslim working women. It can apply elsewhere to further understanding of religion's role in shaping attitudes toward gender equality.

**“**  
**DAPAT MABURA SA ISIP NG MGA ESTUDYANTE 'YUNG PAGTINGIN NILA NA MABABA ANG TECH-VOC.**  
**”**

For me, being a technical vocational graduate is a blessing. Hindi kasi lahat nabibigyan ng opportunity to pursue the course they want, and tech-voc would be the way for them to pursue education.

**IRENE OPEÑA**  
Assistant Manager  
FIRST College

**INVESTING IN WOMEN**  
SMART ECONOMICS  
AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

**Australian Aid**

What is your advice to those who plan to take tech voc careers in the future?

In the Philippines, the Edukasyon.ph campaign addressed gender-based job segregation in technical vocational education and employment. The initiative included a social media campaign that sought to generate discourse on gender norms within Edukasyon's community of students, parents, educators and employers. It reached 35.3 million people, nearly a third of the population.

In Vietnam, IW's social media campaign challenging traditional notions of masculinity reached 2.8 million people. A propaganda art campaign had an online reach of 200,000. IW trained 30 filmmakers about gender in cinema, and an artificial intelligence tool helped analyze gender stereotyping in advertising.

IW also supported research by campaign partners and independent researchers to develop a broader understanding of gender norms and how to measure their change through social media. Using qualitative and quantitative evaluations of impact, IW joined the cadre of researchers starting to try to understand how to evaluate the impact of social media on such initiatives. Respondents to a survey in Indonesia and Vietnam reported that some of the campaigns helped build a sense of social support and connection to others with similar views, values, and experiences: "Even if I don't receive support from my family, I receive support from other women who are part of the campaign," said a Filipino woman who participates in StartUp Pinay's Facebook group.

Campaigns also helped women challenge social and family expectations hindering them from pursuing their goals. One 23-year-old Indonesian woman described how she learned from the feminist magazine *Magdalene* that she does not have "an expiry date"; she is now resisting family pressure to marry by the cultural standard of 25: "I don't think I'm at the right moment to prepare to get married or get married at that age," she says. "I'm still pursuing what I want."

To build momentum for women's economic empowerment in Southeast Asia, DFAT started a new phase of IW in 2023. Phase 3 will build on the strengths of IW's lessons, networks, and partnerships. This next phase will play a significant role in creating more cohesive, dynamic, sustainable, and inclusive economies in a post-pandemic Southeast Asia.



## What did Investing in Women Achieve?

### Workplace Gender Equality



### Gender-Lens Investing



### Influencing Gender Norms



SCAN TO VIEW GRAPHIC

**LEARN MORE:** Investing in Women Program Overview | Investing in Women Website  
**PROJECT:** Investing in Women  
**CLIENT:** Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)



## Diversifying Leadership for Equitable Health Outcomes in PNG

Papua New Guinea (PNG) doesn't do well on development and health indicators. In 2022, it ranked 156 of 189 countries in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index, a composite of life expectancy, education, and income. Life expectancy hasn't risen as rapidly as it has in comparable countries, and the health system doesn't function well. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the immunization rate for measles, for example, is only 9 percent in the province with the worst coverage, while the national average is just 34 percent—less than half the global average of 85 percent.

Girls and women have particularly high unmet needs for health care. PNG's maternal mortality rate is stark: 192 per 100,000 live births in 2020 according to WHO data, compared with 74 in the East Asia and Pacific region. And the pace of improvement has slowed down alarmingly over the past decade.

The Abt-led PNG–Australia Transition to Health (PATH) program is an initiative funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to improve coverage and quality of health services in PNG. Among its activities, PATH is trying to strengthen the health system by increasing women's influence at both the national and provincial levels. Data suggest that having more women in the workforce and leadership roles enhances workplace performance, promotes innovation, increases accountability, and reduces costs. In the health sector in particular, research in Cambodia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe showed that where women have leadership roles, they often set different priorities that are more responsive to the health needs of the entire population.

In PNG, women account for 25 percent of senior leaders in the public health sector and 31 percent of health managers, even though women account for 48 percent of the population. DFAT is investing AU\$6.3 million into PATH's Sapotim Lida (Supporting Leaders) program, which aims to support diverse and inclusive leadership in the health system.

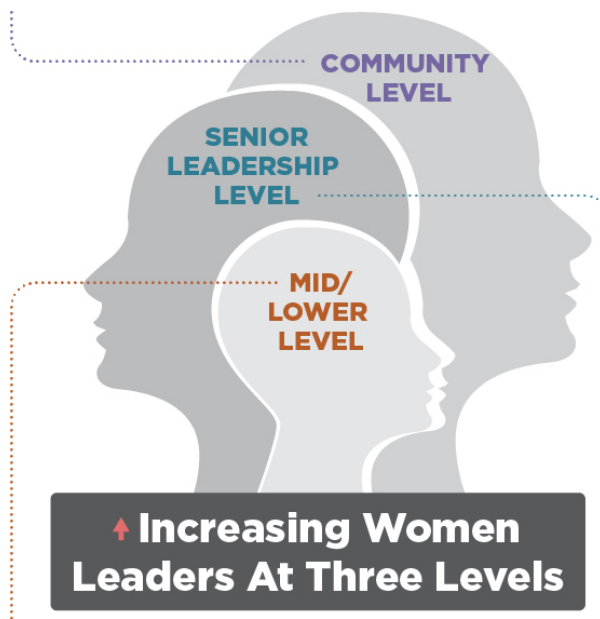
Launched in 2022, this three-year flagship program for gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) has a purposefully broad definition of leadership, working to increase the number of women leaders in the health system at three levels: senior, middle, and lower workforce and community.

Sapotim Lida recognizes that women need much more than training to succeed. That’s why the program offers support through a menu of service options including organizational policy reform, accountability and feedback mechanisms, and sensitization of men. Sapotim Lida began its journey by speaking with senior management teams from the National Department of Health, five participating provincial health authorities (PHAs), and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Department of Health (BDoH). We facilitated a participatory process to review challenges and gaps and jointly develop a workplan. Government officials and other local partners are helping to determine priorities and activities to support women’s leadership.

So far, the program has worked with newly formed GEDSI teams in the PHAs and BDoH as they deliver audits, sensitization workshops, and participatory action planning. We help them develop GEDSI policies and introduction packages to ensure all staff understand the policies. And we will also be offering leadership training for women and advocacy training for men.

PATH has high hopes for Sapotim Lida. PNG has spent a lot of money on improving health systems with little success—health officials and development partners believe women’s leadership in the sector can help change that. Over the years, both officials and development partners have recognized the need to strengthen the position of women in leadership, with the expectation that doing so will change priorities and improve quality standards and outreach to communities.

Supporting women who use the health system in advocating for **their own and their families’ needs**



Leadership development opportunities and developing workplace conditions **that help them achieve their potential**

Ensuring women are **respected and supported** when in key senior decision-making positions

Many people in PNG don’t seek out healthcare services from formal providers when they need them. They may doubt that formal health care will help them, based on negative perceptions or past experiences with the health system. But better and more accessible health services may increase demand for them.

Strengthening women’s leadership in the health sector is meaningful in and of itself. The hope is that it will be a significant part of the path to improving the country’s health outcomes, too.

**PROJECT:** Papua New Guinea–Australia Transition to Health (PATH) Sapotim Lida program

**CLIENT:** Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)





# Tackling Racial Bias in the U.S. Low-Wage Job Market

For years, efforts to improve economic well-being for low-wage workers in the U.S. focused on the employee: Get a better education and credentials. Get more training. Seek more mentoring and support.

Turns out that's not the whole answer, especially for workers of color. An Abt study on career trajectories for low-wage earners found that even when people started in the same jobs at similar starting wages, 10 years later Black workers' wage growth was 27 percent less than that of white workers. Racial barriers to advancement exist at nearly every step of the process on the employers' side: how they advertise jobs, find applicants, screen them, hire them, train and mentor them, assign tasks and work hours, pay them, treat them, promote them, retain them, and fire them.

It's not possible to analyze the barriers to economic progress for low-wage earners without recognizing how race discrimination is holding many of those workers back. However, while a wealth of research exists about the racial wage gap, little of this research is focused on low-wage workers. Even less information exists about how we can address bias as part of broader strategies to support their advancement.

## Potential Areas of Bias in Employment Processes



The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families wants to learn how bias intrudes into each step of the process and how to address those biases in the low-wage labor market. From September 2021 to March 2024, OPRE is engaging Abt to tackle those questions in a project that has included stakeholder consultation, a review of existing research, and site visits to document promising practices and highlight areas for future research. With a rapidly changing labor market as well as increased demands for racial equity, generating information about racial barriers in the workplace has taken on even greater urgency.

Our team consulted with employers, policymakers, researchers, and other interested collaborators. Importantly, we have worked with workers of color who are currently working low-wage jobs to incorporate their expertise as we drew out themes from the literature review, selected sites, and developed data collection processes and instruments. Enthusiasm for the results of our approach prompted OPRE to ask us for more information on our processes to help the office consider how other projects can incorporate expertise informed by lived experience.

These experts will continue to advise the project team through the study's conclusion. Their input so far has prompted our team to center workers' experiences of autonomy and agency—whether they are treated with respect and able to make decisions at work—as both an important outcome on its own and a way of reducing racial bias. Their input also made clear that when low-wage earners think about better jobs, they take into account a range of issues in addition to higher wages, such as predictable hours, job stability, and respect.

*Much of the existing research on employment focuses on discrimination. Studies of racial discrimination focus on employer decision making, meaning how an employer treats job seekers or workers of different racial backgrounds. In this project, we focused on bias. A process is biased if it systematically disadvantages qualified job seekers and workers of color, regardless of whether the employer had discriminatory intent or practice.*

The study's literature review goes beyond the typical research on the racial wage gap and focuses on low-wage workers, how racial bias permeates every phase of their employment process, and ways to address pervasive bias to support advancement. The review describes the numerous ways racial bias manifests itself in the low-wage labor market. The team considered direct bias, which stems from racist beliefs, prejudices, and attitudes that are inherent in an individual's actions or in broader processes, policies, and systems. The team also considered indirect bias, which comprises individual actions and organizational processes, policies, and systems that may appear neutral but disproportionately harm certain groups.

Abt's analysis outlines forms of direct racial bias in all five of the targeted categories of employment processes. In hiring, for example, job ad placement algorithms may target applicants of certain races for certain jobs, and hiring managers may look at candidate names they think "sound Black" less favorably. Job assignments may segregate workers of color into lower-paid jobs, and workers of color may be more likely to be laid off or receive poor evaluations for actions that don't lead to the same repercussions for white counterparts. Work culture can also negatively affect workers of color when they experience routine acts of discrimination that lead to denials of promotion and acts of harassment that not only hinder professional advancement but also cause stress and undermine well-being.

Our literature review also highlighted indirect racial bias across employment processes, often related to structural racism in the U.S. that harms job seekers and workers of color. Patterns of residential segregation mean that workers of color tend to live farther from employers, have less information about and access to job openings, and have a harder time with scheduling changes once hired. Racially homogenous social networks also mean job seekers of color often do not hear about good jobs. Other structural issues such as lower educational attainment, higher rates of criminal justice involvement, and less digital access and literacy also undermine economic progress for people of color.

With a solid foundation from the literature review, our team is now exploring what addressing racial bias in the low-wage labor market looks like in practice. We held initial calls with nine organizations for potential site visits, ranging from software firms hoping to make technology solutions more equitable to nonprofit organizations with cohort-based programs for employers to work on diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. Together with OPRE, we'll select four sites for in-depth visits this year. We will examine motivations for addressing bias and for the potential strategies that sites opted to pursue; how their strategies work; the experiences of staff members, employers, and workers; and whether they might be good prospects for more in-depth evaluation. We will also explore what broader research questions and methodological approaches could help OPRE identify interventions to address employment disparities.

Developing and learning from promising employer strategies that reduce racial gaps is imperative. Business as usual hasn't worked, and race-neutral approaches haven't reduced racial disparities in employment. If Abt and OPRE find potentially viable solutions, this project may be the first step in what may be a long—but invaluable—learning journey.

**PROJECT:** Employment Processes as Barriers to Employment in the Lower-Wage Labor Market

**CLIENT:** Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families



## Increasing Diversity and Earnings Through Apprenticeships in the U.S.

Apprenticeships are a common path to higher-paying jobs in many countries. Not so much in the U.S., where for decades, apprenticeships were primarily limited to training in the building and construction trades—an industry predominantly consisting of non-Hispanic white men. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI), with the goal of expanding apprenticeships to underrepresented populations and non-traditional industries other than construction.

The result was an unequivocal success in achieving this goal, according to an Abt evaluation of the initiative. AAI enlisted high percentages of people who have been historically underrepresented in apprenticeships and developed apprenticeships in new occupations. Our study found that employers received direct and indirect returns on their apprenticeship investments.

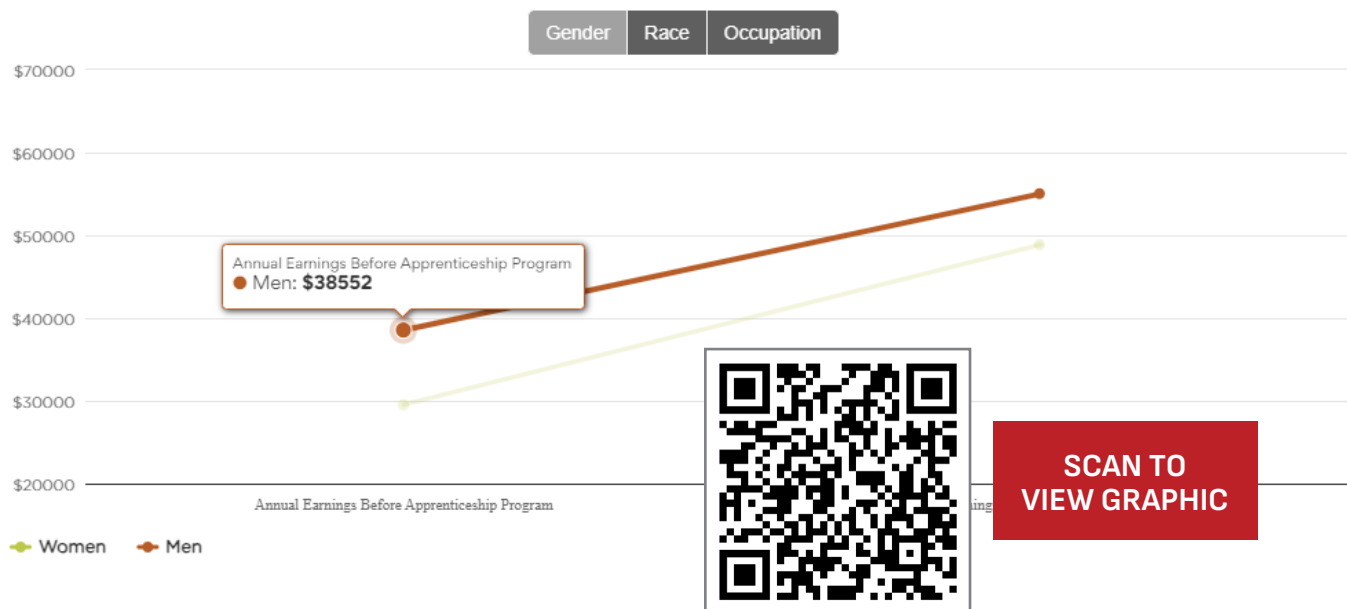
“Apprenticeships show promise to help employers identify and develop workers for a variety of occupations and improve company culture, something that is important in the current tight labor market” said Elizabeth Copson, the study’s deputy director. Apprentices themselves have also benefited: Participants increased earnings significantly, though the study could not conclusively say it was their apprenticeships that caused those increases.

Registered apprenticeships, which must meet specific government standards, combine classroom instruction with on-the-job learning from a mentor at a worksite. Apprentices gain occupational skills transferable to other employers and are paid progressively higher wages during the training. All apprenticeship programs supported by AAI were registered with either DOL's Office of Apprenticeship or with a federally recognized State Apprenticeship Agency. Under AAI, DOL awarded \$175 million in five-year grants to 46 grantees that included state government agencies, colleges, nonprofits, and sector-based organizations such as labor unions and trade associations. Abt evaluated the effectiveness of AAI apprenticeships for workers and employers and generated lessons for developing and operating apprenticeship programs.

Our evaluation found that AAI diversified the industries implementing apprenticeships. Grantees sought out employers to hire apprentices in a range of occupations. Three-quarters of the 2,600 AAI apprentices who we surveyed registered in nontraditional occupations, with 33 percent in manufacturing, 17 percent in healthcare, and 7 percent in IT.

Grantees recruited individuals from populations historically underrepresented in apprenticeships, including women, people of color, veterans, and people with disabilities: more than 60 percent of AAI apprentices were from underrepresented populations. Compared with all U.S. apprentices, a greater share of AAI apprentices were women or people of color.

### AAI Apprentice Earnings Levels and Growth



Abt’s evaluation found that AAI apprentices experienced substantial increases in earnings. Among all AAI apprentices, annual earnings grew by an average of 49 percent from the year before starting the apprenticeship to the year after, rising from \$35,408 to \$52,876. Among different occupations, apprentices in IT experienced the highest earnings growth at 174 percent, followed by apprentices in healthcare, who experienced a 97 percent increase.

Earnings growth for AAI apprentices was broad-based, with apprentices from all racial and ethnic groups experiencing growth in average earnings, though gaps remained in average income levels between groups. Earnings for Hispanic apprentices increased by 50 percent, compared with 45 percent for white apprentices and 37 percent for Black apprentices. This growth in earnings for all racial and ethnic groups is consistent with AAI’s goal of promoting racial equity. Additionally, women’s earnings rose 65 percent versus 43 percent for men. This suggests that apprenticeship may be a promising strategy for reducing a significant gender pay gap: The gap narrowed from 31 percent one year before the apprenticeship to 13 percent one year after.

The AAI evaluation also built evidence about the value of apprenticeship to employers. Abt’s study projected employers’ return on investment from the first program year and for five years after, including direct and indirect benefits. Five years after the end of the apprentice’s time in the program, the typical employer experienced an estimated 44 percent return on investment—that is, for every dollar invested in the apprentice, the employer ultimately earned \$1.44 in benefits. During the program, the typical employer didn’t recoup all its costs. But after the program, employer benefits were estimated between \$33,000 and \$40,000 for each apprenticeship program. This included both direct benefits (the apprentice’s productivity) and indirect benefits, such as reduced turnover, improved talent pipeline, worker loyalty, and company culture.

“Registered apprenticeships have allowed Baystate Health to build tailored, flexible training programs that often amplify training that was already happening. Since we tend to focus on using competency-based models, it ensures all of our registered training pathways have defined skills that are mastered by the employee as they learn. Our employees appreciate the national credential that apprenticeship registration affords.”

– Jason Pacheco, Director of Workforce Planning, Analytics, and Compensation at Baystate Health

Some questions remain unanswered, such as the extent to which apprenticeships are responsible for participants’ earnings gains; how to promote entry into higher-paying occupations, especially for underrepresented populations; and how to encourage employers to launch apprenticeship programs. That said, clear evidence now exists to promote apprenticeships in the U.S. And the indications are that it would be a big win for a diverse group of both workers and employers.

**LEARN MORE:** Expanding Registered Apprenticeship: Grantees and Their Programs (Report) | Expanding Apprenticeship to New Sectors and Populations: The Experiences and Outcomes of Apprentices in the AAI (Report) | Expanding Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities to Underrepresented Populations: Findings from the AAI Evaluation (Brief) | Do Employers Earn Positive Returns to Investments in Apprenticeship? Evidence from Registered Programs under the AAI (Report) | Equitable Earnings: Recognizing the Benefits—and Addressing the Shortfalls—of Apprenticeships (Podcast)

**PROJECT:** Evaluation of the American Apprenticeship Initiative

**CLIENT:** U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)



## Centering Youth in U.S. Homelessness Response Plans

4.2 million. That’s the estimated number of youth and young adults ages 13 to 25 who experience homelessness each year in the U.S. The real number may be higher as it’s hard to contact unhoused people, many youth and young adults aren’t in shelters, and some move between temporary sleeping arrangements with friends. The scale of the problem is enormous, and the impact significant: Housing instability and homelessness during this critical developmental period exposes young people to increased risks and undermines their ability to achieve their full potential.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) is trying to reduce that figure through a grant program that enables communities to design and implement youth homelessness response systems over a two-year demonstration period. Abt helps communities assess their needs related to ending homelessness among youth, create coordinated community plans, develop and implement YHDP demonstration projects, and prepare to transition from demonstration funding to alternate sources. We have supported urban, rural, and suburban communities and tailor our technical assistance to each community’s unique needs and goals.

As part of our support, we help grantees establish and work with Youth Action Boards (YAB) that include youth who have lived experience with homelessness. YABs play a critical role at every step of the YHDP process, including defining community needs and action steps and deciding how to distribute funding to support activities. The activities can include prevention, diversion, system navigation, crisis and permanent housing, and support services. After the funding decision, YABs monitor implementation.



“ Authentic youth collaboration is a cornerstone of YHDP and is woven throughout the process from planning to implementation and evaluation.”

– Kathryn Primas, Senior Associate and Project Co-Lead

Since 2017, we’ve undertaken robust consultation processes with 18 YHDP grantees to help them assess the scope of the challenge in their communities. Alongside youth leaders, we’ve held more than 100 meetings and listening sessions and met with more than 800 people across the country. By engaging invested partners from education, workforce, child welfare, and juvenile and adult justice systems, we have developed integrated strategies that enable communities to address the numerous root causes of youth homelessness, rather than simply addressing its symptoms.

To help our 18 assigned grantees with their community-wide plans, we facilitate workshops and technical assistance that emphasize equity and authentic youth collaboration. We help grantees develop homelessness response systems that emphasize low-barrier access to housing, positive youth development, trauma-informed practice, and equity. We also provide training in program design and grant management. Specific technical issues covered include HUD regulations; racial equity strategy; equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth; health management information system data analysis; and systems modeling.

With our assistance, grant recipients’ plans have resulted in a combined \$36.4 million in additional funds and annually renewing HUD funds plus more federal, state, and local money. The funding is earmarked for innovative, youth-specific services and housing projects. The recipients are expected to serve thousands of young people annually.

The ultimate goal: by partnering with young people closest to the issue, we will help communities get closer to ending youth homelessness.



**PROJECT:** Technical Assistance to Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Grantees

**CLIENT:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)



# Thriving Environment

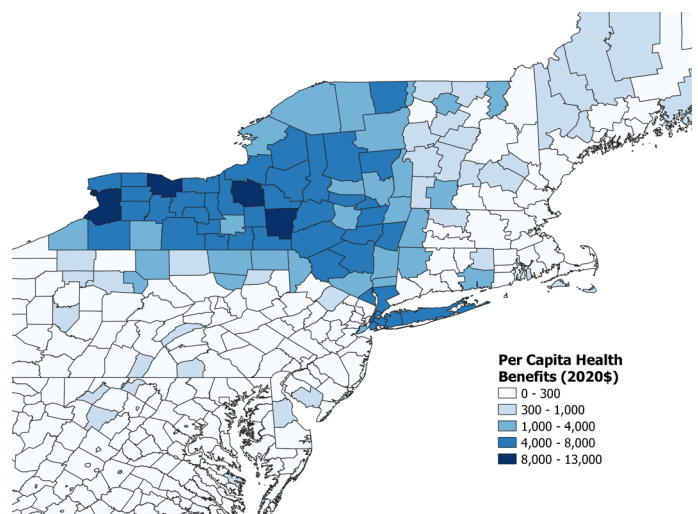
## Addressing Climate Challenges with Locally-led Solutions

### Quantifying the Health Benefits of Climate Actions in New York

It's one of the most ambitious climate measures in the United States. A 2019 New York State law requires carbon neutrality and net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. But the law and the initial plan to implement it had a problem: New York didn't have a complete understanding of the benefits of implementing the law, and the costs of cutting carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions initially appeared to outweigh the direct carbon benefits.

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), together with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, academics, industry, and others on the state's Climate Action Council, were developing a path forward to implement the law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. NYSERDA called in Abt to see if we had a different take. We did. We found that when you look at the picture more comprehensively, the full benefits—including the public health and air quality benefits—dwarfed the costs. Our analysis enabled the Climate Action Council's approval in 2022 of the plan, paving the way for funding and implementing it.

Building on our extensive work translating climate plans into health benefits, we quickly showed tangible and significant public health value of New York's proposed emissions reductions. Slashing CO2 emissions also reduces emissions of many other pollutants: fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, ammonia, and volatile organic compounds. The changes then improve air quality, resulting in significantly improved health outcomes. Thousands fewer people will lose days of work. Thousands fewer will need to go to hospital emergency rooms. Thousands fewer will get admitted. And tens of thousands fewer will die prematurely. We also modeled other benefits, such as health benefits from improved indoor air quality due to energy efficiency programs.





We used our Climate HealthCounts™ framework to model the avoided health outcomes and the dollar value of the benefits from the air pollution emission reductions in all 62 New York counties and in neighboring states. This framework relies on COBRA (Co-Benefits Risk Assessment), a health impacts screening and mapping tool Abt created for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The bottom line: up to \$170 billion in health benefits between now and 2050, more than enough to offset the \$55 billion costs of emission reductions. The benefits include \$40 billion in health and environmental benefits of increased active transportation (walking and biking) and \$9 billion in benefits from reduced emissions from residential energy efficiency programs.

New Yorkers will benefit, and low- and middle-income communities will be a priority. Benefits of reduced fossil fuel combustion will be higher in urban areas due to higher emissions and a larger impacted population. Benefits of reduced wood combustion will be higher in upstate areas. And the annual benefits will grow over time as pollution rates decrease.

That's not the end of the story. Reduced air pollution will help neighboring states, too. The plan could serve as a model for other states to follow to mitigate and adapt to climate change risks and protect disadvantaged communities. They can use Abt's Climate HealthCounts™ framework to evaluate their health benefits. Abt's evidence led to action that will lower greenhouse gas emissions in New York, thus contributing to curbing global warming.

**LEARN MORE:** [New York's Bold Climate Plan Approved After Abt Analysis | Climate HealthCounts™](#)  
**PROJECT:** Air Quality and Health Effects of New York State Decarbonization Pathways  
**CLIENT:** New York State Energy Research and Development Authority



## Mitigating Methane Emissions with Scalable Solutions Around the World

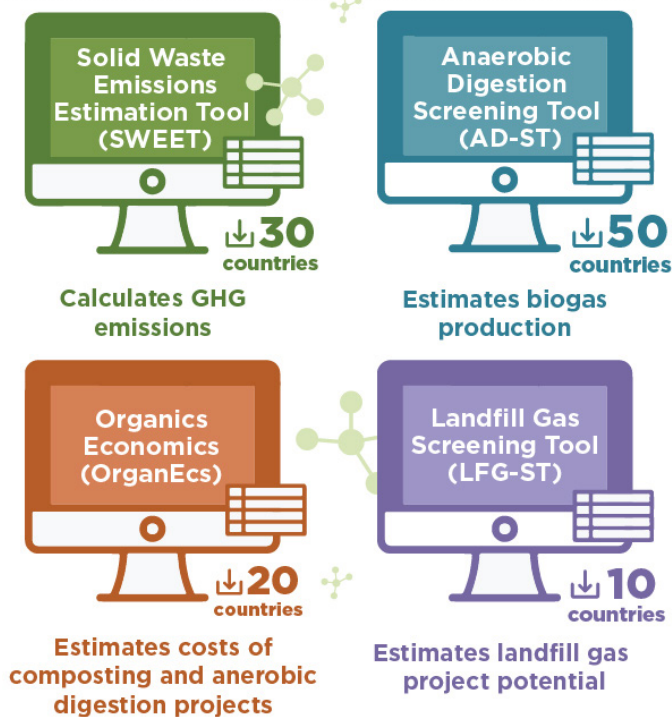
Methane is a potent, short-lived greenhouse gas that's responsible for almost half of the current observed rise in global temperatures. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says that methane accounts for about 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. It stays in the atmosphere for less time than carbon dioxide (CO2) but has about 85 times the warming impact. Methane is also linked to harmful ground-level ozone formation. Because of methane's exceptional warming potential and short life span compared with CO2, big reductions would have a rapid and large effect on climate change.

Abt has provided more than a decade of methane support to the EPA, a lead partner in the Global Methane Initiative (GMI). We provide a range of tools, measurement methodologies, feasibility and cost-benefit analyses, and technical assistance to guide methane mitigation efforts around the world.

The Global Methane Pledge, signed by over 150 countries since 2021, established ambitious worldwide methane reduction goals. The pledge also reflects a mounting global recognition of the importance of including methane mitigation solutions in holistic climate action strategies.

In India, a GMI member since 2004, Abt is working with Indian partners to reduce methane emissions, as well as capture and use them productively. Our EPA-funded approach, on behalf of the GMI, tackles two of India's largest methane emission sources: livestock manure and solid waste.

### TOOLS DEVELOPED BY ABT FOR GMI

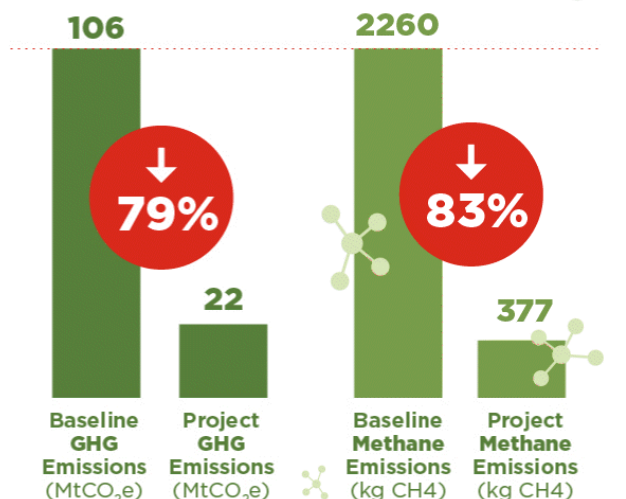


### Using Biogas for Cold Storage in Rural Areas of India

One practical option to address methane focuses on capturing the gas produced by decomposing livestock manure and turning it into clean energy, like biogas. This is accomplished in systems, known as digesters, where anaerobic microorganisms break down the organic material in an enclosed structure. The resulting biogas could then become an energy source to power cold storage or refrigeration for farmers, instead of getting released to the atmosphere. This process produces co-benefits by meeting farmers' energy needs and reducing climate impacts from methane emissions.

In Maharashtra, India, we applied several tools and resources Abt developed for the EPA under GMI to conduct a feasibility analysis for the creation of a biogas facility to power a cold storage system. The Anaerobic Digestion Screening Tool assesses how much biogas an amount of manure or food waste could generate. The OrganEcs tool looks at the costs of organic waste management program activities.

### BIOGAS PILOT ESTIMATED EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS



Our analysis showed the feasibility and potential benefits of the proposed facility. A pilot biogas project in Maharashtra could cut an estimated 79 percent of total annual greenhouse gas emissions and 83 percent of annual methane emissions from the baseline. Capturing the livestock manure and using it to generate biogas could provide an important cold storage solution for rural villages where electricity is either unavailable or unreliable. That would reduce crop waste and loss and help reduce food insecurity. The facility would benefit farmers by providing flexibility for decisions on the timing and quantity of their product sales in the market. Resulting higher profits would then help farmers pay for the maintenance of the cold storage systems.

It's a replicable solution that could scale elsewhere in India and beyond.

## Implementing Existing Policies for Source Separation of Municipal Solid Waste in India

Another major source of methane emissions in India is solid waste, which emits methane when organic wastes—from food scraps, wood, or paper—decompose. A country of 1.4 billion people, India handles a vast amount of municipal solid waste and is actively expanding its national solid waste and circular economy practices. The government recently passed a law to guide the handling of solid waste. Regulations call for separation of waste into biodegradable (wet), non-biodegradable (dry), and hazardous (can't be reused or recycled). Restaurants, hotels, and hospitals, and other industries that generate the majority of local waste are supposed to treat what they can on site through methods such as composting. They pay a licensed vendor to cart away and treat the rest.

Many cities in India are working to improve solid waste management to increase compliance with these laws. East Delhi is one of them. The East Delhi Municipal Corporation—supporting a geographic area of nearly 140 square kilometers and a population of nearly 182 million people—has an additional set of bylaws that build off the national rules. The focus is on organic waste, food waste, and other green waste.

To support these source separation efforts in East Delhi, Abt worked with Delhi-based The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) to develop solutions that would strengthen compliance with national and municipal rules. After bringing together stakeholders to explore the issues, we developed a training course on source separation regulations that TERI delivered to 86 waste generators and vendors.

Like the capture of methane from manure, this intervention is replicable elsewhere, too. We can tailor the material on national rules and add any variations to meet local needs. Taking local conditions, culture, and stakeholder needs into account is the best way to make progress in curbing emissions of this dangerous, climate-changing gas.

**LEARN MORE:** Societal Benefits of Methane Mitigation | Spotlight On: Methane

**PROJECT:** Technical and Capacity Building Support for the Global Methane Initiative

**CLIENT:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



## Protecting Indigenous Environments in the U.S. through Climate Resilience

For more than two decades, the largest wildfires in New Mexico have threatened the Pueblo de San Ildefonso. Wildfires pose risks to many elements of Pueblo life: its traditions, its spiritual values, and the health of its members. “Natural and cultural resources were lost,” recalls Raymond Martinez, Director of the Department of Environmental & Cultural Preservation and Tribal Council Representative, of one of the recent large fires.

The wildfires came on top of longstanding concerns about air and water contamination stemming from neighboring Los Alamos National Laboratory, where nuclear weapons development took place during the WWII Manhattan Project, and hazardous wastes were released to the local environment. The Pueblo is one of many Tribal Nations actively seeking ways to minimize the combined effects of climate and contaminants from wide-ranging resource extraction and industrial practices within their lands.

2022 could be the year things started to turn around. Tribal Nations got some good news when the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) passed late in 2021. They suddenly would have access to \$13 billion in direct investments and additional billions in competitive grant opportunities for climate and environmental projects (totaling around \$130 billion). This was followed in short order by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which poured another \$89 billion into grants with Tribal eligibility.

Of course, that posed another set of problems. To access funding, Tribal Nations had to navigate the bewildering world of grant money in the 1,000-page BIL: knowing what was available, when, and for which activities and how to submit often complex grant proposals to agencies to get the money. Ironically, this large influx of funds, being administered in large part through a competitive grant system, has created an environmental justice issue. Many Tribal Nations don't have the resources to navigate the grant application process.

Abt has worked with the Pueblo and other Tribal Nations for a decade on environmental studies, tribal human health risk assessments, restoration planning, and climate resiliency. Investing our own time to equalize the playing field for Tribal Nations, Abt created a toolkit to track opportunities and eligibility for the BIL. Our guide listed more than 50 grant opportunities by category to help Tribes quickly determine which opportunities have Tribal eligibility, when to expect the opportunities, and their approximate value.



### Climate change is not a myth.

It'll be hard to change this individually but as a community, we need to realize if we don't change the way we treat the Earth, She is going to die on us. **Everything we use will be affected by the Earth's climate change.** Without water we wouldn't have crops, animals, water to drink. Without animals, we wouldn't have food to eat. Without things we lose, we wouldn't be who we are.



—Youth participant from climate adaptation and resilience planning workshop

We disseminate information on new opportunities—descriptions and due dates—to Tribal Nations and other stakeholders in a newsletter once or twice a month, which also now includes information on IRA dollars. We offered training at the Tribal Lands and Environment Forum, a national Tribal conference, and created an online site that acts as a clearinghouse of grant information. It's available to Tribal Nations, as well as Environmental Protection Agency staff, and local state government agency staff.

Our teams work closely with Tribal applicants in shaping proposals to ensure the request reflects their needs and priorities, and we help ensure compliance with agency requirements. In the past year, we helped shepherd six grant applicants through the application cycle. Selected Tribal Nations got \$2.9 million for a variety of projects. They ranged from climate adaptation and wildfire mitigation and resilience plans to watershed action and emergency evacuation plans. When needed, we also help with implementation of these awards, such as writing climate adaptation plans or wildfire mitigation plans.

Take the Pueblo de San Ildefonso, for which we had helped write a climate adaptation and resilience plan. Starting with Tribal input gathered through community workshops, the Pueblo identified its priorities on what to preserve and protect—often governed by the lands, plants, and wildlife that are both sacred and environmentally important. Participants included elders, youth, and resource managers. The workshops produced a community vision that reflects the voices of those impacted. Abt provided environmental science input: What's the climate risk? How severe are the consequences for the community?

With this plan in hand, the community had a set of prioritized actions it wanted to take to protect their environment and health. And with the BIL and IRA, resources were now available to support them. Abt was ready to help. We collaborated with Martinez to write multiple grant proposals, marrying his substantive knowledge about Tribal priorities with our grant writing and technical insights. "Your commitment and passion for your work really helps us tackle these tough topics that are at our Pueblo's doorstep," he told our team.

The integration of Tribal knowledge about needs and context and Abt's expertise in environmental science and government compliance is critical. The result in 2022: \$2 million in grants to implement wildfire and contaminants air quality monitoring and improve resilience to drought at sacred springs within Pueblo.

**LEARN MORE:** [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Summary of Environmental Grant Opportunities with Tribal Eligibility](#) | [New Abt Tool Helps Tribes Maximize Benefits of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)

**PROJECT:** Abt initiated efforts



# Empowering Communities in the U.S. with Insights About Environmental Contaminants

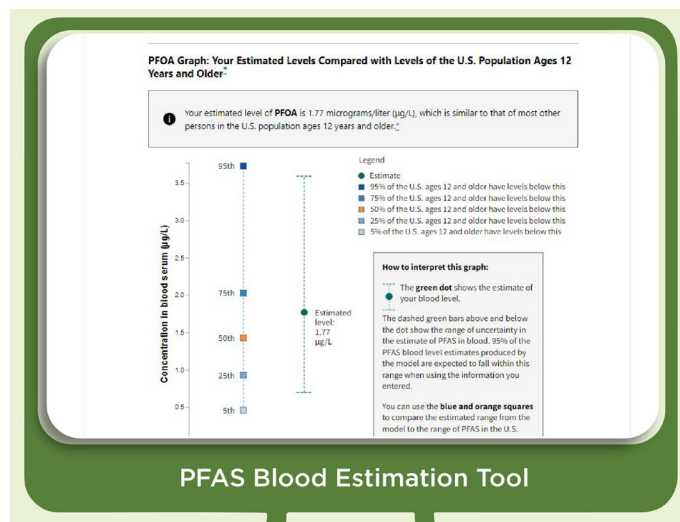
They're everywhere. And they have been associated with immune system harm, increased cholesterol levels, and increased cancer risk. "They" are PFAS, also known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a class of man-made chemicals found in everything from cosmetics, food packaging, clothing, firefighting foams, and non-stick frying pans. There's a reason they're called the forever chemicals. Many PFAS can stay in your body for years because many don't easily degrade. They can persist in the environment for decades, resulting in ongoing exposure to humans and wildlife from a variety of sources, including drinking water, food, air, dust, and soil.

With growing publicity about PFAS and their dangers, there's intense concern about people's exposure to PFAS, particularly from contaminated drinking water. Communities want to know about PFAS in their drinking water and residents exposed to contaminated water want their blood tested. But it's difficult to test everyone. So we built on Abt's extensive work on PFAS and partnered with the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to develop an online tool to estimate personal exposure to four PFAS (those with the most data), with no blood sample required. This will give people who are concerned about their own exposure more information that they can use to take action to address their potential risk.

To use the online tool, released in November 2022, users enter their water PFAS concentration levels. Public utilities, state agencies, or testing results for private wells are common data sources for these levels. Some users can find water system sampling data collected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA), which is included in the tool. Users then input their age, sex, weight, use of bottled and filtered water, and other factors like previous births and breastfeeding history. The tool then estimates the levels of PFAS in the person's blood on that day and compares it with average levels in the U.S. population.

To create the underlying model, Abt analyzed data from 21 published studies that reported drinking water measurements and corresponding concentrations of the four PFAS in human blood. Our team used advanced methods to calibrate and test the model and account for individual's possible exposures.

We tested the model against actual blood samples and found the predictive model accurate. Although the tool is not intended to predict the risk of negative health effects, its core function of predicting blood levels based on an individual's exposure represents a significant advance in understanding personal PFAS risks and is a useful community resource. With estimates in hand, concerned people can pursue getting their blood tested, work to determine the sources of their PFAS exposure, and try to minimize them.



The PFAS blood estimation tool was accessed nearly 2,600 times in the first six months following its release in late 2022.

“ The PFAS Blood Level Estimation Tool addresses a critical community need, empowering individuals to learn more about their PFAS exposures. The team from Abt have been great partners in this effort, providing the needed technical expertise and project management skills. ”

– Rachel Rogers, MA, PhD, senior environmental health scientist, CDC/ATSDR

The tool is just the latest facet of Abt’s PFAS work. Abt also helped EPA’s Office of Water, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, create regulations for PFAS. We worked on EPA’s recently proposed health protective standard for PFAS in drinking water and provided technical support for the benefit–cost and environmental justice analysis for the proposed rule options to decrease the amount of PFAS in public drinking water. We have studied methods and their costs to remove PFAS from drinking water. Abt also samples water, fish, and soil to determine contamination levels and potential adverse outcomes for wildlife and habitats.

All of this work addresses one of the most widespread environmental challenges the global community faces. Abt is helping empower people to learn about their health risks and enable communities to reduce them.

**LEARN MORE:** Community-facing toxicokinetic models to estimate PFAS serum levels based on life history and drinking water exposures | Bayesian Estimation of Human Population Toxicokinetics of PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS and PFNA from Studies of Contaminated Drinking Water | Spotlight On: PFAS, Environmental Contamination, and Health

**PROJECT:** Community-facing Pharmacokinetic Models to Estimate PFAS Serum Levels Based on Drinking Water Exposures

**CLIENT:** ATSDR



# Our People & Operations

We've always worked differently. For nearly 60 years, Abt has pioneered what it means to be a social impact organization, inside and out. Beginning with founder Clark Abt's concept of a "social audit" for business, today an ambitious commitment to equity and sustainability guides our global operations.



# Employee Wellness

People growing isolated as they work from home. Children’s education gaps from school closings. Long-term COVID symptoms. The COVID-19 pandemic spawned major life shifts with lasting psychological effects. Abt employees weren’t immune to the impact of disruptions of life patterns. So, we continued to offer a wide variety of resources for all of our employees. And our staff used this critical support extensively.

## Our Support Resources

CCA Inc. provides an array of employee assistance for Abt staff. Its website outlining services is available globally. CCA offers wellness seminars and well-being events. Many employees sought clinical assistance for issues such as stress and anxiety. In addition, CCA counseled Abt staff on work-life issues ranging from childcare to legal issues to elder care.

CCA also provides behavioral health support for employees when local events occur, from severe weather events such as Hurricane Ian to shootings such as the mass shooting of Asian Americans in California and the murder of Tyre Nichols. The company sent staff a long list of important links to contact before, during, and after Hurricane Ian. Abt sponsored two support groups after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade abortion decision. The topics of webinars ranged from the future of work after the pandemic and how to care for the caregiver to embracing happiness and workday workouts.

In 2022, we renewed our WELL Health Safety certification. The WELL Health-Safety Rating is an evidence-based, third-party verified rating for all new and existing building and facility types focusing on operational policies, maintenance protocols, stakeholder engagement, and emergency plans. Corporate Services documented activities to support building safety and cleanliness. Total Rewards documented our COVID safety protocols, other emergency preparedness programs, and our health service resources (sick leave policies, comprehensive health benefits, support for mental health recovery, etc.). We also reported our stakeholder engagement and communication work to promote health and well-being.



Our offices in Australia and the United Kingdom also offer an array of services. Behavioral health help is available from a variety of providers, including Indigenous providers, for everything from emotional stress and interpersonal conflict to drug use issues, financial difficulties, and bereavement.

## The Well-being@Abt Employee Networking Group

In FY23, Well-being@Abt focused on providing opportunities for staff to explore different mental health practices, hear from leaders about their experiences with mental illness, and begin conversations around burnout and how to prevent it. One highlight: the new leave policy under which U.S. staff gets five weeks off regardless of tenure. In a change from the past, the policy doesn't allow carryover of time off to the following year. This approach encourages vacations for a healthy work-life balance.



## Global Benefits

With equity as our cornerstone, in 2022 we prioritized improving our global benefits for our employees around the world. We implemented a consolidated health benefits strategy that includes a consistent minimum benefit package and minimum level of health coverage. We will continue to focus on an equitable approach to benefits.

## Safeguarding at Abt

Abt continued its safeguarding efforts with a refreshed policy that outlines our approach to preventing and responding to harm to our staff, those we serve, and communities where we work. Abt is committed to the following principles:

- We will take a survivor-centered approach. We are committed to a human rights-based approach to ensure that we consider survivors' rights and needs first.
- We are committed to action. We will respond to all reports, concerns, or allegations in a fair, reasonable, and timely way in accordance with Abt's Investigations Policy.
- Prevention is a shared responsibility. We will develop safeguarding strategies with appropriate levels of dedicated capacity and resources at all levels of the organization to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. We expect everyone to contribute to a safe environment.
- We are committed to an intersectional approach to safeguarding. We strive for equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work, so we recognize that exploitation and abuse are fundamentally grounded in inequality, often gender inequality, and the intersection of gender with other forms of inequality, including race, migration status, socio-economic status, age, sexual identity, gender identity, and disability.
- We are committed to accountability and transparency. We will ensure high-level oversight and accountability around our safeguarding efforts.

Nothing is more important than the safety of our staff and the people with whom we work. We ground all of our activities in an environment that is physically, psychologically, and emotionally safe in all settings.



# Financial Health

## Closing the Gender Pay Gap

The media's coverage of International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day in 2023 was unrelenting in its description of the stubborn gender pay gap, which has barely budged in 20 years. A recent Pew Research analysis showed that in 2022, women in the U.S. made 82 cents at the median for every dollar made by men, compared with 80 cents in 2002. "The gender pay gap has hit a glass ceiling of its own," The Washington Post intoned.

Abt is steadfast in its commitment to end the gender pay disparity. And we have done so, while ending the racial pay gap too. We take equity and the well-being of our employees seriously. The story of how we reached this achievement offers a model for other companies.

In 2019, Abt advanced our commitment to gender equality with the pursuit achievement of the first level of EDGE Certification. The three-tiered EDGE (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) methodology is the global business standard for gender equality. It measures representation, pay equity, effectiveness of policies and practices to ensure equitable career flows, and inclusiveness of the culture as reflected in career development opportunities. We were the first U.S. government implementing partner to achieve EDGE certification. And in 2021, we were the fifth U.S. company to achieve the second level certification—Edge Move — both in the U.S. and on a global level. In doing so, Abt eliminated our gender and racial pay gap.

Our compensation policy and practices enable us to maintain parity despite staff turnover. Throughout 2022, we used a compensation equity analysis in every employment offer and pay adjustment. We conducted quarterly regression analyses, a best practice for understanding pay differences within the organization, looking for both gender and race pay differences. We considered years of experience, education levels, and other factors to see if race or gender was the only explanation for disparities—and took action if that was the case.

Closing the gaps was the easy part. Maintaining a closed gap is why we systematically monitor pay. In addition to monitoring, Abt uses self-developed tools for addressing ad hoc inequities and evaluating offers to candidates. We base salary offers not on an applicant's earnings history but on what people in comparable jobs at Abt earn. These efforts are part of our ongoing and evolving process for being equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible.



# Ethics & Governance

Abt's leadership in sustainable business began nearly 60 years ago, when founder Clark Abt pioneered the concept of a "social audit" for business. The impact measurement methodology quantified the benefits Abt operations create for employees, society, and the environment. Since then, sustainability and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) management and continuous improvement have been baked into our DNA.

## Leading in Sustainability

In March 2023, Abt became the first-ever company to earn the new sustainability certification designed for the professional services industry. The NSF/ANSI 391.1: General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Professional Services standard certifies professional service organizations based on environmental, social, economic, and sustainable supply chain criteria. Abt earned the highest "Leadership" level certification for transparency and exemplifying sustainability management in the market. "We are thrilled and honored to be the first organization certified under this new standard, demonstrating Abt's longstanding commitment and leadership in the sector to integrate sustainable practices and policies across our global operations," said Abt President and CEO Kathleen Flanagan.

Accredited by the American National Standards Institute, NSF facilitated the development of the standard at the request of stakeholders—including U.S. federal agencies—to raise the corporate performance profile of the professional services industry. Abt tracked development of the certification following the launch of the standard in 2019 and in 2022 entered a pilot to test the inaugural certification.



NSF 391.1  
Sustainable  
Business Practices  
**LEADERSHIP  
CERTIFIED**

Prerequisite criteria for certification include, among other criteria, documented ethical business, human rights, and labor policies; a publicly available environmental policy; integrated sustainability principles and practices in the company’s code of conduct; demonstrated greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions; a commitment to support nonprofit organizations and/or provide pro bono services; and policies to implement supplier diversity and increase spending with diverse suppliers.

The work that enabled Abt to achieve this certification positions us to meet and exceed climate and ESG-related criteria increasingly required by clients. This includes the Biden Administration’s establishment of sustainability-related goals and climate mandates for each federal agency such as mandatory compliance rules for procurement. With our long experience, we find ourselves positioned to be ready for these mandates and continue to lead on ESG integration and climate action.

## Code of Conduct

In 2022, Abt updated our Code of Conduct to shift from an emphasis on corporate actions to a focus on employee behavior. The message: act with integrity and do no harm. This applies to all those with whom we engage: colleagues, clients, and the communities with whom we work.

All Abt employees are responsible for doing their part to create and ensure a safe working environment free from harassment and misconduct. Ensuring the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of our staff and the community partners with whom we work is paramount. Our employees know that they must report all incidents promptly to supervisors or to the Legal or Human Resources teams. Employees have Abt’s pledge to provide a survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to all reported incidents, particularly during investigations into safeguarding violations.



*At Abt, we do the right thing even when no one is looking...Our values demand it, and **it's part of our mission.***



—General Counsel Brian Roemer

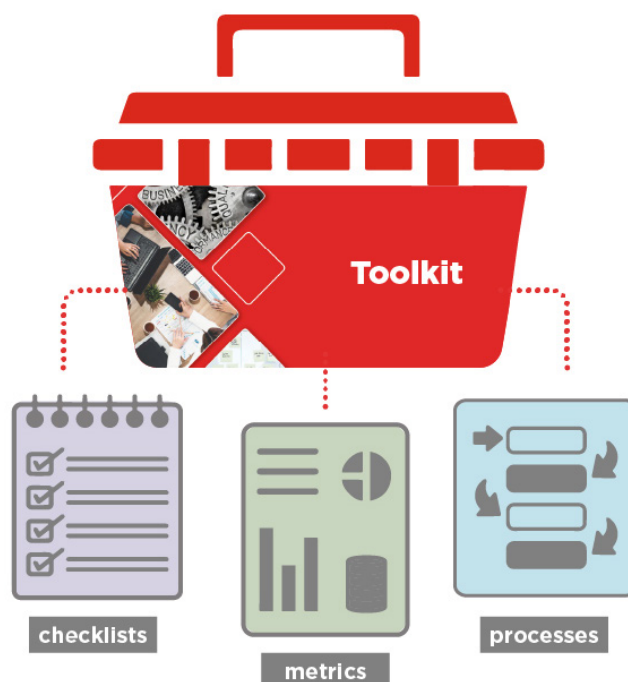
Safeguarding refers to preventing and responding to harm caused by our organization or our partners to the people working in the organization and the people whom we serve. To promote the safety of our staff and community partners, we enhanced our global safeguarding processes and procedures, including a new expanded safeguarding policy. The likelihood of exploitation or abuse increases when individuals are in a vulnerable situation and where unequal power dynamics exist. Abt's commitment to safeguarding includes protecting staff from harm and inappropriate behavior, including discrimination, bullying, or harassment. Our policies also are designed to prevent and respond to harm, including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, caused by our organization to the people we serve. These policies reinforce Abt's commitment to meet the standards of preventing and responding to harm.

Our Code of Conduct is a guide to working ethically and honestly in our highly regulated business environment. We are accountable for our choices and actions. We honor our commitments. "At Abt, we do the right thing even when no one is looking," says General Counsel Brian Roemer. "Our values demand it, and it's part of our mission."

## Continuous Improvement

Three years ago, we made a decision to strengthen and fortify our international operations through business process management and continuous improvement. Abt institutionalized a Business Process Management (BPM) Framework, Playbook, and Toolkit to provide consistency and standardization across our operational processes. These resources have been designed to build BPM skills across the organization and are available to all staff, especially department leaders, who use the tools to design and manage their processes. The Toolkit includes 26 BPM resources to document, improve, and optimize operations and enable transparency, accountability, and role clarity across our work. This will make it easier to work at Abt for our project teams globally.

Abt's BPM Team facilitates business process design efforts within functions such as Human Resources, Procurement, Grants, Finance, and other groups. With the focus on optimizations and improvement, the process design teams, and functional leadership are required to identify, capture, and communicate process performance metrics to become more data-oriented. We always ask, "What If?" for our clients. Now we're asking that of ourselves. The results will improve our international internal operations, and that in turn will improve the way we do our work for our clients and their partners: a win for everyone.



# Equity as Our Cornerstone

As we advance on our equity journey, we focused last year on ensuring equity for our global employees through new Total Rewards benefits. These changes reached 1,230 staff working in 46 countries. Moving forward, they will be able to take advantage of one global healthcare plan and enjoy expanded sick leave in countries that don't provide a minimum amount of leave.

## Equity-Centered Benefits

In the U.S., after the U.S. Supreme Court's abortion ruling paved the way for states to restrict women's access to the procedure, Abt implemented a medical travel benefit for travel expenses related to medical treatment obtained more than 100 miles from home. Employees can use the plan to pay for transportation and lodging related to obtaining medical care, including care for transgender adults and youth, with up to a \$4,000 lifetime maximum.



## Talent Management

Advancing an equity agenda among our staff requires reflecting inward. To that end, Abt has rolled out mandatory equity training courses for all Abt staff around the world. The training deals with a host of important topics: transgender and gender diverse identities, casteism, colorism, and ableism.

To create more equity in our professional development benefits, we changed our policy to provide in-service education benefits to staff who work fewer than 40 hours. This will particularly help people who identify as female, who most often are those who work fewer than 40 hours.





For the second year in a row, we sponsored project management certifications for more than 50 employees to become Project Management Professionals (PMPs) and Project DPro Practitioners—the world’s leading project management certifications. We select the employees with an eye toward diversity and equity.

Our mentoring program is unique and we use different mentor dynamics to meet different employee needs. The approaches include peer-to-peer, reverse, and group mentoring, as well as hour-long sessions of four 15-minute interviews with different potential mentors to achieve the right match. To date we have hosted two activities, with a total of 155 attendees, and 70 staff connected with a partner in an official ongoing mentoring relationship. Mentoring is a proven approach for providing skills-development and networking opportunities for underrepresented employees to minimize challenges they face as they make their way into leadership positions or new responsibilities.

## Reflecting Inward

Our Reflecting Inward assessment and learning program looks at how equity considerations play out in our internal culture, policies, and practices. 2022 saw an expansion of mandatory Reflecting Inward training series by covering the topics of ableism, casteism, and colorism. Intersectionality is critical to Abt’s perspectives of and approach to equity, which led to a fourth training course on transgender and gender diverse identities. With increasing invalidating legislation around the world and throughout the United States, it is the responsibility of Abt and all our employees to support one another in creating a more equitable world within and outside of Abt.



## Employee Networking Groups (ENGs)

Last year saw the welcoming of the latest ENG, Disability Pride at Abt, committed to centering people with disabilities and people caring for those with disabilities at Abt. The Abt ENGs officially became One Global Abt groups representing and providing activities for staff around the globe.

Abt recognizes ENGs as the cultural epicenter of the organization. They give those from historically excluded identities the chance to meet and discuss ways to create learning experiences for colleagues about their group.



Each ENG also celebrated an awareness month: U.S. Black History Month (Black at Abt), U.S. Women's History Month (Women at Abt), Mental Health Awareness Month (Well-being at Abt), Pride Month (PRISM), U.S. Hispanic Heritage Month (Somos Abt), and U.S. Career Development Month (Emerging Leaders).

Hundreds of Abt employees have joined ENGs. Women at Abt is the largest, with 229 members, followed by Well-being at Abt (233), Black at Abt (186), PRISM (158), Somos Abt (107), and Disability Pride (84).

# Environmental Responsibility

Climate change is threatening our ability to achieve our mission—to *improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people worldwide*. It causes operational and programmatic disruptions and can limit the effectiveness of our work and lessen our impact if we don't build our solutions with climate as a consideration.

Clients are rapidly expanding their outlooks and requirements, asking their contractors and suppliers, *how are you contributing to slowing climate change?*

## Abt's First Climate Office

Abt has been reducing our carbon footprint for over a decade. And in July 2022 we formally established our first Climate Office with the charge of catalyzing, incubating, and accelerating climate-readiness across Abt. This and the appointment of Abt's first Chief Climate Officer, Eric Reading, are significant milestones. They represent a whole-of-Abt approach to addressing the climate crisis. We apply ambitious climate solutions to our internal operations, just as we do for our clients in our work globally.

The Climate Office has already achieved important operational wins in its short tenure. The office:



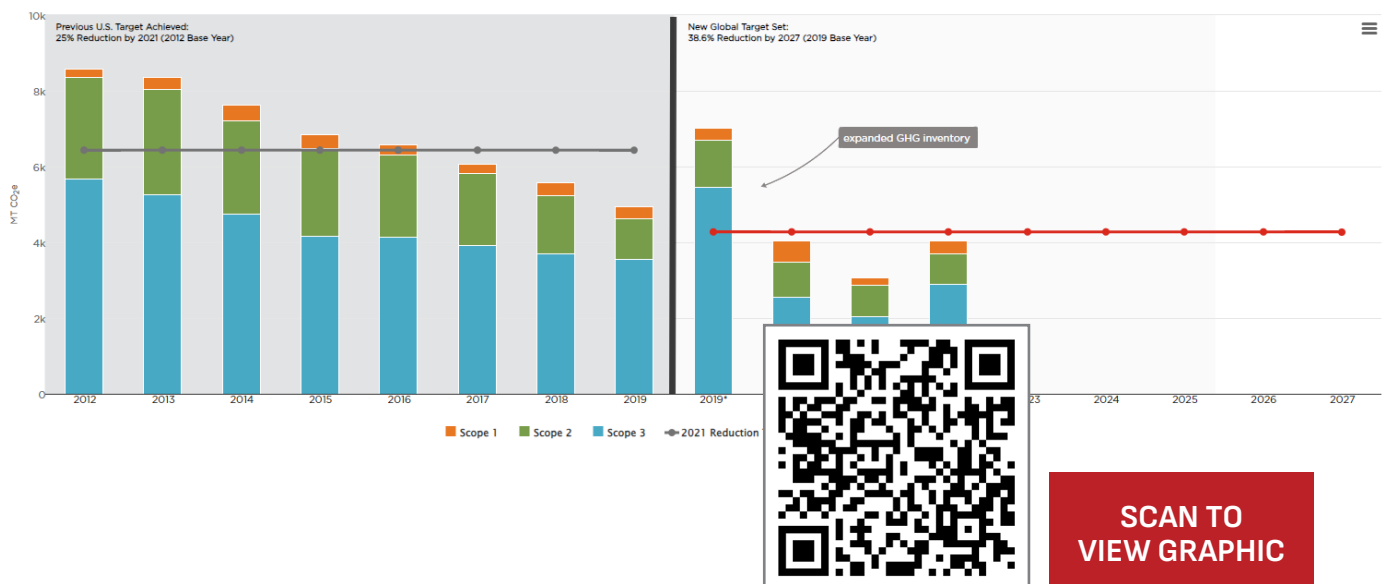
- Implemented sustainability risk language into the Employee Code of Conduct
- Refreshed our Environmental Policy for global use
- Helped us to become the first professional services company to achieve *NSF/ANSI 391.1 General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Professional Services certification*
- Completed verification of near-term and 2050 net-zero GHG reduction targets with the Science Based Targets initiative.

## Emissions Targets

In June 2022, we set and verified Abt's science-based target to reduce our global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 38.6 percent by 2027 from our 2019 base year.

*Abt Global commits to reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions 38.6 percent by 2027 from a 2019 base year. Abt Global also commits to reduce absolute Scope 3 GHG emissions from fuel and energy related activities, business travel, and employee commuting 38.6 percent within the same timeframe.*

Abt is already below our 2027 emissions target because of pandemic-level interventions and changes to the business environment since 2020. This is also a result of intentional strategies, such as reducing our U.S. and U.K corporate office footprints in favor of co-working sites and remote or hybrid staff schedules. Abt's short-term strategy is to ensure that "new normal" post-pandemic emissions stay below these current levels and don't rise. As of 2022, Abt has reduced our global emissions 41.9 percent from our 2019 base year.

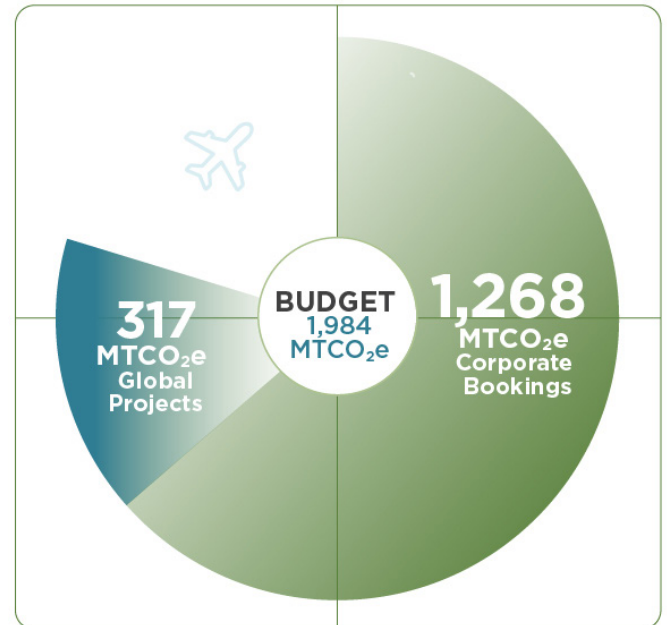


## Air Travel Emissions Budget

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Abt's air travel emission dropped 73 percent. But in 2022 we started to see an increase in air travel globally. We know that we need to manage our operations carefully to keep us on track to achieve our 2027 target.

To do so, Abt implemented an annual air travel emissions budget to manage this emissions source. We developed a suite of tools to enable the adoption of proactive air travel management with decision-makers, including interactive dashboards, scenario planning, and more. Over the next year, we will be integrating air travel emissions planning with financial planning while developing decision-support matrices to ease adoption and promote progress toward our goal.

### **ABT AIR TRAVEL EMISSIONS BUDGET**



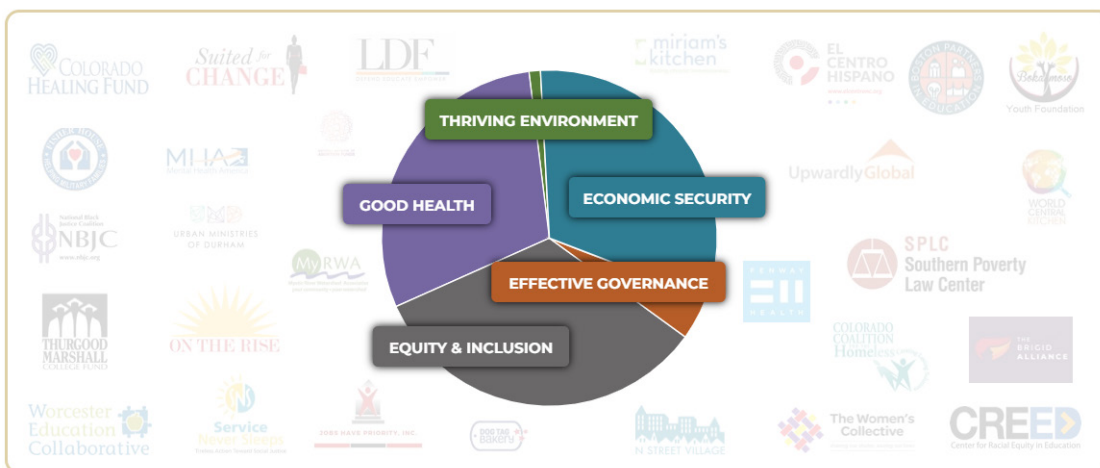
*Abt Classic (U.S.) - FY23*

# Our Communities

We live our mission—improving the wellbeing of people—in numerous ways in communities where we live, work, and operate. Volunteering is an additional way, beyond our work, that Abt employees promote our mission, backed by financial support from Abt for causes that are meaningful to our company vision and teams. Equity remained at the heart of all we did.

## Giving Financial Assistance

In FY2023, starting April 1, 2022, Abt and our staff funded a variety of crisis efforts, from water test kits in Jackson, MS, to earthquake relief in Syria and Turkey. Staff in our Brisbane office participated in the four-day Trek for Rights, sponsored by UN Woman, across Cradle Mountain in Tasmania to raise money for the work of UN Women in Bangladesh with Rohingya refugees. The Papua New Guinea staff raised funds for Movember, the men’s health charity, and for our colleague Florence Momoa’s cancer treatment. We donated to help those affected by Hurricane Ian, which devastated the Fort Myers, FL, area, where we have a call center and staff. We made donations to the Colorado Healing Fund after the Club Q shooting, which targeted LGBTQIA+ patrons on the eve of Transgender Day of Remembrance.



**SCAN TO  
VIEW GRAPHIC**

Abt Global Australia was a finalist for the Queensland Corporate Volunteering Award. “The award said, “The program has been able to demonstrate the significant positive outcomes brought about in the Queensland community.”

## Giving Our Time

Abt staffers helped those in need around the globe, including people in communities where we live who were facing severe challenges. Abt policies such as a social impact floating holiday encourage volunteerism, which took many forms.



Our Durham, North Carolina, staff partner with **Urban Ministries of Durham**, which tries to end homelessness and fight poverty by offering food, shelter, and a future to neighbors in need.

Volunteer activities include mentoring women on career skills, distributing food, assembling safe sex kits, environmental cleanups, and helping people experiencing homelessness transition to secure housing.

A D.C. native, Daisha Johnson is always conscious of giving back to her community. When she learned about a volunteer opportunity at the Women’s Collective from her Employee Network Group, Women@Abt, and heard a presentation about the collective’s history, she knew it was the right place for her.

Women’s Collective founder Patricia Nalls was diagnosed with HIV shortly after her husband and child died from AIDS. In 1990, Patricia set up a private phone line in her home for women living with HIV to share their struggles and concerns and advertised it with flyers in her doctor’s office. As the number of women grew, she transformed the effort into a confidential support group for women to come together to laugh, cry, share resources, and gain strength from each other.

“Patricia’s story about her strength and perseverance really resonated with me and made me grateful for the opportunity to help and listen to others,” Daisha says.

After the presentation, she got straight to work. Volunteers split into groups and packed hygiene bags, helped with administrative tasks, assisted with the food pantry, and helped clean up the office. “Everyone was appreciative of our help, and it was a joy to experience,” Daisha says.



Each year, we carry out one pro bono project in partnership with a community-based organization aligned with our goal to embed equity into all that we do. This annual effort is designed to use our resources to strengthen the impact that the nonprofit organization already has in its community. We ensure our support is sustainable and scalable by the nonprofit. This past year, we worked with the Worcester Education Collaborative (WEC), which promotes systemic equity and educational excellence for all children. We devoted 375 hours to position WEC to strengthen its partner relationships and measure its impacts for people, community, and systems.



## Mobilizing Support for Colleagues

It wasn't Maria Claudia de Valdenebro's first brush with climate change. The Abt graphic artist had been through this before in their Cape Coral Florida, home, where ubiquitous canals make sure no homeowner is far from water.

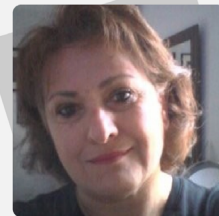
But 2022's Hurricane Ian was different. "Water was coming everywhere," she says. Then the wind picked up. "It was like we were inside a washing machine" as gusts reached 155 mph, Maria Claudia added. Water submerged all but the roof of her car. Furniture. Books. Appliances. Clothing. All destroyed. Power and phone service were out for three weeks.

Was there a little good news? Yes. Metal slats on windows kept debris out. Most walls were plaster and withstood the water damage. The Red Cross came. Neighbors helped each other out. And her Abt colleagues provided a lot of support—through fundraising, administrative support while she was unable to work, and other assistance.

"It lifted my spirits," she says. And it helped her husband, who had had four strokes and couldn't help Maria Claudia with the cleanup and other tasks. Seven months later, Maria Claudia is still dealing with the effects. "We don't know what's going to happen," she says. Whatever does happen, she knows Abt and her colleagues have her back.



*"[My husband] was feeling the world coming to an end on his head. When he saw we were getting help from the office, **it was just amazing.**"*



—Maria Claudia de Valdenebro



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2023

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# GRI 1: FOUNDATION 2021

## 3. Reporting in Accordance With the GRI Standards

### Foundation 7: GRI Content Index

This document is organized by GRI Disclosures and serves as Abt's 2023 GRI Content Index.

### Foundation 8: Claims of reporting in accordance with the GRI Standards

This Report has not been prepared in accordance with the GRI Standards, Comprehensive option but includes content Abt Associates have chosen to disclose publicly at this time. Abt has voluntarily followed GRI reporting guidelines since our inaugural Mission Impact Report, published June 2018, and plans to extend our reported disclosure threshold each year as appropriate.

# GRI 2: GENERAL DISCLOSURES 2021

## 1. The Organization and Its Reporting Practices

### 2-1: Organizational details

Abt Associates, Inc. is a privately held professional services firm headquartered in Rockville, Maryland USA. Our employee stock ownership program (ESOP) was established in 1975, just ten years after the company was founded. It is one of the oldest ESOPs in the U.S. and no one individual has a significant share of ownership.

Abt Associates serves more than 50 countries and territories in the regions of Australia, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Americas, South and Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. We have eight corporate locations in the U.S., two in Australia, and one in the U.K.

### 2-2: Entities included in the organization's sustainability reporting

Abt Associates, Inc. includes our parent company—Abt Associates, headquartered in the U.S.—as well as our Abt Australia and Abt Britain entities.

### 2-3: Reporting period, frequency, and contact point

This report spans multiple time frames depending on the topic in focus. This includes the 2022 calendar year, Abt's 2023 fiscal year (April 2022 to March 2023) and our clients' fiscal year designations. All relevant timeframes are noted throughout the report.

Abt issue our Mission Impact Report on an annual basis in June. Please send comments or questions about this Report to [impact@abtassoc.com](mailto:impact@abtassoc.com).

### 2-5: External assurance

Abt does not engage in external assurance for GRI reporting at this time. Our global greenhouse gas emissions inventory is externally verified by a qualified third-party and reported to The Climate Registry biennially.

## 2. Activities and Workers

### 2-6: Activities, value chain, and other business relationships

See the [About Us](#) section in the 2023 Mission Impact Report

Abt Associates is a private professional services firm that works on U.S. domestic policy and international development. Abt uses data and bold thinking to improve the quality of people's lives worldwide. From increasing crop yields and combatting infectious disease, to ensuring safe drinking water and promoting access to affordable housing—and more—we partner with clients and communities to tackle their most complex challenges. Our diverse staff of more than 3,200 operate on the ground in more than 50 countries alongside our clients, enabling us to tailor our solutions to meet their needs and the needs of those they serve.

The Abt supply chain is a diverse mix of professional services providers offering expertise in Education, Environment & Energy, Food Security & Agriculture, Governance & Justice, Health, Housing, Communities & Asset Building and Workforce & Economic Mobility. Beyond basic operational requirements like IT, Vehicle support, and office needs, Abt secures sizeable quantities of insecticide, spray and personal protective equipment for use in operations internationally. While this carries moderate costs, the transaction count is smaller in comparison to the services work performed.

The supply chain is stable with minimal disruption. Predominantly services-based awards present little impact to the supply chain. Abt regularly starts and ends contracts both domestically and internationally and faces typical challenges partnering with subcontractors to perform elements of the statement of work that Abt deems necessary.

Where Abt does engage suppliers for materials in support of our contracts, the volumes of procurement are insignificant to the broader services aspect of the work performed. One notable exception is our USAID contract for Vector Control and the follow-on contract, Evolve. Abt engages several key suppliers globally for specific product needs to support project operations.

### 2-7: Employees

#### Associated UNGC Principle: 6 Associated SDG: 8

Total Number of Employees FY23: 3,254. Percent of Abt global employees by employment contract and sex:

| Employment Contract | Sex    | FY23 |
|---------------------|--------|------|
| Permanent           | Female | 47%  |
|                     | Male   | 53%  |
| Temporary           | Female | 55%  |
|                     | Male   | 45%  |

Percent of Abt global employees by employment type and sex:

| Employment Contract | Region        | FY23 |
|---------------------|---------------|------|
| Permanent           | Domestic      | 42%  |
|                     | International | 58%  |
| Temporary           | Domestic      | 5%   |
|                     | International | 95%  |

Percent of Abt global employees by employment contract and region:

| Employment Contract | Region        | FY23 |
|---------------------|---------------|------|
| Permanent           | Domestic      | 42%  |
|                     | International | 58%  |
| Temporary           | Domestic      | 5%   |
|                     | International | 95%  |

To establish these values, Abt looks at average global headcount across the fiscal year  $\left(\frac{\text{first day FY23} - \text{last day FY23}}{2}\right)$ .

### 3. Governance

#### 2-9: Governance structure and composition

##### Associated SDGs: 5, 16

Abt's Board of Directors is comprised of eleven members, including the Chairman of the Board and Abt's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Board members sit across four committees: Finance and Audit, Nominating and Governance, Human and Reputational Capital, and Compensation. Our Human and Reputational Capital Committee is updated quarterly on topics pertaining to social, environmental, and economic impacts.

| Governance Body    | Age Group |       |      | Sex    |      |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|------|--------|------|
|                    | <30       | 30-50 | >50  | Female | Male |
| Board of Directors | 0%        | 0%    | 100% | 36%    | 64%  |

The Board of Directors is comprised of ten external, non-staff individuals. Abt's CEO is the only executive member of the Board. All board members with the exception of the CEO are independent from Abt Associates and may serve a maximum of 15 years or until they reach the age of 75.

27% of Abt's Board of Directors self-identify as non-white and 36% as female.

With expertise ranging from diplomacy and healthcare policy to global economic development and finance, this team of luminaries sets the company's strategic direction and accountability in addressing the most challenging economic, social, and environmental issues of our time.

Additional information on our governance structure can be found on our website:

<https://www.abtassociates.com/who-we-are/board-of-directors>

#### 2-10: Nomination and selection of the highest governance body

##### Associated SDGs: 5, 16

The Nominating and Governance Committee of the Board nominates Directors based on their independence and diversity, as well as their experience and expertise in a variety of areas including economic, environmental, and social topics. In evaluating each candidate, the Committee considers factors such as willingness and ability to devote sufficient time to their duties as a Director, willingness to leverage relationships to attract top and diverse talent, a confident personality, tolerance for ambiguity, and an informed and reasoned approach to complex business problems.

#### 2-11: Chair of the highest governance body

##### Associated SDG: 16

Gary Perlin, retired Chief Financial Officer of Capital One Financial Corporation, currently serves as Chairman of the Board.

#### 2-12: Role of the highest governance body in overseeing the management of impacts

##### Associated SDG: 16

Goals pertaining to climate action and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are developed by Abt's Global Sustainability Program and approved by the Chief Executive Officer and executive leadership team.

Abt employs an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework based on global risk management standards, including COSO and ISO 31000. The objective of the ERM program is to identify and address risks that could prevent Abt from achieving our strategy. We also use the frameworks and tools of our ERM program to manage unanticipated risks when they arise. Identified risks—such as operations in fragile states, cybersecurity, climate change, and regulatory compliance—are ranked based on risk exposure and management preparedness, and appropriate action is taken. Key risk indicators are regularly monitored.

Abt engages an outside firm to conduct this process. The firm brings collaboration tools that collect the views of a wide cross-section of Abt leaders about the risks that impact our strategy and also provides perspective about how other peer firms evaluate these risks. This perspective allows Abt to understand how well our ERM process does in identifying top risks and whether Abt is focusing on the right risks when comparing our results to the market. Once a year, following our annual ERM process, our General Council and Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer presents findings from the review to the Board of Directors.

## **2-13: Delegation of responsibility for managing impact**

Accountability and direction for strategic issues—including those pertaining to economic, social, and environmental topics—are ultimately set by our Board of Directors, specifically the Human and Reputational Capital Committee. Chief executives then delegate oversight of actions accordingly to Vice Presidents, Directors, and Senior Managers, with regular reporting of progress and challenges to both executive and board-level leaders.

Our Senior Director of Climate Integration regularly reports to our executive leaders and the Board of Directors on Abt's sustainability strategy, priorities, goals, and performance.

## **2-14: Highest governance body's role in sustainability reporting**

Abt's sustainability reporting is formally reviewed and approved by our Chief Executive Officer, Kathleen Flanagan.

## **2-15: Conflicts of interest**

### **Associated SDG: 16**

Annually, each Director updates their conflict of interest form. The Board Secretary works with Abt's General Counsel and Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer to ensure that mitigation plans are in place if conflicts of interest are identified.

## **2-17: Collective knowledge of highest governance body**

Associated SDG: 4

Annually, the Nominating and Governance Committee reviews and updates—as needed—the Board training plan, which addresses a number of important topics relevant to Abt's business. Topics include but are not limited to, government contracting and the associated regulatory and legislative environment, cybersecurity, and more.

## **2-18: Evaluation of the performance of the highest governance body**

Annually, each Board Committee conducts an anonymous and independent assessment of their work, composition, and performance against their stated duties. The results of those assessments are provided to the committee chairs and reviewed/discussed at a committee meeting, where potential actions and/or changes are identified and an implementation plan is developed to address any findings. Potential actions include changes to committee composition, work plan, preparatory materials, and more.



## 2-20: Process to determine remuneration

### Associated SDG: 16

Abt is committed to attracting and retaining individuals who demonstrate high performance and commitment to our mission, clients, and the communities we serve. As a performance-based company, Abt rewards employees for the value of their accomplishments and contributions. Abt's compensation philosophy is a key part of its total rewards package used to convey how employees are rewarded for their contributions. Abt is committed to fair and equitable pay practices for equivalent work. As an equal employment opportunity/affirmative action employer, this includes all protected classifications: color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), marital status, military status, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information. To ensure equity, pay differences are evaluated on a yearly basis using a regression analysis. It is Abt's practice that any differences in pay are due to bona fide business factors such as:

- Competencies, education, qualifications, certifications, relevant experience, skills, seniority, performance, merit, any collective bargaining, contractual requirements, or business, organizational requirements, and geographical cost of labor.

The Compensation Department including the Senior Director of Total Rewards, and the Chief Operating Officer, oversee the process for determining the scope of the Compensation Policy for Abt. External consultants are procured for the advisement of executive compensations.

## 4. Strategy, Policies, and Practices

### 2-22: Statement on sustainable development strategy

See the [Letter from Our CEO](#) in the 2022 Mission Impact Report.

Our Human and Reputational Capital Board Committee is updated quarterly on topics pertaining to social, environmental, and economic impacts.

Additional information on our governance structure can be found on our website: [abtassociates.com](http://abtassociates.com)

### 2-23: Policy commitments

#### Associated UNGC Principle: 10

#### Associated SDG: 16

To maintain the highest standards of business conduct for Abt employees, the company has an established Code of Conduct. Abt provides regular Ethics and Compliance training to all staff globally as well as other resources such as the anonymous Ethics and Compliance Helpline and the Audit Committee Helpline.

When Abt employees have questions about the Code of Conduct or are concerned about conduct that they believe violates Abt Associates' standards or the law, we encourage them to talk to their manager. They may also contact:

- A higher level of management
- Human Resources
- General Counsel / Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer

Regardless of the person they choose to talk to, the company is committed to responding to each situation quickly and completely. We have helplines available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and do our due diligence to ensure each concern is thoroughly reviewed.

The Precautionary Principle is a core element of how we pursue our mission. We systematically evaluate potential risks and benefits to human health and the environment across every engagement and ensure mitigative measures are employed when the risk potential is evident. In addition, it is our policy to conduct research in a manner that protects and safeguards the rights and welfare of human subjects and is in accordance with applicable international, federal, state, and local regulations. In order to accomplish this policy, Abt Associates has an Institutional Review Board tasked with reviewing our research in accordance with applicable requirements.

Abt's Freedom From Harassment policy prohibits harassment of any kind. Harassment violates Abt's Code of Conduct which clearly states that all employees shall be treated with honesty, integrity, and trust. Harassment includes, but is not limited to bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse. Our commitment covers all internationally recognized human rights covered by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Abt policies are confidential and are not made publicly available. Policies are approved by the highest level in the department and differ depending on the subject matter. They are owned by the Chief Human Resources Officer, General Counsel and Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer, and Vice President of Marketing and Communications. Our Code of Conduct establishes standards that all employees in all offices are expected to follow. While local customs in the countries where we work may vary, all our employees are held to our corporate standards for ethics and behavior.

In addition, Abt has established a Supplier Code of Conduct, which outlines the standards all suppliers doing business with Abt are expected to follow. More information can be found here:

<https://www.abtassociates.com/work-with-us/supplier-resources>

## 2-24: Embedding policy commitments

### **Associated UNGC Principle: 10**

### **Associated SDG: 16**

Abt's Code of Conduct established standards of business conduct that are applied uniformly at all Abt Associates locations and followed by all employees. References in the code to "employees" are intended to cover not only Abt staff but also advisers, consultants, contractors, and other temporary workers. The Code of Conduct applies to all Abt employees and members of our Board of Directors worldwide, including all subsidiaries. Employees or Directors cannot use a contractor, agent, consultant, broker, or other third party to perform any act prohibited by law or by Abt Associates policy.

We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of business conduct and ethics. Our Code of Conduct reflects the business practices and principles of behavior that support this commitment. We expect every employee and director to read and understand our Code of Conduct and its application to the performance of their business responsibilities. In terms of procurement, Abt Associates shall source and procure goods and services matching the needs of the business and mission with the right supply market, through effective and efficient use of funds in compliance with corporate policies and procedures, applicable U.S. or other Government Public Law, and client or donor procurement regulations under all contracts and awards.

Abt additionally implemented our Supplier Code of Conduct in 2021, which sets out the minimum expectations and standards of business required by all suppliers when doing business with or on behalf of Abt Associates. More information can be found here: <https://www.abtassociates.com/work-with-us/supplier-resources>

## 2-25: Processes to remediate negative impacts

**Associated UNGC Principles: 1, 8**

**Associated SDGs: 1, 5, 8, 16**

Abt Associates is an organization with strong values of responsibility and integrity. Our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics contains general guidelines for conducting business with the highest standards of ethics.

We are committed to an environment where open, honest communication is the expectation, not the exception. We want employees to feel comfortable in approaching supervisors or management in instances where they believe violations of policies or standards have occurred.

When employees have questions or want to report any concerns regarding questionable accounting or compliance matters, or concerns regarding issues of non-compliance, potential fraud, Code of Conduct violations, or other such violations by company officers, the Chief Executive Officer or a member of the Board of Directors, they can use the Audit Committee Helpline:

- Phone: 888-309-1558
- Web: <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/48834/index.html>
- Both are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Abt places an importance on receiving feedback and continuing to improve its processes with clients and employees alike. We take feedback into consideration for updates to existing procedures.

## 2-26: Mechanisms for seeking advice and raising concerns

**Associated UNGC Principle: 10**

**Associated SDG: 16**

See Our [Ethics & Governance](#) section in the 2023 Mission Impact Report

We employ a number of measures to ensure staff behave in accordance with our standards and in compliance with regulations that govern our work.

These include:

- A comprehensive Code of Conduct.
- Policies on business processes and procedures that are easily accessible to all employees.
- Robust training on policies regarding corrupt practices, anti-trafficking, freedom from harassment and non-retaliation.
- Two 24-hour anonymous helplines for reporting any potential misconduct, one monitored by management and one monitored by the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee.
- One WhatsApp phone line managed by Abt's Director of Ethics & Compliance

For more information, see Disclosure 2-25.

## 2-28: Membership Associations

- AcademyHealth
- American Council for Technology-Industry Advisory Council
- American Society for Training & Development d/b/a Association for Talent Development
- Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management
- Gartner Inc.
- Global Compact Network USA
- Humentum (Inside NGO)
- IntraHealth International Inc.
- National Council of State Housing Agencies
- National Minority Supplier Development Council
- Professional Services Council
- Society for Health Communications
- Society for International Development
- The Climate Registry
- The Executive Leadership Council
- U.S. Global Leadership Campaign
- Washington Exec, Inc.
- World Trade Center Institute, Inc.

## 2-29: Approach to stakeholder engagement

Abt's people engage continuously with key stakeholders, both internal and external, as part of routine business. To evolve and deepen our understanding of how our work and operations impact key stakeholder groups, we undertook a stakeholder mapping exercise in FY23. The assessment considered internal drivers shaping how we engage with our clients, community, and employees, as well as external drivers, such as regulatory requirements, ESG (environmental, social, and governance) reporting requirements, and ESG risks to our business. Stakeholder priorities were assessed using employee dialogues and surveys, our past ESG disclosures, peer and sector disclosure benchmarking, regulatory and legal requirements, and industry best practice. Abt will refresh this process at least once every three years under the direction of our Sustainability Committee to reassess the key stakeholders impacted through our business and operations, how we engage with them, and examples of topics and responses to maximize feedback opportunities. This information will be used to address key areas of impact—risks and opportunities—upon which to focus our materiality assessment and business strategy.

# GRI 200: ECONOMIC DISCLOSURES

## GRI 201: Economic Performance

### 201-2: Financial implications and other risks and opportunities due to climate change

**Associated UNGC Principles: 6, 7**

**Associated SDGs: 8, 13**

Abt defines a substantive impact on our business broadly as one that would affect our ability to deliver on our business objectives and our mission. The considerations of the impact include both quantitative and qualitative effects to measure the severity of the risk.

We define a substantive financial impact as an impact on gross revenue or contract profit. Abt scores financial impact on a rating of one to five—one being low substantive impact, where the impact affects the gross revenue or contract profit by less than 5%, and five being critical substantive impact, where gross revenue or contract profit are affected by greater than 20%. We define a strategic impact as one that requires dedicated resources—either labor, capital, or both—to manage a risk or manage an opportunity.

We employ an open-ended enterprise risk management process based on global management standards—including COSO and ISO 31000—to identify and monitor risks and opportunities as they arise, including those related to climate change. The scope of this process includes assessing the risks and opportunities of regulatory changes, changes in the market and customer behavior trends, impacts to Abt's reputation, Abt's operational footprint—including leased assets (offices) and international project sites—used to conduct operations for our clients, and ability to deliver our solutions and services. In the context of climate-related risks and opportunities, different levels of substantive impacts range from transitional—moving from an office-based strategy to a telecommuter strategy to reduce our footprint, to physical—managing business continuity and site vulnerability related to extreme weather events. Each type of risk will have its own procedure to identify and control risks to ensure the positive business development of the organization and effective risk reporting. Physical risks are identified using a climate vulnerability assessment of our leased assets which uses a qualitative rating of exposure to extreme weather events. Transitional and regulatory risks are evaluated based on the size of the business opportunity, as well as the risk to non-compliance and failure to act aggressively enough within short- medium- and long-term horizons. Overall, risks will be prioritized based on impact, likelihood, and potential influence on our ability to carry out our business functions, and/or influence our revenue.

Upstream value chain inputs include regulations and policies applied by governments, or the products and services provided by our suppliers. In the face of any potential regulatory risks, Abt will seek to mitigate and control the risk by first conducting a gap analysis to better understand compliance requirements and risks to reputation. Following this, Abt will 1) assess the timeframe for implementation and the cost of labor and services needed to manage the risk; 2) assess the likelihood of the risk occurring, and magnitude of impact should it occur across varied time horizons; and 3) budget the management of this risk into our business strategy. As a government contractor, Abt abides by all local and federal requirements, seeking to proactively manage this type of risk.

CASE STUDY 1: In 2021, Executive Order 13990 was signed into action with the goal of leveraging the purchasing power of the federal government to track and incentivize the reduction of climate change impacts. Concurrently, the first ever sustainability standard for professional services firms—NSF/ANSI 391.1—was launched with a strong potential that it could be included in future preferred federal procurement criteria. Non-compliance with the Standard could result in a substantive loss of revenue for Abt as a government contractor. To assess the transitional risk of non-compliance, Abt conducted a gap analysis of the Standard to our existing operations and KPIs. We took action to close these gaps across the organization, with the development and release of Abt's Supplier Code of Conduct being a key example. The Supplier Code of Conduct establishes the standards of business conduct required of all suppliers in the delivery of goods or services to Abt and/or our clients, worldwide, across the areas of human rights, labor, anti-corruption, and the environment. Environmental criteria include management of physical and transitional risks by our suppliers—such as GHG emissions, climate-related risks, environmental permits and compliance, hazardous substances and waste, and resource efficiency. Abt holds all Tier 1 suppliers to a higher level of standard, by requiring compliance through a digital questionnaire to measure performance. Implementation of this Code closed the gaps to Abt's preparation to become certified to NSF/ANSI 391.1, once certification to the Standard becomes available.

CASE STUDY 2: Abt's limited vulnerability to extreme weather events is typically mitigated by our enhanced teleworking policies and digital capabilities, which enabled our staff to work nearly 100% remote for two years without negative impact to our revenue or operations. However, connectivity across our global teams is key to doing business, therefore continual risk reduction management is a priority for Abt. In 2021, Abt enhanced our virtual private network (VPN), digital collaboration tools, and file storage capabilities to make it easier for teams to file share and work simultaneously on projects without physically being together or on-site at an office.

## 201-3: Defined benefit plan obligations and other retirement plans

Abt Associates no longer has a Defined Benefit Plan, therefore no separate funds for any pension liabilities. Abt does have two Defined Contribution Plans governed by ERISA (The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974) for U.S.-based employees:

1. An Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) with automatic enrollment, no employee contribution, and a discretionary employer contribution (thus 100% participation). For plan year 2021, 5% of eligible compensation was the employer contribution for ESOP share allocations for active eligible participants.
2. A 401k plan with a 100% match of deferrals up to 5% of compensation. Abt had a participation rate of 97% for all eligible employees at end of 2022.

## GRI 202: Market Presence

### 202-2: Proportion of senior management hired from the local community

#### Associated SDG: 8

In FY23, 83% of our senior managers were hired from the local community. The local community is defined by Local Country National (LCN) status. LCNs are employees whose nationality is the same as the country in which the project office is located. Abt emphasizes sourcing local talent to fill positions in our project offices to further support the communities in which we work.

|   | FY23 | FY22 |
|---|------|------|
| Percent of senior management hired from local community | 83%  | 87%  |

## GRI 204: Procurement Practices

### 204-1: Proportion of spending on local suppliers

#### Associated SDG: 12

Abt Associates' mission drives our commitment to engage and support local suppliers. We implement programs across multiple disciplines that support a stable economy, maintain community relations, and advance the livelihood of the community.

Abt's local purchases of products and services represents 20% of our qualifying annual spend. "Local" in this context is defined as our project site operations across Africa, the Middle East, South East Asia, South America and the Caribbean regions. We define significant locations of operations as any country where Abt is provided or supporting development activities.

## GRI 205: Anti-Corruption

### 205-1: Operations assessed for risks related to corruption

**Associated UNGC Principle: 10**

**Associated SDG: 16**

Abt has multiple risk management tools in place to capture international and domestic operations risks. We use an enterprise risk management (ERM) framework based on global risk management standards, including COSO and ISO 31000, to conduct an annual assessment of enterprise risks. Corruptions risks are included in these assessments.

### 205-2: Communication and training about anti-corruption policies and procedures

**Associated UNGC Principle: 10**

**Associated SDG: 16**

Abt's Code of Conduct establishes standards of business conduct that are applied uniformly at all Abt Associates locations and followed by all employees. While businesses and customs vary—and each individual who works for Abt Associates is unique—certain standards and responsibilities are shared wherever we do business. This includes adhering to anti-corruption laws and competing fairly.

Employees receive annual Ethics and Compliance training to certify their understanding and compliance with the Code of Conduct. This training includes explicit guidance on anti-corruption behavior and reporting options. Additionally, the training covers how to work ethically with clients to ensure quality and integrity. Abt's Code of Conduct and Ethics and Compliance Helpline are made available to all staff, as are detailed policies regarding bribery, business ethics and conduct, and more.

For more information, see Disclosure 2–25.

## GRI 206: Anti-Competitive Behavior

### 206-1: Legal actions for anti-competitive behavior, anti-trust, and monopoly practices

**Associated SDG: 16**

Abt Associates had zero legal actions pending or completed during the reporting period regarding anti-competitive behavior, nor any violations of anti-trust or monopoly legislation.

## GRI 300: ENVIRONMENTAL DISCLOSURES

### GRI 302: Energy

#### 302-1: Energy consumption within the organization

**Associated UNGC Principles: 7, 8**

**Associated SDGs: 7, 8, 12, 13**

CY2022 energy consumption within the organization includes on-site combustion from natural gas and purchased electricity.

Energy consumption within the organization:

| Energy Consumption (MWh)        | CY22         | CY21         | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Electricity                     | 2,378        | 2,415        | -2%                  | 3,465            |
| Natural Gas (Heat)              | 967          | 1,019        | -5%                  | 1,291            |
| <b>Gross Energy Consumption</b> | <b>3,345</b> | <b>3,434</b> | <b>-3%</b>           | <b>4,756</b>     |

### 302-2: Energy consumption outside of the organization

Associated UNGC Principle: 8  
 Associated SDGs: 7, 8, 12, 13

CY2022 energy consumption outside of the organization is reported as U.S.-based data colocations. Emissions from telecommuting and international project sites are not currently reported at the MWh-level.

| Energy Consumption (MWh)        | CY22       | CY21       | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Electricity                     | 139        | 163        | -15%                 | 640              |
| <b>Gross Energy Consumption</b> | <b>139</b> | <b>163</b> | <b>-15%</b>          | <b>640</b>       |

### 302-3: Energy intensity

Associated UNGC Principles: 8  
 Associated SDGs: 7, 8, 12, 13

CY2022 energy consumption within the organization includes on-site combustion from natural gas and purchased electricity. As of 2022, 57% of Abt's U.S.-based staff elected to work fully remote. Therefore 2022 regular employees include home office staff in Australia, Britain, and on-site and hybrid employees in the U.S.-explaining the significant reduction in employees from 2021 to 2022 for this ratio. Project site employees are not included as they do not contribute to these energy categories, but rather Scope 3-related energy use. Fully remote employees also do not count toward this ratio, but Scope 3-related telework energy use.

Energy intensity ratio:

| Energy Intensity         | CY22       | CY21       | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Energy Consumption (MWh) | 3,345      | 3,434      | -3%                  | 4,756            |
| Regular Employees        | 588        | 1,142      | -49%                 | 1,304            |
| <b>Intensity Ratio</b>   | <b>5.7</b> | <b>3.0</b> | <b>89%</b>           | <b>3.6</b>       |

### 302-4: Reduction of energy consumption

Associated UNGC Principles: 8, 9  
 Associated SDGs: 7, 8, 12, 13

See Disclosure 302-1 for more information.



## GRI 305: Emissions

### 305-1: Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions

Associated UNGC Principles: 7, 8

Associated SDGs: 3, 12, 13, 14, 15

Emissions by Scope:

| Total Emissions (MT CO <sub>2</sub> e) | CY22         | CY21         | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|--|--------------|--------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Scope 1                                | 344          | 185          | 85%                  | 315              |
| Scope 2 (Location-Based)               | 797          | 842          | -5%                  | 1,237            |
| Gross Scope 1 & 2                      | <b>1,141</b> | <b>1,027</b> | <b>11%</b>           | <b>1,552</b>     |
| Scope 3                                | 2,908        | 2,155        | 35%                  | 5,414            |
| Gross MT CO <sub>2</sub> e             | <b>4,049</b> | <b>3,182</b> | <b>27%</b>           | <b>6,965</b>     |
| Renewable Energy Credits               | (316)        | (495)        | -36%                 | (77)             |
| Net MT CO <sub>2</sub> e               | <b>3,733</b> | <b>2,687</b> | <b>39%</b>           | <b>6,889</b>     |

Abt's 2022 emissions inventory is scheduled to be externally verified in Q3 of 2023.

Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions:

| Scope 1 Emissions (MT CO <sub>2</sub> e) | CY22       | CY21       | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|--|------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Natural Gas                              | 176        | 185        | -5%                  | 235              |
| Refrigerants                             | 168        | 0          | N/A                  | 80               |
| Gross Scope 1                            | <b>344</b> | <b>185</b> | <b>85%</b>           | <b>315</b>       |

Abt's 2022 emissions inventory is scheduled to be externally verified in Q3 of 2023.

### 305-2: Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions

Associated UNGC Principles: 7, 8

Associated SDGs: 3, 12, 13, 14, 15

Indirect energy (Scope 2) GHG emissions:

| Scope 2 Emissions (MT CO <sub>2</sub> e) | CY22       | CY21       | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|--|------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Direct Electricity (Location-Based)      | 797        | 842        | -5%                  | 1,237            |
| Renewable Energy Credits                 | (316)      | (495)      | -36%                 | (77)             |
| Net Scope 2                              | <b>481</b> | <b>347</b> | <b>39%</b>           | <b>1,160</b>     |

Abt's 2022 emissions inventory is scheduled to be externally verified in Q3 of 2023.

### 305-3: Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions

Associated UNGC Principles: 7, 8  
Associated SDGs: 3, 12, 13, 14, 15

Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions:

| Scope 3 Emissions (MT CO <sub>2</sub> e) | CY22         | CY21         | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|--|--------------|--------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Air Travel                               | 1,367        | 749          | 83%                  | 3,559            |
| Employee Commuting                       | 413          | 221          | 87%                  | 993              |
| Employee Telecommuting                   | 414          | 484          | -14%                 | 136              |
| Data Colocations                         | 43           | 49           | -13%                 | 173              |
| Project Sites                            | 671          | 652          | 3%                   | 553              |
| <b>Gross Scope 3</b>                     | <b>2,908</b> | <b>2,155</b> | <b>35%</b>           | <b>5,414</b>     |

### 305-4: GHG emissions intensity

Associated UNGC Principles: 8, 9  
Associated SDGs: 13, 14, 15

CY2022 Scope 1+2 emissions include on-site combustion from natural gas, refrigerants, and purchased electricity as a result of our corporate facilities. Therefore 2022 regular employees for calculating Scope 1+2 emissions intensity are limited to home office staff in Australia, Britain, and on-site and hybrid employees in the U.S. As of 2022, 57% of Abt's U.S.-based staff elected to work fully remote, and therefore do not count toward this emissions intensity calculation for Scope 1+2.

Abt's complete global workforce, including remote workers and global project site employees, is used in calculating Scope 3 emissions intensity as all contribute to emissions within this scope.

GHG emissions intensity ratio, Scope 1+2 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e per employee:

| Scope 1+2 GHG Emissions Intensity    | CY22       | CY21       | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Scope 1+2 Gross MT CO <sub>2</sub> e | 1,141      | 1,027      | 11%                  | 1,552            |
| Regular Employees                    | 588        | 1,142      | -49%                 | 1,304            |
| <b>Intensity Ratio</b>               | <b>1.9</b> | <b>0.9</b> | <b>116%</b>          | <b>1.2</b>       |

GHG emissions intensity ratio, Scope 3 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e per employee:

| Scope 3 GHG Emissions Intensity    | CY22       | CY21       | % Change (CY22/CY21) | Base Year (CY19) |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Scope 3 Gross MT CO <sub>2</sub> e | 1,654      | 2,210      | -25%                 | 4,806            |
| Regular Employees                  | 2,354      | 3,630      | -4%                  | 3,670            |
| <b>Intensity Ratio</b>             | <b>0.7</b> | <b>0.6</b> | <b>15%</b>           | <b>1.3</b>       |

## 305-5: Reduction of GHG emissions

**Associated UNGC Principles: 8, 9**

**Associated SDGs: 13, 14, 15**

See [Our Environmental Responsibility](#) section in the 2023 Mission Impact Report.

Abt adheres to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, including CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, and N<sub>2</sub>O in our emission inventory and measures our emissions in Scope 1, 2, and 3.

We are committed to externally verifying our emissions on a biennial cycle and publicly report our inventory to The Climate Registry. Abt's GHG inventories for the years 2012 through 2020 have been externally verified to reasonable assurance standards for Scope 1 and 2 emissions and to limited assurance standards for Scope 3 emissions.

In 2022 Abt validated our new near-term science-based emissions reduction target with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Our near-term target is to reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions 38.6% by 2027 from a 2019 base year. Abt also commits to reduce absolute Scope 3 GHG emissions from fuel and energy related activities, business travel, and employee commuting 38.6% within the same timeframe. These targets are aligned with the climate science deemed necessary to maintain a 1.5 °C pathway. In the latter half of 2022, Abt submitted our net-zero by 2050 emissions reduction target for validation with SBTi, which was reviewed and completed in 2023.

Abt's global CY2022 emissions were 4,049 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e representing a cumulative reduction of 41.9% from the 2019 base year. Abt's emissions increased significantly from 2021 levels due increased operations post-COVID-19, such as increased air travel to meet client demands. Abt's 2022 emissions inventory is scheduled to be reviewed and verified in Q3 of 2023."

# GRI 400: SOCIAL DISCLOSURES

## GRI 401: Employment

### 401-1: New employee hires and employee turnover

Associated UNGC Principle: 6

Associated SDGs: 5, 8

In FY20 we updated our methodology to reflect rates more accurately, measuring the number of hires or turnovers per category and dividing by average headcount. Therefore rates accurately will not add to 100%.

As Abt commences more international-based projects, this will increase our international hire rate. Depending on the country, this will have implications for male/female proportions based on local country.

Hire rates, Abt U.S.:

| Age Group | FY23 | FY22 |
|-----------|------|------|
| Under 30  | 33%  | 52%  |
| 30-50     | 17%  | 23%  |
| Over 50   | 10%  | 15%  |

| Sex    | FY23 | FY22 |
|--------|------|------|
| Female | 20%  | 27%  |
| Male   | 15%  | 22%  |

| Region        | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Domestic      | 22%  | 23%  |
| International | 13%  | 25%  |

Turnover rates, Abt U.S.:

| Age Group | FY23 | FY22 |
|-----------|------|------|
| Under 30  | 13%  | 24%  |
| 30-50     | 10%  | 12%  |
| Over 50   | 8%   | 9%   |

| Sex    | FY23 | FY22 |
|--------|------|------|
| Female | 13%  | 16%  |
| Male   | 8%   | 9%   |

| Region        | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Domestic      | 13%  | 17%  |
| International | 8%   | 9%   |

Hire rates, Abt U.S.:

| Age Group | FY23 | FY22 |
|-----------|------|------|
| Under 30  | 56%  | 67%  |
| 30-50     | 46%  | 29%  |
| Over 50   | 57%  | 26%  |

| Sex    | FY23 | FY22 |
|--------|------|------|
| Female | 46%  | 33%  |
| Male   | 53%  | 29%  |

| Region        | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Domestic      | 48%  | 38%  |
| International | 56%  | 35%  |

Turnover rates, Abt Australia and Abt Britain:

| Age Group | FY23 | FY22 |
|-----------|------|------|
| Under 30  | 27%  | 0%   |
| 30-50     | 30%  | 20%  |
| Over 50   | 33%  | 9%   |

| Sex    | FY23 | FY22 |
|--------|------|------|
| Female | 18%  | 16%  |
| Male   | 24%  | 14%  |

| Region        | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Domestic      | 31%  | 19%  |
| International | 0%   | 0%   |

## 401-2: Benefits provided to full-time employees that are not provided to temporary or part-time employees

### Associated SDG: 8

Abt Associates is committed to providing a comprehensive suite of benefits for the health and wellness (physical and financial) of our employees and their eligible dependents/family members.

Our U.S.-based employees who regularly work 30 hours or more each week are eligible immediately to participate in our comprehensive benefits package, which includes company-subsidized medical and dental insurance plans, company-funded life insurance, disability plans and leave plans, business travel accident insurance and an employee assistance plan. Employees can choose from a variety of employee-paid benefits offered through payroll deductions, including flexible spending plans, supplemental life and disability insurance and vision coverage. Employees are also eligible for parental leave—which provides 100% base salary replacement for up to eight weeks—following the birth of an employee’s child or the placement of a child with an employee in connection with adoption. Abt will contribute a certain percentage of its profits each year to eligible employees (U.S. citizens and permanent residents) via the employee stock ownership program (ESOP) as well as provide a generous matching contribution to the employee’s 401(k).

Abt’s Expatriate and Third Country National employees enjoy the same benefits as our U.S.-based employees.

## 401-3: Parental leave

### Associated UNGC Principle: 6

### Associated SDGs: 5, 8

Per Abt’s Parental Leave Policy, all employees working 30 hours or more are entitled to parental leave, regardless of sex. New parents can receive eight weeks of full paid leave when they welcome a new child into their life, through birth or adoption. Through our Adoption Assistance benefit, Abt will reimburse \$5,000 in costs associated with an adoption process.

The Parental Leave program was enhanced effective 4/1/23 to increase the time off from ten days to eight weeks.

This information is true for US-based employees.

See Disclosure 401-2 for more information.

| Sex          | Employees who took parental leave in FY22 | Employees who returned to work in FY22 after parental leave ended | Employees who returned to work after parental leave and were still employed 12 months later | Employees who took parental leave in FY23 | Employees who returned to work in FY23 after parental leave ended | Return to work rate | Retention rate |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Female       | 30  | 28  | 25  | 29  | 26  | 92%                 | 83%            |
| Male         | 20  | 20  | 17  | 12  | 12  | 100%                | 85%            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>50</b>                                 | <b>48</b>   | <b>42</b>   | <b>41</b>                                 | <b>38</b>   | <b>95%</b>          | <b>84%</b>     |

Return to work rate: Took leave in FY22 and returned in FY22 / Total who took leave in FY22

Retention rate: Took leave in FY22 and still employed in FY23 / Total who took leave in FY22

## GRI 402: Labor/Management Relations

### 402-1: Minimum notice periods regarding operational changes

**Associated UNGC Principle: 3**

**Associated SDG: 8**

Abt's standard practice is to ensure that employees are well-informed in advance of operational and procedural changes. Our company was founded on participatory principles and we have maintained that practice throughout our company's history. From a corporate planning perspective, we conduct a five-year strategic planning process with annual updates. In general, all major operational changes are decided and announced during this process, thereby providing employees between one to five years notice. Of course, changes may be required within the course of a year, in which case the decision is announced directly to staff affected by the change(s). Ideally, employees are included in the design and implementation processes, thereby maximizing their input.

Our approach is to provide the "what, how and when" for employees and then involve staff and/or collect input from staff to inform decisions and direction based on employee feedback. Abt's Employee Advisory Council (EAC) represents employee perspectives on key issues and supports leadership decisions. For example, within this last year there were key updates to Abt's US leave policy making it more generous and flexible and this was communicated to employees six months in advance to allow room for planning. Additionally, as part of our current strategy we have been undertaking a growth ecosystem project to ensure we are organized and roles and responsibilities are clear in support of our growth and strategy objectives. Throughout this process, staff have been involved and informed as organizational design decisions were made, roles were defined and changes were made.

## GRI 403: Occupational Health and Safety

### 403-1: Occupational health and safety management system

**Associated SDG: 8**

Abt implemented Oracle's Workforce Health and Safety module to better track injuries, illnesses and injuries. Abt had one reportable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) injuries in CY22.

### 403-2: Hazard identification, risk assessment, and incident investigation

**Associated SDGs: 3, 8**

The vast majority of domestic employees are working in an office environment and work related hazards are minimal. Most injuries are either slip and falls or related to wrist strain due to typing. Our HR and Benefits team meets on an annual basis with our workers compensation carrier to review claims and identify patterns that would require intervention. Recommendations are reviewed for potential implementation at this time. Additionally, in the U.S., Abt must comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations around worker safety.

In 2022, employees had many avenues for reporting a work-related injury including our new Workforce Health and Safety module in Oracle, by contacting the HR Service Center, report to Facilities in the office in which they work, or contact the HR and Total Rewards team directly. All reports come to Total Rewards for reporting to our workers compensation carrier. Abt's Non-Retaliation Policy protects workers from retaliation for good-faith reporting of any possible improper activity.

Abt employees have resources in place to raise issues about their work situation either directly to their manager or to HR. They can also contact Abt's Employee Advisory Council if they are not satisfied with the response from their manager or HR.

For repetitive stress injuries, we use our workers compensation broker to perform ergonomic assessments to identify adjustments to work stations that will allow an employee to work without discomfort. The carrier may recommend changes to the work station, or equipment that will reduce discomfort (such as a natural keyboard) that Abt will provide.

### **403-3: Occupational health services**

#### **Associated SDGs: 3, 8**

Abt's workers compensation broker performs ergonomic assessments to minimize the risk of repetitive stress injuries at employees' request. Employee access is facilitated by sharing information on Abt's intranet, required postings in all offices and communicating process for reporting accidents and injuries during new employee orientation. Abt secures personal health information and ensures that information on employee work-related injuries is not used for favorable or unfavorable treatment by keeping access to this information restricted to Total Rewards staff.

### **403-4: Worker participation, consultation, and communication on occupational health and safety**

#### **Associated SDG: 8**

Abt does not have a process for worker participation and consultation in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the occupational health and safety management system.

### **403-5: Worker training on occupational health and safety**

Abt does not provide training beyond informing employees about the reporting process noted in Disclosure 403-2.

### **403-6: Promotion of worker health**

Abt offers medical coverage to all employees working at least 30 hours per week and subsidizes approximately 70% of the cost. Employees also have access to subsidized yoga classes and a bike subsidy to encourage exercise. Our largest health plan offers incentives for regular screenings and healthy activities to promote good health.

Abt offers gym discounts, on-site gyms in two offices and Weight Watchers memberships to U.S.-based staff. We also offer supplemental health insurance programs that are employee funded. Our Work/Life Assistance Plan offers many seminars on topics such as stress relief, depression, marital conflict and financial issues. Employees also have access to counselors at no cost.

### **403-7: Prevention and mitigation of occupational health and safety impacts directly linked by business relationships**

Abt publishes suggested desk setup for ergonomic comfort and provides ergonomic assessments for employees who request assistance.

See Disclosure 403-2 for more information.

### **403-8: Workers covered by an occupational health and safety management system**

Abt has not implemented a system due to the low number of incidents incurred.

## 403-9: Work-related injuries

There was one reported injury in 2022 to Abt U.S.

Across Abt's global project sites and entities in Australia and Britain, 23 work-related injuries or incidents were reported across 2022, with one fatality as a result of work-related injury.

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Fatalities as a result of work-related injury</b>                    | 1                                   |
| <b>High-consequence work-related injuries</b>                           | 1                                   |
| <b>Recordable work-related injuries</b>                                 | 23                                  |
| <b>Main types of work-related injury</b>                                | Field staff: Snake bites; Dog bites |
| <b>Work-related hazards that pose a risk of high-consequence injury</b> | Rural field site conditions         |
| <b>Actions taken or underway to eliminate other work-related hazard</b> | Safety briefings & training         |
| <b>Workers excluded from disclosure</b>                                 | None                                |

## 403-10: Work-related ill health

Work-related ill health, Abt U.S. 2022:

|  |      |
|--|------|
| <b>Fatalities as a result of work-related ill health</b>   | 0    |
| <b>Cases of recordable work-related ill health</b>         | 0    |
| <b>Main types of work-related ill health</b>               | 0    |
| <b>Work-related hazards that pose a risk of ill-health</b> | 0    |
| <b>Workers excluded from disclosure</b>                    | None |

## GRI 404: Training and Education

### 404-2: Programs for upgrading employee skills and transition assistance programs

#### Associated SDG: 8

Abt provides learning and development opportunities for staff through LinkedIn Learning, which offers over 10,000 diverse courses. LinkedIn Learning content, along with dedicated time to learn, allows Abt staff to meet just-in-time needs as well as accomplish long-term goals. Abt also supports continued education/training through our professional development assistance program, which helps cover the cost of expenses incurred while pursuing a degree or professional certification. Internal courses, webinars and workshops are hosted throughout each year on a wide variety of topics. Access to technical on-demand training is available for staff. Abt is highly supportive of on-the-job learning and has created tools, dedicated time and an environment where stretch assignments and internal mobility opportunities help staff develop new skills. Finally, Abt is committed to developing a more equitable and inclusive culture and continued its commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility by continuing quarterly mandatory trainings for all staff.



## 404-3: Percentage of employees receiving regular performance and career development reviews

Associated UNGC Principle: 6  
Associated SDGs: 5, 8

Performance Review Evaluation Plan (PREP) is Abt's annual performance evaluation process in which all employees—in all locations worldwide—are provided with feedback, a rating for goals, performance competencies and cultural competencies and the opportunity to create a professional development plan. 100% of Abt staff who were hired by December 31st of the previous year participate in our annual PREP review process. All staff also participate in Goal Setting and our Continuous Performance Management program throughout the year. This program allows for timely, concise feedback and manager/employee Check In Conversations that can be used immediately in real time.

## GRI 405: Diversity and Equal Opportunity

### 405-1: Diversity of governance bodies and employees

Associated UNGC Principle: 6  
Associated SDGs: 5, 8

Diversity of governance bodies:

| Governance Body      | Age Group |       |      | Sex    |      |
|----------------------|-----------|-------|------|--------|------|
|                      | <30       | 30-50 | >50  | Female | Male |
| Board of Directors   | 0%        | 0%    | 100% | 36%    | 64%  |
| Executive Leadership | 0%        | 30%   | 70%  | 47%    | 53%  |

Diversity of employees, Abt U.S.:

| Region        | Employee Category     | Sex    | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------|------|------|
| Domestic      | Senior Management     | Female | 66%  | 61%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 34%  | 39%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Female | 66%  | 68%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 33%  | 32%  |
| International | Senior Management     | Female | 25%  | 28%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 75%  | 72%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Female | 29%  | 31%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 71%  | 69%  |

| Region        | Employee Category     | Age      | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|-----------------------|----------|------|------|
| Domestic      | Senior Management     | Under 30 | 0%   | 0%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 42%  | 38%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 58%  | 62%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Under 30 | 22%  | 18%  |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 58%  | 62%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 20%  | 20%  |
| International | Senior Management     | Under 30 | 1%   | 0%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 47%  | 42%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 52%  | 58%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Under 30 | 6%   | 6%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 76%  | 77%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 18%  | 17%  |

Diversity of employees, Abt Australia and Britain:

| Region        | Employee Category     | Sex    | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------|------|------|
| Domestic      | Senior Management     | Female | 66%  | 61%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 34%  | 39%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Female | 66%  | 68%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 33%  | 32%  |
| International | Senior Management     | Female | 25%  | 28%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 75%  | 72%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Female | 29%  | 31%  |
|               |                       | Male   | 71%  | 69%  |

Diversity of employees, Abt Australia and Britain:

| Region        | Employee Category     | Age      | FY23 | FY22 |
|---------------|-----------------------|----------|------|------|
| Domestic      | Senior Management     | Under 30 | 0%   | 0%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 73%  | 78%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 27%  | 22%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Under 30 | 7%   | 6%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 77%  | 80%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 16%  | 14%  |
| International | Senior Management     | Under 30 | 0%   | 0%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 50%  | 41%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 50%  | 60%  |
|               | Non-Senior Management | Under 30 | 3%   | 2%   |
|               |                       | 30-50    | 46%  | 58%  |
|               |                       | Over 50  | 51%  | 40%  |

## GRI 410: Security Practices

### 410-1: Security personnel trained in human rights policies or procedures

**Associated UNGC Principle: 1**  
**Associated SDG: 16**

The Abt Associates Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that research staff take training on research integrity and protection of human research participants every three years. This is a three-hour on-line training, which is available in ten different languages. The IRB supplements this online training with role-based training for leaders and researchers on other topics, such as privacy laws (e.g., HIPAA), open data policies (e.g., USAID's), and ethical issues specific to a methodology (e.g., qualitative research with vulnerable populations). 100% of key staff on research studies are trained on research integrity and the protection of human research participants.

## GRI 412: Human Rights Assessment

### 412-1: Operations that have been subject to human rights reviews or impact assessments

**Associated UNGC Principle: 1**

Our researchers study some of the most important and relevant questions facing the world today, from the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, to evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to reduce barriers to family planning services. Social, behavioral, and educational research can pose risks to privacy and confidentiality as well as ethical challenges, especially studies involving vulnerable populations. As part of its commitment to conducting research that meets the highest ethical standards, Abt Associates maintains its own Institutional Review Board (IRB) to safeguard research participants' rights and welfare and to protect their personal information.

The IRB review typically includes assessment of: 1) the informed consent process and research design; 2) compliance with country or state privacy laws; 3) a safety plan for collecting face-to-face during a pandemic, e.g., COVID-19 and for studies involving vulnerable populations to ensure those in need are referred to appropriate resources, e.g., helplines for veterans, and study teams complied with mandated reporting requirements, e.g., potential child neglect and abuse; 4) a detailed data security plan and data agreements; and 5) certificates of confidentiality or privacy certificates to protect participants' sensitive research data.

The Abt Associates IRB ensures that staff take training on research integrity and protection of human research participants every three years. This is a three-hour on-line training, which is available in ten different languages. The IRB supplements this online with role-based training on other topics, such as privacy laws (e.g., HIPAA), open data policies (e.g., USAID's), and ethical issues specific to a methodology (e.g., qualitative research with vulnerable populations).

Abt had zero reported human rights abuses through any of our employees, clients, suppliers, or research participants in FY23.

### 412-2: Employee training on human rights policies, or procedures

**Associated UNGC Principle: 1**

In 2022, Abt once again offered all staff Freedom from Harassment training, which covered human rights policies and procedures. This training takes 45 minutes on average. 100% of employees were required to complete—and completed—modules on human rights, trafficking, child protection, and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

All staff also completed the 45 min Code of Conduct training that covered topics such as using fair employee practices, non-retaliation, fostering a safe workplace, human trafficking, child protection, and embracing diversity.

### **412-3: Significant investment agreements and contracts that include human rights clauses or that underwent human rights screening**

#### **Associated UNGC Principle: 2**

Abt is compliant with all of its U.S. Government contracts containing the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) clause found at FAR 52.222-50, titled "Combating Trafficking in Persons." Additionally, upon issuance of a subcontract under a U.S. Government prime contract, Abt includes this same FAR clause and ensures compliance by its subcontractors. Our work performed under agreements with the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) requires that we likewise adhere to and be compliant with relevant anti-trafficking and human rights policies.

Our work for the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) strictly adheres to the Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy. Abt Associates Australia implements a robust child protection policy in compliance with DFAT's stringent requirements driving adherence to international child safeguarding standards. In accordance with a "do no harm" approach, a number of key safeguarding requirements are implemented as part of our operations and program activities, including rigorous recruitment and screening measures, comprehensive child protection training for staff and partners, dedicated child protection resourcing across programs, detailed risk management processes and partner capacity building.

## **GRI 414: Supplier Social Assessment**

### **414-1: New suppliers that were screened using social criteria**

#### **Associated UNGC Principle: 2**

#### **Associated SDGs: 5, 8, 16**

As part of Abt's due diligence, all new and potential suppliers are run through a series of screening checks including across SAM.gov, the U.S. Government's System for Award Management, as well as dynamic screening through Visual Compliance. By accepting any buy-side contract from Abt, suppliers also acknowledge their acceptance of the principles of decent business conduct as described by Abt's Supplier Code of Conduct, their intention to comply with its requirements, and their ability demonstrate and/or submit proof of compliance with the commitments at Abt's request.

## **GRI 415: Public Policy**

### **415-1: Political contributions**

#### **Associated UNGC Principle: 10**

#### **Associated SDG: 16**

Abt makes no political contributions.