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HEALTH POLICY INITIATIVE

Through policy dialogue and implementation, the USAID | Health Policy Initiative strives to improve the enabling environment for health—especially for FPIRH, HIV, and maternal health programs

AT-A-GLANCE

- The Health Policy Initiative is a five-year indefinite quantity contract (IQC) issued by the Bureau for Global Health
- IQC funding ceiling: \$325 million
- Time period: Sept. 2005–2010
- Task orders can extend 3 years beyond the 2010 end date
- Missions can generate their own task orders under the IQC at any time
- Contractors eligible to bid on IQC task orders:
 - Abt Associates
 - Chemonics International
 - Constella Futures
 - Research Triangle Institute
- Task Order 1, which accepts core and field support, was awarded to Constella Futures and has a ceiling of \$100 million
- Subsequent task orders: Asia-Pacific Region, including China; Peru; South Africa

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BACKGROUND

Improving the policy environment is the critical first step for meeting many health and development goals. Policy decisions made at the national, provincial, and district levels determine which health services will be available; when, where, and under what conditions services will be available; who can provide them; and who is eligible to receive them.

The formulation of good policies is important, but not sufficient. Those policies must be put into practice. Doing so requires implementation plans that make choices about how services will be funded, who will be responsible for seeing that the plans are carried out, and how policy implementation will be evaluated.

Moreover, experience has confirmed the importance of civil society advocacy in formulating policies and in making sure that policies are implemented. The involvement of a range of stakeholders in the policy process helps to ensure that their needs will be addressed. Active, knowledgeable advocates also are critical to shoring up political commitment and making sure that governments carry out their promises.

Resource allocation is another key aspect of an effective policy process. Resource levels have not been adequate in the health sector, so efforts have to be made to increase them. But the available resources also have to be used effectively and allocated equitably. Good policy assistance helps policymakers and stakeholders look at the impacts of various interventions and make informed decisions.

Many issues that affect health (e.g., stigma and discrimination, women's lack of resources or decisionmaking authority) cannot be solved by the health sector alone. They need attention and action from the broader society, including the private sector, community and faith-based organizations, and various government ministries. But a multisectoral approach needs coordination and direction if its efforts are to be effective rather than haphazard or divisive.

And, finally, the past three decades of policy assistance have shown that good evidence, convincingly presented, is the first step in focusing the attention of policymakers on a particular issue. Once policymakers take up an issue, good data are essential for sound planning, effective resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation, and strong advocacy efforts to ensure policies and plans meet stakeholder needs. Thus, the availability and use of timely and accurate data underlie all the other inputs that make up an enabling policy environment for health.

- ✓ Policies put into practice
- ✓ Strong leadership and civil society participation
- ✓ Effective and equitable resource allocation
- ✓ Multisectoral engagement
- ✓ Data for decisionmaking

Working on health policy and implementation is even more challenging in developing countries, where the capacity of organizations and individuals to advocate for, formulate, and implement policies may be limited. Thus, building in-country capacity is critical to all policy work.

IQC OBJECTIVE

The USAID | Health Policy Initiative strives to improve the enabling environment for health, especially family planning/reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, and maternal health. The initiative also provides assistance to design policy responses to other infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, avian influenza, and malaria.

This objective will be accomplished through the achievement of five intermediate results:

- **Result 1:** Policies that improve equitable and affordable access to high-quality services and information adopted and put into practice
- **Result 2:** Public sector and civil society champions strengthened and supported to advocate successfully and sustainably
- **Result 3:** Health sector resources (public, private, civil society) increased and allocated more effectively and equitably
- **Result 4:** Strengthened multisectoral engagement and host country coordination in the design, implementation, and financing of health programs
- **Result 5:** Timely and accurate data used for evidence-based decisionmaking

Furthermore, the initiative will assist countries in devising strategies for issues that cut across technical areas and that hinder service quality and access. These crosscutting issues are poverty, gender, and human rights and stigma and discrimination. The IQC provides strategies for mainstreaming these issues within a policy context to improve the enabling environment for health.

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For more information about
accessing services offered by the
IQC, please see:
<http://ghiqc.usaid.gov>

For more information about the
technical approach and work of the
IQC, please see:
<http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com>