USAID Global Health Research and Development Strategy 2023-2028

Executive Summary

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is pleased to present its new Global Health Research and Development Strategy 2023-2028. USAID submits this strategy pursuant to Section 7019(e) of Division K of Public Law 117-103, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2022, which incorporates by reference the requirements of the Joint Explanatory Statement that provides:

> *"The USAID Administrator shall also develop a new multi-year strategy on global health research and development, which shall be submitted to the Committees on Appropriations and posted on the USAID website not later than 180 days after enactment of the Act. Such strategy should include:*
> *(I) how USAID will work across programs to implement a comprehensive research and development approach;*
> *(2) plans to collect and use input from the Global Health Bureau, consultations with nonprofit and other private sector partners, and the heads of other relevant Federal agencies, including CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority;*
> *(3) plans to coordinate with such stakeholders in support of innovative global health product development; and*
> *(4) specific investment and target goals for research and product development across disease areas*."

This strategy describes USAID's renewed commitment to research and development (R&D) and use of new, innovative health products and technologies; the implementation and scale-up of real world, evidence-based research and learning to improve health outcomes globally; and the strengthening of both local health research and development capacity and global research and development partnerships.

The United States government has long recognized how scientific and technological innovation, data, and evidence are central to the development and implementation of sound policies and the delivery of equitable programs. Investments in global health protect Americans at home and abroad, save lives, strengthen fragile states, and promote social and economic progress.[1] USAID plays a critical role in investing in research and development (R&D) that has led to life-saving breakthroughs in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of global diseases, and to the uptake at scale of critical health and development interventions. Harnessing the power of research and learning has resulted in more efficient and effective programs and advancements in efforts to prevent maternal and child deaths, control the HIV/AIDS epidemic, combat infectious diseases and emerging threats, and strengthen health systems.

[1]https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/memorandum-on-restoring-trust-in-government-through-scientific-integrity-and-evidence-based-policymaking/

Over the next five years, USAID will continue to concentrate on those areas where it is uniquely qualified and has a comparative advantage, pursuing a vision of research and innovation translated into action to improve the health, well-being, and resilience of people around the world. USAID will support collaborative monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL) from the local to the global levels, generating evidence on interventions, policies, approaches, products, and technologies that increase the impact of health programs globally while sustainably strengthening country research and development systems. In order to accomplish this, USAID will focus on four interrelated objectives:

1. To accelerate the development, introduction, scale-up, and sustained equitable access to and use of health products, technologies, tools, and approaches to address critical unmet needs and mitigate emerging challenges;
2. To identify, generate, utilize, and scale-up high-quality evidence to support the adoption, implementation, and impact of life-saving health and development behaviors, approaches and interventions;
3. To strengthen the capability and resilience of local stakeholders, institutions, programs, and partnerships to conduct monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning and utilize evidence to improve health outcomes in a systematic, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable manner to further USAID's commitment to localization; and
4. To strengthen research and development partnerships among countries and development partners to improve coordination and strengthen open, shared data and evidence for decision making and planning.

The U.S. government's investments in global health R&D help build stronger, more equitable communities, countries, and global partnerships. These investments strengthen health systems, foster stability and economic growth globally, and help the global community prevent and respond to emerging diseases, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The vision of R&D is to advance the Administration's use of MERL to use data and learning to contribute innovations, measure, learn, and help partner countries improve the health outcomes of their populations. This includes population health approaches such as strengthening primary health care, as well as a commitment to localization. The true challenge is to collaboratively deepen and accelerate efforts in order to maintain progress and sustainably improve equitable health outcomes worldwide.

Global Health Research and Development: Accelerating Success

For more than 50 years, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has played a pivotal role in saving lives and improving the health of populations around the world through evidence-based research and development programs. Thanks to the critical support of Congress and the American people, USAID has led and contributed to major gains in global health by collaborating with host governments and many other partners to strengthen the capacity of local and global health programs to improve health and well-being. Between 2000 and 2020, collective efforts in tuberculosis (TB) treatment saved over 66 million lives and supported the development and clinical trials of over 25 drugs and combination treatments.[2] Similarly, since the launch of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2003, over 21 million lives have been saved through HIV prevention and treatment, and over 20 countries reached epidemic control of HIV/AIDS.[3] USAID's investments in voluntary family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) have supported women and couples in over 30 countries to achieve their desired family size, while also contributing to the development of nearly every modern contraceptive method available today.[4] In response to the 2012 global Child Survival Call to Action, USAID scaled up maternal and child health (MCH), family planning, nutrition, and malaria interventions to prevent child and maternal deaths (PCMD) in 25 high-need priority countries. This focus has enabled USAID to help save the lives of 9.3 million children and 340,000 women in those countries since then.[5]

However, despite dramatic reductions in child mortality over the last 30 years, substantial progress remains to be made to improve maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.[6] The world also observed the rollback of many health and development gains due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which global health systems suffered from disruptions to routine health interventions and lifesaving services.[7] For example, there were an estimated 14 million more malaria cases documented in 2020 than in 2019, and 24 nations recorded increases in malaria mortality.[8] While the full extent of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be fully understood, collaborative efforts by USAID, partner governments, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other partners continue to support the continuity of basic services, provide social and economic support, and work to both prevent and address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the broader global health system.[9]

These successes were made possible by USAID's support for innovative global health MERL; focus on identifying problems, developing and testing novel approaches, and rapidly adapting solutions; and investments to build and utilize local research and development capacity. In collaboration with local partners, USAID's global health MERL develops targeted technologies

[2]https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/hq-tuberculosis/tb-report-2021/factsheet-global-tb-report-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=86011b1e_5&download=true
[3] https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PEPFAR2022.pdf
[4] https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022.06.15_PRH-FPRH-Program-Overview.pdf
[5] https://www.usaid.gov/global-health/health-areas/maternal-and-child-health
[6] https://www.unfpa.org/publications/trends-maternal-mortality-2000-2017
[7] https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-EHS-continuity-survey-2021.1
[8] https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240040496
[9] htPBtps://www.usaid.gov/coronavirus

and generates practical implementation evidence and tools. These learnings are directly applied to make country programs more efficient, equitable, sustainable, and cost-effective, thereby enabling countries to introduce and, if appropriate, scale up interventions more rapidly to reach more people. USAID-funded R&D has led to many other key successes, including over 50 years of commitment to build data for evidence-based decision-making from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Program; the development and adoption of more effective strategies to prevent and reduce maternal, child, and newborn mortality and malnutrition, such as oral rehydration salts (ORS/Zinc Vitamin A); groundbreaking innovations in new and existing contraceptive methods; development and scaling up of the use of evidence-based High Impact Practices (HIPs) to improve family planning programming; support for introduction of lifesaving vaccines; use of chlorhexidine as a broad-spectrum antiseptic for umbilical cord care among neonates; prophylactic applications of antiretroviral drugs to prevent HIV infections; new drug formulations for malaria; and new treatment regimens for drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB).

R&D must remain a vital component of USAID's efforts to solve health problems. The highly mobile and interconnected nature of our world has contributed to both the emergence and rapid spread of a variety of health threats. USAID's investments in R&D, and those of its partners, are necessary to develop new breakthroughs in prevention, detection, and treatment of emerging threats as well as ending longstanding global scourges such as HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria; to drive improvements in reproductive, maternal, child and newborn health; and to more effectively strengthen health systems. Many poor health outcomes persist because of the complexity of adapting existing or potential solutions to fit different contexts. This strategy is a renewed commitment to reach vulnerable and marginalized populations, and to address inequities by understanding subnational variations, testing innovations to extend effective service, and strengthening key elements of health systems. R&D is crucial to understanding how to better tackle these implementation challenges. Lessons learned internationally can also be applied domestically to help equitably reach disadvantaged populations in the United States and low and middle income countries (LMICs).

In addition, USAID's global health research partnerships, commitment to supporting science and the scientific method in LMICs, and recognition of the importance of engaging with the private sector and civil society organizations have helped to build reliable scientific capacity and global research networks. Improved local R&D, paired with strengthened collaboration and coordination across other donors, research institutions, networks, multilateral agencies, governments, and other stakeholders at the global level, has the potential to reinvigorate research and development efforts. Ultimately, focusing on partnerships is critical to centering country ownership and capacity while supporting countries on the pathway to sustainable and resilient health systems.

Vision, Mission, and Objectives of the Strategy

Vision: Research is translated into timely action to improve health, well-being, and resilience of people around the world.

Mission: To support strategic, locally-led research, evaluation, and learning from community to global levels, generating high-quality, timely evidence for innovation and utilization across interventions, policies, approaches, products, and technologies as the foundation for impactful, equitable global health and development programs.

To achieve its global health R&D mission, USAID will focus on four **objectives.**

1. **Health technologies, tools, and approaches:** To accelerate the development, introduction, scale-up, and sustained equitable access to and use of health technologies, tools, and approaches to address critical unmet needs and mitigate emerging challenges.
2. **Implementation science, knowledge management, and research utilization**: To identify, generate, utilize, and scale-up high-quality evidence to support the adoption, implementation, and impact of life-saving health and development behaviors, approaches and interventions.
3. **Ethical, locally-led R&D systems:** To strengthen the capability and resilience of local stakeholders, institutions, programs, and partnerships to conduct monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning and utilize evidence to improve health outcomes in a systematic, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable manner to further USAID's commitment to localization.
4. **Partnerships and collaboration:** To strengthen R&D partnerships among countries and development partners to improve coordination and strengthen open, shared data for decision making and planning.

This new strategy outlines USAID's global health research objectives and describes the main approaches that the Agency will employ to achieve those goals across different technical areas and diseases. This strategy builds upon the 2017-2022 Global Health Research and Development Strategy, and was informed by and vetted with a variety of stakeholders, both within and outside of the U.S. government. These stakeholders were consulted to provide feedback on the importance of global health R&D, USAID's unique role in global health R&D, and the adequacy and appropriateness of the strategy's revised objectives.

USAID's Role in Global Health Research and Development

USAID coordinates its global health research closely with other U.S. government agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Department of Defense. Complementing the work of other agencies, USAID's work emphasizes research that is directly applicable to local and global