I-TECH
International
Training & Education
Center for Health
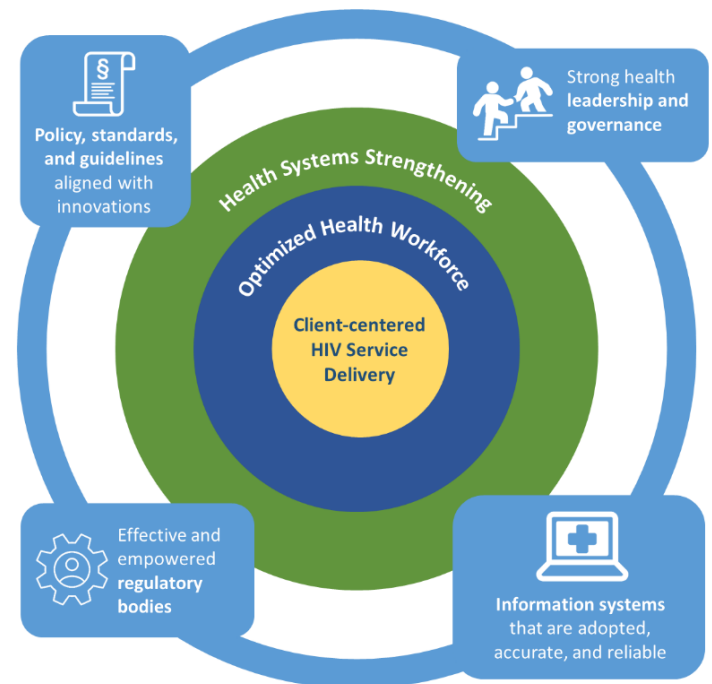
One of the greatest challenges to achieving population health objectives, including HIV epidemic control, is the effective scale-up of evidence-based interventions (e.g., HIV Test and Treat, TB preventive treatment, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis). Implementing these best practices at scale requires that governments adopt them into national policies, guidelines, and plans, and then appropriately resource those interventions in budgeting processes. These policies and plans must then be adopted and implemented at varying levels of government (e.g., national, provincial, state, district) and ultimately in the clinic setting between providers and patients. In many settings, adoption of evidence-based interventions into policies and plans is slow and inconsistent. And often when adopted, their implementation is hampered by poor implementation planning, resource shortages or misallocation, inadequate policy dissemination or training, or failure to effectively monitor policy implementation and address unforeseen barriers. Strengthening health policy enabling environments through governance and policy system strengthening, as described by the World Health Organization (WHO) Health System Building Blocks, is critical to achieving and sustaining population health objectives.
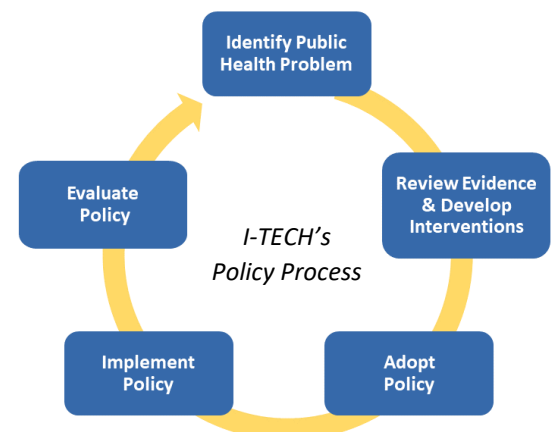
I-TECH CAPACITY

The International Training and Education Center for Health (I-TECH) has broad expertise in strengthening health policy, planning, and systems in resource-constrained settings. I-TECH's approach to policy and planning emphasizes the importance of developing standardized processes, focusing on:

- Conducting sound situation, stakeholder, and policy analyses;
- Modeling implementation, including financial, material, and human resource needs;
- Facilitating policy awareness and understanding by key implementers;
- Policy information management; and
- Ongoing policy monitoring and evaluation.

I-TECH also has the advantage of rapid feedback mechanisms from its global network of technical experts, who engage at various levels across the health system.

I-TECH Program Reach

Strengthening Policy Management Capacity. I-TECH worked with the National Department of Health of **South Africa** (NDOH) to strengthen and standardize its policy development and implementation systems. As part of this activity, I-TECH developed a policy development and management manual for use by NDOH staff. I-TECH also co-developed the Road Map for Monitoring and Implementing Policy Reforms that contains a series of tools to strengthen policy development and management capacities.

Policy Information Management Systems. I-TECH is developed a policy information management software system with the **South Africa** NDOH that will host a comprehensive set of national policies and strategies, streamline policy development and review processes, provide implementation feedback to policymakers, and improve management of policy and planning processes through a policy status dashboard.

Policy Content Evaluations. I-TECH conducted content evaluations of policies and laws in **Kenya**, **Uganda**, **South Africa**, **Nigeria**, and **Tanzania** addressing issues ranging from scope of practice laws affecting ART initiation; health information confidentiality laws affecting HIV service delivery; and age of consent for HTC, ART initiation and VMMC. These content evaluations compared existing laws and policies in these countries against international best practices or recommendations and presented considerations for potential reforms. I-TECH also recently concluded a content evaluation of policies relating to access to HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis by adolescent girls and young women in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda as part of DREAMS.

Policy Implementation Evaluations. I-TECH conducted an implementation evaluation of **South Africa**'s Universal Test & Treat Policy in four provinces. The evaluation consisted of interviews with key implementers at the provincial departments of health, district health offices, hospitals and outpatient clinics. The evaluation identified potential barriers to implementation and made recommendations to the NDOH regarding strategies to strengthen implementation.

Policy Development. I-TECH influences decision making at national level through our participation in key policy-making forums at all levels of Ministries of Health. I-TECH sits at the table at Ministries of Health across the network and is able to make strong and evidence-based recommendations because of its continuous presence in work processes at the operational level. In **Namibia**, I-TECH team works closely with key Ministry counterparts across various levels of the health system in the area of secondary prevention of cervical cancer, facilitating the formulation of new guidelines for Cervical Cancer Screen and Treat by way of visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) and point-of-care surgical treatment. In **Tanzania**, I-TECH worked closely with the Ministry to identify differentiated care models implemented across the country and develop recommendations for integration of differentiated care in the national HIV guidelines. I-TECH played a key role in the revision and implementation of the new HIV policy. In **Kenya**, I-TECH collaborated with the Ministry of Health to develop a Unique Patient Identifier Implementation Framework to facilitate rollout of unique patient identification.