

Supporting An Evidence-Based Response To COVID-19 In The Health Sector

As health systems around the world struggle to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID must act quickly to pivot its resources and programming to support the much weaker health sector in the developing world. Crowded urban centers, social mores, and limited access to clean water, sanitation, and primary health-care in low- and middle-income countries, can contribute to spiraling COVID-19 infection and mortality rates. Such outcomes could have serious global socioeconomic and political consequences.

MSI stands ready to support USAID health offices and host governments in assessing the COVID-19 risk, its potential impacts, and in planning for evidence-based resource allocation to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. MSI has worked as a USAID partner for over 35 years in 100+ countries. Our work in the health sector focuses on the intersection between monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL), and health programming. In this role we have provided health sector evaluations, rapid assessments, operations research, strategic planning, and learning support in every region of the world. For COVID-19 response MSI can rapidly mobilize teams to support country- and regional-level assessment and planning efforts, including in fragile states and conflict zones. Our proposed services include:

COVID-19 Risk Assessment and Response Mechanisms:



- Country and/or regional risk and vulnerability assessments, focusing on primary health-care capacity and response.
- Research and analytical services to support disease surveillance and monitoring.
- Third-party monitoring by MSI's local monitors in remote areas or locations where data collection requires special protective measures.
- Real-time dashboards, GIS mapping, and infographics to strengthen evidence-based decision making, including by health teams, COVID-19 coordination committees, or district/sub-district health officials.

Health System Responsiveness:



- Health system capacity and gaps assessment at country, regional, and district levels; will include access to health facilities, ability to test and treat at the primary and secondary levels (with a focus on emergency respiratory equipment and personal protective equipment), availability of testing supplies and labs, and capacity of primary and secondary health facility staff to plan and respond.

- Remote training to primary health care workers and community health volunteers on testing, treating, and preventing COVID-19.
- Financial cost assessment and identification of funding options to strengthen host country capacity to address COVID-19.

District and Community-level Responsiveness:



- District/community assessment to determine high-risk areas for COVID-19 spread with recommendations for mitigation.
- Social and behavioral change communications assessments and recommendations for dissemination in public spaces (e.g. hospitals, clinics, and via local media).
- Technical guidance for schools, workplaces, hotels, prisons, hospitals, and other institutions, aimed at preventing the transmission of COVID-19.
- Options and costs for short-term bolstering of social safety nets for most vulnerable populations.

MSI's COVID-19 Relevant MEL Work in the Health Sector

The following highlights examples of the work MSI is currently doing in the health sector that can support USAID's response to COVID-19.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SUPPORT PROJECT (MESP) SOUTH SUDAN (2013-2021): MSI conducted third-party monitoring (TPM) of the level of Ebola virus disease preparedness and response by: (1) designing and testing a TPM tool for Ebola preparedness, and (2) monitoring screening points and handwashing facilities along border areas with Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo. This tool could be useful in tracking COVID-19 prevention responses in high-risk communities.

GHANA EVALUATE FOR HEALTH (2014-2021): MSI works closely with USAID and the Ghana Health Service (GHS) to deliver evaluations whose designs are applicable to COVID-19, e.g.: (1) impact of USAID disease control interventions across all regions in Ghana, (2) optimal healthcare worker training models in resource-limited environments, and (3) quality of primary health care services nationwide to identify gaps in services and assess access to services, supply chain efficiency, culture of quality improvement, and level of community/local government support to community health centers. MSI supported the GHS in training staff and rolling out a tablet-based client e-tracking system in 2,000+ health facilities, which can be adapted to monitor COVID-19 testing, treatment, and recovery. MSI also created an M&E Community of Practice for health M&E professionals to strengthen capacity in areas key to tracking COVID-19 (data analytics/visualization, ArcGIS mapping, and District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) platform design to track key health indicators).

ZAMBIA EVIDENCE FOR HEALTH (ZEH) (2020-2025): MSI works with the USAID/Zambia Health Office and the Ministry of Health to improve the quality, timeliness, and accessibility of HMIS data from the health facility to the national level; and to strengthen the capacity of Zambia’s health research community to gather evidence to improve health programming, focusing on people living with HIV. MSI support is designed to enhance data use for decision making across the health system, optimizing Health Management Information System component interoperability and responding to knowledge management needs to improve data analysis across big data sets, such as those available across donor COVID-19 programs.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA) MELS PLATFORM (2019-2024): MSI provides support to the Middle East Bureau to assess the specialized health needs of marginalized communities in five countries in the MENA region and to identify appropriate responses to gaps. Such assessments are useful to determine gaps in health systems to respond to COVID-19. The studies also assess quality management, leadership, and governance needed to ensure positive health outcomes among target populations.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROJECT (MEP) SENEGAL (2015-2020): MSI conducted two evaluations applicable to COVID-19 concerns. The first assessed the capacity of the Government of Senegal to plan and meet the milestones of a regional-level government to government program to strengthen local-level primary health care provision. The second was a midterm evaluation of the full USAID/Senegal health portfolio to assess the effectiveness of program, project, and activity designs and implementation; and prospects for sustaining the results in the Senegalese health system in its journey to self-reliance.