RTI International conducts HIV research and provides comprehensive technical assistance for HIV programs, policy, advocacy, and systems strengthening. We work with U.S. federal agencies, international health ministries, local governments, donors, foundations, and other clients seeking to prevent the spread of HIV in the United States and around the world.
RTI brings together multidisciplinary teams to conduct innovative HIV research, strengthen systems for service delivery, and provide effective and cost-efficient technical assistance—all with a focus on improving HIV prevention and care. Our HIV work builds upon behavioral research and evidence-based interventions, including community-based and clinical trials, and decades of applied program experience in developing countries.

**Capabilities**

**Prevention and Care among Vulnerable Populations**

RTI conducts epidemiologic, implementation, biomedical, and socio-behavioral research to improve the health of vulnerable populations living with, or at risk of, HIV. We work around the world, including in the United States, sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. We develop, test, and implement evidence-based prevention and care interventions that are appropriate to the needs of hard-to-reach populations and their communities. Partnering with at-risk people and communities, we implement innovative and culturally appropriate behavioral and treatment-based interventions that consider the unique human rights and legal issues faced by vulnerable populations and the stigma and discrimination that restrict their access to prevention, care, and treatment.

Our research focus areas include woman-focused health care initiatives, sexual health of adolescents and young people, reproductive health risk reduction through increased economic opportunity, availability of female-initiated contraceptives and biomedical HIV prevention interventions, HIV prevention and care among female sex workers, couples-based HIV prevention strategies, and the reduction of gender-based violence. Other projects focus on additional populations at risk of HIV infection, including men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, and persons living with HIV.

RTI is also developing and testing the use of a USAID-funded thin-film polymer device that delivers anti-retroviral agents under the skin that can prevent HIV for up to 3 months. The novel device offers a safer and simpler long-acting preventive for young and vulnerable populations—especially young women—than user-controlled methods such as vaginal gels, rings, and oral medications.

The Woman-Focused HIV Prevention Intervention, known as the Women's CoOp, is one of CDC’s best-evidence HIV behavioral prevention interventions and has been adapted for vulnerable adult and adolescent women in the United States and in multiple regions in South Africa, Republic of Georgia, and Russia.

**Implementation Science**

There is a call to scale up proven interventions and better attribute outcomes to specific programs through implementation science. RTI experts are using scientific methods to integrate research findings and evidence-based interventions into policy and practice—an important tool to help develop and test new service delivery approaches of promising interventions, improve program effectiveness, and inform policy.

RTI is enhancing the existing targeted sex work services in Africa to increase the uptake and frequency of HIV testing, demonstrate acceptability and feasibility of delivering pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to HIV-negative sex workers, maximize retention in care of HIV-infected women, promote timely initiation of anti-retroviral therapy (ART), and maximize retention and adherence to both ART and PrEP.

**Populations**

RTI specializes in addressing the needs of people at risk for, or living with, HIV:

- Adolescents and young people
- Couples at risk
- Homeless and marginally housed individuals
- Individuals involved in the criminal justice system
- Men who have sex with men
- Mobile and military populations
- People who use drugs/people who inject drugs
- Pregnant women
- Sex workers
- Transgender people
- Vulnerable women
Clinical, Infectious Disease, and Social Epidemiology

We have extensive experience designing and conducting individual- and cluster-randomized experimental studies to evaluate the safety, feasibility, efficacy, and effectiveness of HIV prevention and care interventions. Our work also includes observational studies of multilevel factors that influence HIV risk, including structural and social determinants. We are conducting ongoing studies that use multicomponent interventions focused on enhancing engagement along the HIV prevention and care continuums. Our HIV work also integrates a focus on other reproductive health outcomes, including sexually transmitted infections, prevention of unintended pregnancy, and gender-based violence.

Data Coordinating Centers

We specialize in data coordination for multisite research studies in which multiple research centers implement both common and unique study protocols. Our diverse capabilities allow us to support a wide spectrum of clinical and behavioral research, including epidemiologic studies and prevention interventions. We use flexible methods for acquiring and managing all types of data, including survey, clinical, medical measurement, and laboratory results. Our data coordination services are custom-designed to meet the specific research requirements of each project while using proven methods and technologies.

Health Communication and Social Marketing

RTI’s experts in health communication and social marketing routinely conduct formative research to identify appropriate target audiences and segmentation strategies to inform HIV prevention efforts. We work with creative teams to execute theory-driven HIV testing and prevention campaigns that target health care providers and at-risk populations. We design evaluations for these campaigns that seek to understand how well a message reaches its intended audience and how it affects their knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and health outcomes. Our health communication researchers are exploring the use and efficacy of new technologies, such as mobile devices, in disseminating HIV prevention and care messages.

Health Information Technology and mHealth

RTI works with health ministries and other agencies to develop strategies, improve coordination, and strengthen their capabilities in HIV and other health management...
systems. Our experience includes policy research and technical support related to large-scale health IT initiatives. We also offer a research-based design process to support the development of various user-centered technologies, personal health record applications, mobile technologies, remote monitoring, and Web 2.0 and social media tools.

With funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, RTI created a comprehensive, geospatially enabled database of HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention facilities in the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—providing a clearer understanding of the level and distribution of facilities serving key populations within the region.

Health Systems Strengthening and Policy Reform
RTI works in developing countries to strengthen all aspects of health systems to respond effectively to HIV—from advocating and supporting national goals for health sector reform, to building the capacity of local government agencies to deliver services. We also help implement and provide training in surveillance systems that support epidemiologic investigation of HIV, opportunistic infections, and sexually transmitted infections. Our expertise includes

- Economics and financing
- Planning, budgeting, and management of health sector reform to influence health policy
- Governance, accountability, and transparency
- Administration of grants to local partners to enhance and scale up the delivery of HIV services
- Program monitoring and evaluation.

Select Clients
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Institutes of Health
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- U.S. Naval Health Research Center
- CONRAD
- World Bank
- Department for International Development
- WHO
- UNICEF

Modeling, Simulation, and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
Our team of modelers uses mathematical modeling and simulation techniques to evaluate biological processes, social interaction in disease behavior, and associated health outcomes. Models developed and applied at RTI provide insights into resource allocation for HIV prevention and treatment; the spread of HIV in networks of people who inject drugs; and cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost-consequence analyses of various HIV therapies.

More Information
Robert Ssengonzi, PhD
rssengonzi@rti.org

Felicity Young, PhD
fyoung@rti.org

RTI International
3040 E. Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194 USA

www.rti.org/hiv