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The Frontline Health Workers Coalition Response to USAID's Draft Vision for Action for Health Systems Strengthening

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The Frontline Health Workers Coalition (FHWC) commends USAID for laying out a clear vision for health systems strengthening with definitions, goals, objectives and an identified approach to guide its work in addressing barriers and bottlenecks to achieving the Agency's health goals of Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths (EPCMD) and achieving an AIDS-free Generation (AFG). We recommend and hope this vision is coordinated and closely aligned with HSS and HRH strategies and visions of other agencies, including the State Department (OGAC), CDC, HHS and HRSA.

As noted in the Vision, achievement of these goals will require concerted and concurrent efforts to strengthen all aspects of the health system, especially human resources for health (HRH).

Recommendations:

The FHWC supports the goal of ending dependence on development assistance and achieving progress toward Universal Health Coverage, as well as alignment of the HSS activities under USAID's Vision with the six core health systems functions (building blocks). The recommendations below refer specifically to the Human Resources for Health (HRH) core health systems function.

The FHWC recommends that the USAID Vision for Action for HSS:

- Align efforts to address health systems and health workforce with the United States-led Global Health Security Agenda, which seeks to accelerate progress toward a world safe and secure from infectious disease threats. The Ebola virus epidemic in West Africa is a new reminder that health security for all depends on health workers on the ground. The epidemic brings new urgency to the need to build a sustainable HRH response to future emergencies.



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- Address the critical role of the health workforce in relation to the four strategic outcomes identified in the Vision, with particular emphasis on the strategic outcomes of service and population coverage. These outcomes can only be achieved if there is a sustainable and resilient health workforce. The strategic outcome of financial protection—securing access to comprehensive services—requires an investment in recruiting, training, deploying and supporting health workers. Responsiveness implies that adequate numbers of well trained and supported frontline health workers are available to assure promptness of services for the poor and marginalized.
- Include, in USAID’s approach to strengthening HRH, a priority objective to address incentives for retention of health workers. One of the most critical barriers to achieving UHC is the inadequate numbers of trained health workers available to provide access to services and care. This is especially true in rural areas and for underserved populations where retention of health workers is a particular challenge.

The FHWC supports USAID’s efforts to measure key HSS indicators in the focus countries. These indicators are important to assuring accountability and will assist in measuring the effectiveness of USAID’s implementation of its HSS programs. The FHWC recognizes that improvements in achieving each of these indicators depend on investment in a resilient and sustainable health workforce. Implementation of the USAID Vision for Action for Health Systems Strengthening provides an opportunity to build a body of evidence for what works in strengthening and sustaining human resources for health to achieve the U.S. government’s global health goals.

About the Frontline Health Workers Coalition:

The FHWC is an alliance of 41 US-based public and private organizations working together to urge greater and more strategic U.S. investment in frontline health workers in developing countries as a cost-effective way to save lives and foster a healthier, safer and more prosperous world.

More information about the Coalition is available at frontlinehealthworkers.org

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