

# IMPROVING HEALTH WORKER PERFORMANCE

Crucial in countries' efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015 and to move toward Universal Health Coverage is an effective and responsive health workforce. As the interface between the health system and the population it serves, human resources for health (HRH) are the cornerstone to accessible acceptable care.

The USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems (ASSIST) Project explores the role of the health workforce in improving quality of care: How can countries engage their human resources to ensure that every patient gets the right care at the right time, every time? What systems changes can be institutionalized that will address the human factors that affect HRH performance? How can countries strengthen their workforce toward achieving Universal Health Coverage?

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Focusing at the sub-national level, the USAID ASSIST Project works with countries to develop a workforce that will deliver quality care and will take responsibility for continually improving the services they deliver and the health outcomes they achieve. ASSIST targets its technical support to accomplish a seamless service delivery flow so that the system supports and promotes clinical best practices, improved work processes, and health worker performance to achieve optimum health outcomes. It does this by working with regional and district managers, health workers in local facilities, community providers and volunteers.

## Human Resources Performance Management Cycle



## Health Workers Learn to Manage Their Own Performance

Optimizing the performance of health worker teams at hospitals, health centers, and dispensaries is another key HRH element to achieving and sustaining quality of care.

ASSIST works with teams to maximize their performance by addressing the human factors that impact their engagement and lead to better standard practices. Addressing human factors that impact performance, ASSIST helps teams to walk through a **Human Resources (HR) Performance Management Cycle** as a collaborative team self-management practice. Provider teams need to have clear roles with aligned tasks. In carrying out their responsibilities, objective performance feedback from colleagues and fair evaluation from supervisors, and operating with some rewards and recognition, have proven to influence the commitment and ownership that health workers demonstrate

in their roles. ASSIST helps managers and health worker teams to collaboratively institute practices that address performance factors and monitor their effectiveness.

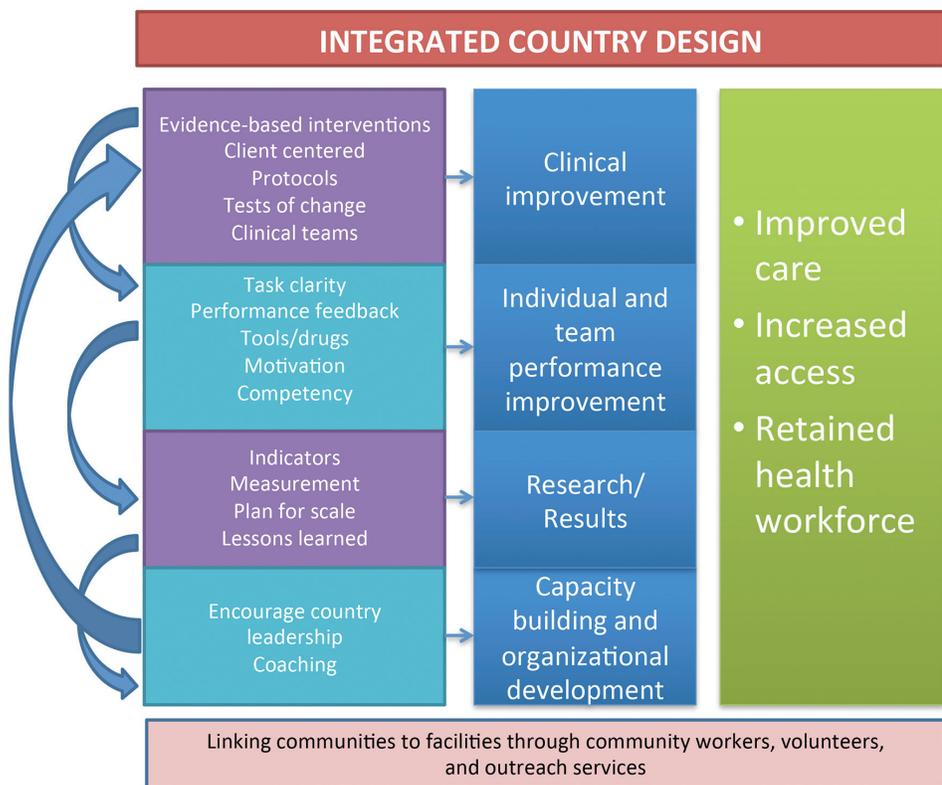
## District Managers Use Improvement Science to Strengthen Their Support to Facilities

ASSIST partners with countries to develop stronger-performing managers. Managers assess their own performance in planning, coordinating the supply chain, managing information, supervising and retaining staff, fostering linkages with the community, and steering quality improvement. By applying improvement methods, management teams test strategies and find the most effective practices for managing budgets, staffing facilities, assuring adequate supply flows, supporting health worker performance, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the system. Additionally, management teams assess their own effectiveness at influencing systems improvements—advocating policy change, engaging community groups, and building civil society partnerships.

## Community Volunteers Link With Community Leadership Groups to Reach More Households

ASSIST promotes the active engagement of communities in improving the care that they receive—building linkages so that community members provide input into local health policy decisions, while also participating in quality improvement efforts and contributing to support systems. ASSIST activities test ways to better link community leadership to health system management and to improve the interface

## Integrating Health Workforce Performance in Improving Quality of Care



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services for vulnerable populations, to ensure that high-impact interventions reach every patient or client, every time, and improve outcomes.

### Global Learning

This work in improving health worker/provider performance at every level is important as HIV scale-up places additional demands on the health system and its existing workforce. A greater understanding of methodologies to improve provider performance and productivity within settings with resource constraints will enable countries to develop more effective and efficient strategies to maximize the practicing health workforce to the best effect. Best practices and lessons learned from individual country partnership experiences are available through the USAID ASSIST knowledge portal in the form of activity reports, toolkits, and blogs. The Decision-Making Tool for Community Health Worker (CHW) Program Development supports decision makers who are designing a national or sub-national CHW program. The CHW AIM is a matrix for assessing the functionality of CHW programs. The District Manager Performance Index helps management teams to assess their performance in their management domains. These and other tools being developed by the Health Care Improvement and ASSIST projects, and will be available online for access and use. In addition, ASSIST supports the health workforce research agenda in pursuing targeted research in specific areas of quality improvement. USAID and its partners under ASSIST are committed to sharing knowledge gained from these experiences to contribute to the global understanding of how to improve health worker performance and how to strengthen systems through applying improvement science to HRH development challenges.

between volunteers from the community and health worker teams in the facilities. Institutionalizing best practices for linking these formal and informal systems enforces a seamless line of quality services from the management level to the family household.

### An Improved Workforce at Every Level Strengthens the Backbone of the Health System

By focusing on three levels of health workforce development through a holistic approach to quality improvement, the USAID ASSIST Project strengthens health systems in a way that is sustainable.

Critical human resources shortages, particularly in low-resource settings, require that we not only develop long-term strategies for increased production and retention of health workers, but that we also maximize the existing workforce so that it is engaged, productive, and supported. The only care that counts is quality care, and the only way to achieve universal coverage so that all sectors of the population will have access to quality care is to strengthen HRH and improve the performance of the health workforce at every

system level—sub-national management levels, local facilities, and communities.

Testing changes to identify sustainable strategies that fill gaps is the quality improvement approach ASSIST uses in its technical support to help countries achieve the MDGs and ensure access to quality care to the whole population. Through an **integrated country design** that addresses clinical practice, system processes, and health workforce performance, countries can improve their health outcomes and at the same time strengthen the health system to sustain those improvements.

ASSIST strengthens the capacity of managers, frontline providers, community health workers, and volunteers to manage their own performance, identify strategies for improving care, and monitor and evaluate best practices and health outcome results, so that evidence will inform decisions and shape policies. This capacity, developed at all delivery levels, results in strengthened systems and sustained quality of care.

USAID ASSIST builds the capacity of host country implementers to apply the science of improvement to health care and other