



# NCD Health Systems Strengthening

» The growing prevalence of NCDs in LMICs is compounded by health systems that are underprepared, shortages of essential medicines and technologies (EMTs), logistical barriers that impede service delivery and access to quality health care, and health financing that is inadequate.

## The Global Impact

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of death worldwide—killing 40 million people annually, equivalent to 70% of all deaths globally.<sup>1</sup> Eighty percent of NCD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).<sup>2</sup> NCDs also create significant losses in economic productivity, impeding development goals. As the health burden in LMICs shifts to NCDs, the ability to foster sustainable and scalable solutions—and effectively address NCDs—hinges on strengthening health system performance.

## RTI International's Solutions

RTI International draws on 60 years of experience in research, policy analysis and development, health economics and financing, and on-the-ground implementation. We successfully assess and address performance gaps. We manage complex, multicomponent health programs and projects—including more than 12,000 client-funded research and international development projects in more than 70 countries. We recognize that sustainable health equity depends on resilient and adaptable local health systems. As leaders in Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) as well as NCD control and management, we work with countries and partners to deliver creative solutions to improve NCD outcomes.



We lead the development and application of innovative tools to assess barriers and identify best practices for improved access to essential lifesaving technologies in LMICs.

## Access to Essential Medicines and Technology

Poor access to essential medicines and technology is a major challenge to treatment and management of NCDs in LMICs. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about one-third of the world's population lacks access to essential medicines, diagnostics, and other health technologies. In the poorest parts of Africa and Asia, 50 percent of the population does not have access to these services.<sup>3</sup>

RTI serves as a leader in both the Coalition for Access to NCD Medicines & Products and the Defeat NCDs partnership—bringing state actors, international governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropists, and pharmaceutical companies together to forge sustainable and scalable models for improved access to NCD medicines and technologies.

## Supply Chain Management and Logistics

The impact of investments to provide essential NCD medicines and technologies will, to a large extent, be determined by the ability to efficiently forecast, procure, and deliver supplies to where they are needed. Our economic analysis shows a high benefit-cost ratio from supply chain investments to deliver NCD medicines. RTI International's Global Supply Chain professionals work in over 50 countries—providing exceptional services in strategic sourcing, procurement, operations, and compliance. Together, RTI's Global Supply Chain and Logistics teams currently supply LMICs with large volumes of health products, valued at hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars annually, by deploying the following:

- Centralized shipping/receiving
- International air and ocean freight
- Pharmaceutical-compliant warehousing
- In-country cold-chain shipment management
- Inventory control
- Cross-border freight management
- Compliance with all country, client, and company regulations
- Strategic sourcing and procurement
- Import/export activities

## Health Information Systems (HIS)

As the number of NCD cases sharply increases, LMICs face a growing need for health metrics and adequate health information systems (HISs). RTI assesses the context and capacity of current HISs and works collaboratively with partners to develop complementary and innovative tools to strengthen HISs; improve data collection and analysis; and inform effective interventions for NCD prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. We help governments and other stakeholders to establish eHealth strategies, allocate resources efficiently, and integrate standards. By establishing and institutionalizing training programs in health informatics, we strengthen human capacity to implement, support, and use information systems.

## Health Financing

RTI's health financing analyses provide countries with information to monetize policy decisions, measure cost-effectiveness, and set priorities for resource allocation. RTI's experts work on health care financing and reimbursement in multiple disease and risk factor programs—including the design and evaluation of health care insurance, payment, and financing systems. RTI is a key contributing member of the Partnership for Healthy Cities—a global alliance of mayors from 40 cities and WHO's Global Ambassador for NCDs (Michael Bloomberg) and Cancer Research UK (CRUK), a multinational team of health and policy experts. Through these collaborations, we work to inform the global dialogue on NCD financing and revenue generation in LMICs.

## Health Governance

RTI promotes collaboration among government, civil society, and the private sector to increase government responsiveness and maximize resource utilization. The approach enhances civil society's role in advocacy and oversight to encourage transparent and effective use of public resources. RTI builds government and NGO capacities to improve performance in delivering key services to citizens. Analysis from RTI informs data-driven governance.



## Country Partners and Projects

RTI has active partnerships and projects addressing NCDs in more than 19 countries across Asia; Africa; South, Central, and North America; the Caribbean; and South Pacific. We successfully compete for research grants from the U.S. National Institutes of Health and count the multiple U.S. federal health agencies among our largest clients. The following examples illustrate, in part, RTI's versatility and diverse capabilities in meeting the challenges presented by NCDs.

### EMT Access

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#### **The Coalition for Access to NCD Medicines and Products**

RTI is a principal partner in the Coalition for Access to NCD Medicines & Products, a group of influential multisectoral actors from across the globe that is committed to increasing access to essential medicines and products (EMPs) for NCDs. The coalition relies on technical support, advocacy, and resource mobilization to help countries address barriers and identify opportunities to increase the availability of affordable EMPs; EMP availability can be improved through supply management, HSS, financing/costing, advocacy, and other means. The coalition was founded in 2017 and PATH hosts the coalition's secretariat; coalition members include government agencies, private-sector partners, NGOs, philanthropic foundations, and universities.

#### **The Platform for Knowledge Sharing on Access Solutions for Innovative Patented Medicines**

RTI collaborates with Access Accelerated, a consortium of 22 global pharmaceutical companies funded by The World Bank, to develop a knowledge platform that (1) integrates analyses of current access programs and (2) models decision and impact pathways to increase access to NCD medicines in LMICs. RTI provides a comprehensive compendium of local case studies that suggests generalizable good practices. RTI and partners provide pharmaceutical companies with necessary technical knowledge to pursue avenues that increase access to NCD medicines and products.

### Supply Chain Management and Logistics

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#### **ENVISION—Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) | Pharmaceuticals and Diagnostics**

RTI led the implementation of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s flagship program, ENVISION, by orchestrating the procurement, donation, and distribution of pharmaceutical drugs and diagnostic supplies valued at US\$22 million. Since 2006, RTI has provided more than 718 million treatments to more than 155 million people across 13 African countries, 1 Latin American country, and 2 Asian countries. RTI is working to control and eliminate NTDs through mass drug administration and preventive chemotherapy.

#### **NTDs Supply Chain Forum**

RTI is a leading member of the NTD Supply Chain Forum.<sup>4</sup> The forum is a unique public-private partnership that includes the WHO, a well-known private foundation, six prominent pharmaceutical donors, logistics partners, and several nonprofits and ministries of health. The forum manages logistics for the transfer of EMTs through one of the world's largest public health donation programs. It allows professionals working in health and logistics to solve problems and tackle the complexities of implementing mass drug administration in remote regions.

### Health Information

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#### **Digital Communication Toolkit**

In collaboration with academic institutions and NGOs in India, RTI conducted qualitative research to learn about NCD-related health communication in India by assessing Indians' preferred communication channels for cancer information and the viability of online platforms to serve as digital health information hubs. Our research produced a Digital Communication Toolkit to enable Indian public health organizations to maximize the impact of their digital communication campaigns about cancer. RTI is collaborating with the Indian Cancer Society (ICS) to use the toolkit's best practices to update ICS's website and online digital outreach strategies effectively.

#### **Patient-Centered Communication in Cancer Care (PCC-Ca) Tool**

RTI designed the PCC-Ca tool in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the patient advocacy group Fight Colorectal Cancer. The tool helps researchers determine whether and how improvement in patient-centered communication translates into better health outcomes by assessing how well health care providers communicate with patients. Available for public use, the PCC-Ca tool is designed for intervention research, national and regional population surveillance, and health care quality monitoring and assessment.

## Medtronic Text Response System

People suffering acute cardiovascular disease (CVD) need care. In India, RTI's research—funded by the Medtronic Foundation—revealed a significant need for increased information about CVD symptoms and risk factors. RTI is designing a text messaging intervention to educate patients about the signs and symptoms of acute CVD. Working with in-country partners, RTI provides health response training to citizens to increase access to appropriate health services.

## Health Financing

### Investment Cases | Global-to-Local Partnerships in Health Finance

RTI gleans valuable lessons about effective NCD economic and policy interventions from in-depth country investment cases. Our applied knowledge informs the health finance modeling implemented by alliances such as the Partnership for Healthy Cities—a global network committed to reducing NCDs by promoting and implementing excise tax policies that are proven to yield improved health outcomes for citizens and more financial benefits to governments. We also provide foundational research and analysis on health policy and finance modeling to groups such as CRUK. Our efforts help practitioners to implement innovative funding mechanisms and to frame interventions in tobacco, obesity, and alcohol research.

### Increasing Access to Care Through Innovative Finance Reform

In a USAID-funded partnership with Pathfinder International, RTI worked with rural and urban organizations in Bangladesh to identify clients needing family planning, maternal and child health care, vital medicines, and curative services. Through two innovative approaches—health benefit cards and a health equity fund—RTI helped 32 nonprofit organizations and 320 clinics increase access to care for Bangladesh's most needy citizens while building the organizations' capabilities for financial sustainability. The national pricing system that RTI helped to create enabled sliding-scale client billing and free health care through health benefit cards for impoverished clients. As a result, nonprofit organizations could compete with commercial clinics while recovering costs and limiting donor dependence. RTI assisted in the development of a health equity fund that transparently redistributes funds from paying to nonpaying clients.

## Health Governance

### USAID Governance, Accountability, Participation, and Performance (GAPP) Program (2012–2019)

In Uganda, RTI leads the USAID GAPP program to increase citizen participation, accountability, and local governance for effective service delivery. RTI is introducing training and capacity building to strengthen local government revenue, procurement, financial, and planning systems. These actions are helping to enhance parliament's oversight function, audit and procurement processes, and the voices of civil society organizations and others to demand better services.

1. World Health Organization. NCD Mortality & Morbidity; Global Health Observatory Data, 2017, [http://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality\\_morbidity/ncd\\_total/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality_morbidity/ncd_total/en/). Accessed 27 December 2017.
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3. Dowling, Paul. 2011. Healthcare Supply Chains in Developing Countries: Situational Analysis. Arlington, Va.: USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, Task Order 4, pg. 1.
4. Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases. The Neglected Tropical Diseases Supply Chain Forum, [http://unitingtocombatntds.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ntd\\_supply\\_chain.pdf](http://unitingtocombatntds.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ntd_supply_chain.pdf). Accessed 18 September 2018.



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