URC—as a leader, a partner, and a technical advisor—is helping countries across the world provide better health care and people to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives.

We strengthen health systems through evidence-based approaches that improve access to health care, the quality of services, and health outcomes in Africa, Asia, Europe and Eurasia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

As the result of our work, more women are having safer births, more communities are accessing quality health care, and fewer people are contracting HIV and tuberculosis, to cite just a few examples.

CHALLENGES

Lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have difficulty implementing evidence-based solutions to strengthen their health systems, just as higher-income countries do.

But LMIC health systems face additional issues, including:
- Higher disease prevalence;
- More limited human and material resources;
- A disconnect between national policy and local implementation;
- More limited opportunities to improve the health care providers’ ability to deliver better services; and
- Local attitudes, beliefs, and social norms that pose obstacles to providing effective health care.

ADDRESSING QUALITY ISSUES

Through assistance in 42 countries, the USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems (ASSIST) Project has developed the capacity of more than 5,000 facility- and community-based teams to apply quality improvement methods to identify and address gaps in HIV, maternal and child health, malaria, tuberculosis, nutrition, and non-communicable disease services.
HEALTH SYSTEMS EXPERTISE

URC’s work strengthens the performance and interconnectedness of the six health system building blocks identified by the World Health Organization: service delivery, health workforce, strategic information, commodities, health financing, and leadership and governance.

URC’s areas of health systems expertise include:

- Using continuous quality improvement and supportive relationships with ministries of health and local partners to build institutional, programmatic, and financial capacities for improved systems;
- Designing context-specific health communication and behavior change strategies to bolster our systems strengthening work at the individual, family, and community levels; and
- Improving health worker performance and engagement to expand interdisciplinary collaboration for all aspects of health care.

ASSIST strengthens health systems by helping countries develop policies, structures, and procedures that promote quality at the point of service delivery.

The USAID Systems for Health Project in Ghana provides technical assistance to the Ghana Health Service’s Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) Initiative. The effort, working in approximately 500 CHPS zones, is bringing quality health services to communities, developing sustainable volunteerism and community health action, empowering women and vulnerable groups, and improving health provider, household, and community interaction.

Systems for Health also is working to end preventable maternal and child deaths in Ghana, where more than 300 women die per 100,000 live births, significantly more than the Millennium Development goal of 190 deaths. A key Systems for Health tactic is working with the Ghana Health Service to integrate quality assurance and quality improvement measures into health service delivery.

STRONGER HEALTH SYSTEMS, GREATER HEALTH STEWARDSHIP

URC-led approaches in quality improvement and health systems strengthening are yielding results.

The Strengthening Uganda’s Systems for Treating AIDS Nationally (SUSTAIN) Project, for example, worked for eight years to strengthen delivery of quality HIV/TB prevention, care, and treatment services at selected health facilities around the country, including regional referral hospitals. Project achievements included:

- Lifesaving antiretroviral treatment provided to 309,719 clients. This included 30,223 pregnant and lactating mothers, decreasing the vertical HIV transmission rate from 8 percent in 2011 to 3 percent by April 2018;
- Encouraging ministry of health ownership and stewardship of HIV service delivery through training leaders and advocating for their placement in HIV service delivery units. This helped the supported clinics achieve a client satisfaction rate of more than 95 percent for their services in September 2017, compared to 41.5 percent in the 2008 National Service Delivery Survey; and
- Recognition as among the top ten worldwide health system strengthening projects by USAID Washington.

Learn more about URC’s work in health systems strengthening at www.urc-chs.com/HSS