



Photo Credit: Sean Hawkey

TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

Health Systems Strengthening

A strong, resilient health system is the key to achieving sustainable improvements in health and health care in any country. A health system is made up of many layers of institutions and individuals that, together, contribute to the availability, quality and affordability of preventative, curative and palliative health services.

Since 2006, IMA World Health has built and supported integrated, holistic and sustainable health systems that increase access to quality health care in fragile countries. IMA supports health systems at the national, subnational (i.e. district) and community levels, providing tailored assistance and capacity strengthening that boosts engagement, capability and investment at all levels of a country's health system.

Our approach encompasses the World Health Organization's building blocks of health systems strengthening (HSS):

- 1. Improved health service delivery:** We address the human, financial, social and physical capital needs of a health system to improve its service delivery and universal access at scale with an emphasis on women and youth.
- 2. Health workforce development:** We strengthen the capacities of a country's health workforce through trainings, mentoring, and the provision of equipment and other resources.

- 3. Information systems:** We help governments and health facilities utilize human resources and reporting software to manage their health workforce more effectively as well as make data-driven decisions to improve their health service delivery.

- 4. Access to essential medicines:** We strengthen national medicine distribution systems, establishing a pull system that gives each health facility a line of credit to purchase low cost, high quality medicine based on their patient intake. The funds from the sales of medicine replenish the credit line and go towards building a facility's financial reserves for future medicine procurement. This pull system also reduces medicine stock outs, ensuring availability to those who need the medicine.

- 5. Health system financing:** We work at all three levels in a health system – government, providers, and recipients – to ensure people have access to essential services and are protected from financial hardship. We do this by creating efficiencies in use of resources, promoting transparencies and accountabilities from all stakeholders, and ensuring access to essential services while striving towards affordable and accessible health coverage for all.



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6. Leadership and governance: We support health facility leadership in strengthening their management capacities and utilizing the information systems they need to be effective. In addition to leadership training programs, we promote the use of community scorecards to help leadership understand the experiences of both health providers and users in their facilities, monitor whether their facility's services are improving, and engage the community and health providers in joint decision-making and planning.

In Practice

Access to Primary Health Care (ASSP)

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, IMA World Health supported the DRC's National Health Development Plan by providing a full range of health systems strengthening planning, training and mentoring support across the WHO's six HSS pillars. With funding from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (formerly DFID), IMA World Health's ASSP project improved access to and coverage of primary health care services for 9.7 million people living within 52 health zones in five of the country's 11 provinces, prioritizing interventions such as the treatment of malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea; nutrition; obstetric and neonatal care; family planning; immunization; and water, hygiene and sanitation interventions. On average, ASSP exceeded program targets by six percent despite ongoing conflict affecting the project's implementation area.

At project close, ASSP resulted in:

- **26 million people** visited ASSP-supported health centers and community care sites for curative consultations
- **3.5 million more people** annually utilized health services
- **1.85 million births** attended at a health facility by skilled health personnel, a 90% increase from project baseline
- **3,418 women** received fistula repair surgery
- **1.68 million more people** accepted modern family planning methods
- **More than 1.35 million children under five and pregnant women** received direct and intensive nutrition interventions
- **1.7 million children** vaccinated against measles
- **1.6 million pregnant women** received intermittent preventive treatment of malaria



The Corus Effect

Founded in 1960, IMA World Health is a leading public health organization operating in some of the world's most fragile settings. In partnership with local partners and governments, IMA strengthens health systems, improves maternal and child health, prevents and treats diseases, promotes nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene, addresses sexual and gender-based violence and responds to global health crises.

IMA World Health is part of the Corus International family, an ensemble of long-serving, global leaders in international development and humanitarian assistance committed to ending poverty and building healthy communities across Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Africa. In addition to IMA World Health, the Corus family includes Lutheran World Relief, CGA Technologies, Ground Up Investing, and Farmers Market Brands. The organizations of the Corus family operate as permanent partners, integrating disciplines, approaches and resources to overcome global health challenges, develop productive and stable economies, improve resilience in the face of climate change, and respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

- **2 million bed nets** distributed
- **109 new health centers** constructed, and 177 renovations completed
- **1,693 new structures** to improve water quality and sanitation completed
- **66,343 health workers** newly registered in iHRIS health workforce management software
- **1,614 health facilities** submitted routine monthly reports using DHIS2 on average



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