

Questions for Dr. Gawande
Assistant Administrator for Global Health
United States Agency for International Development
Representative Cloud
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic
December 13, 2023

Question:

Per the State Department's report on federal contributions to international organizations in 2021, USAID awarded several grants to the WHO to "Support collaborative activities with USAID and the World Health Organization (WHO) in a wide range of health-related activities, including infectious diseases, maternal and child health, family planning, safe motherhood and newborn health."¹ The WHO's website lists a variety of initiatives under each of these headings, such as breastfeeding, contraception, and infant nutrition. Within its voluntary grants to the WHO, does the U.S. specify funding for particular WHO offices, activities, or programs such as these?

- a. Does USAID maintain records of such specifications? If so, please provide copies for the last five fiscal years.
- b. Does USAID report this information to Congress in any form?

Answer:

USAID's agreements with WHO bolster the capacity of WHO to implement activities that advance the shared global health and development goals of USAID and WHO. All activities supported through USAID's WHO grant agreements have individual statements of work (SOW) with objectives, activities, expected deliverables, and an associated budget that receive USAID approval before activity implementation begins. USAID operating units work collaboratively with WHO headquarters, regional, and/or country offices to customize unique SOWs for each USAID investment. USAID's Global Health Bureau currently has two grant agreements with WHO.

The first, the WHO Consolidated Grant II advances USAID global health priority areas related to preventable child and maternal deaths, voluntary family planning, reproductive health, nutrition, and malaria; controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and protecting communities from infectious diseases, including zoonotic diseases that spill over from wildlife and domestic animals, as well as other shared health priorities.

Through this agreement, USAID partners with WHO to leverage WHO's unique position, its reach, and its experience/expertise in: (1) the development and dissemination of standardized, evidence-based technical guidance; (2) coordinating and convening key global, regional, and country stakeholders; (3) carrying out pivotal research; (4) coordinating or conducting

surveillance, laboratory testing, and data analysis; and (5) leading the response to infectious disease outbreaks. These interventions are at the heart of creating resilient and sustainable health systems that can function without donor assistance and are therefore critical to achieving USAID's goals.

Second, the WHO Polio and Immunization II agreement advances USAID's polio and immunization objectives and USAID's overall global health goals of preventing child and maternal deaths and combating infectious diseases. WHO has been a spearheading partner of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) since 1995, which allows USAID to leverage WHO's unique technical capacity to design, operationalize, and oversee polio and other disease eradication and control programs. WHO's role as primary technical advisor to Ministries of Health also uniquely positions this organization as a technical leader in global disease control efforts.

Through this agreement, USAID funding to WHO's programs supports technical assistance and operational support for polio and immunization activities, including laboratory strengthening and accreditation, supporting the introduction of new vaccines, strengthening immunization systems, as well as infectious disease case detection, event, and environmental surveillance. Support to WHO's programs through this agreement contributes to USAID's outbreak response efforts at the global, regional, and country levels, thereby advancing the global eradication of polio and strengthening global health security.

USAID welcomes the opportunity to brief you or your staff and respond to any additional questions that you might have.

In terms of reports submitted to Congress, USAID communicates its plans to work with WHO and other Public International Organizations through the routine Congressional Notification process. In addition, USAID provides reporting on WHO-supported results through program-area specific reports to Congress.

Question:

Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which encourages or pressures countries to alter their laws or policies related to abortion?

- a. Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which encourages or pressures individuals to change their views on abortion?
- b. Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which attempts to discourage conscientious objection to abortion by healthcare workers or others?

Answer:

USAID does not provide funding to WHO to alter laws or policies related to abortion or support activities referenced above related to abortion. USAID implements its WHO activities in compliance with applicable abortion-related statutory restrictions such as the Helms and Siljander Amendments.

Question:

Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which advocates particular laws or policies related to gender identity such as “legal recognition of self-determined gender identity”?

- a. Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which encourages or pressures countries to alter their laws or policies related to legal recognition of gender identity?
- b. Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which encourages or pressures individuals to change their views on legal recognition of gender identity or other aspects of gender identity?
- c. Has USAID specified funds for any WHO project which encourages or pressures countries to alter their laws or policies related to gender transition procedures such as administration of puberty blockers, hormones, or surgeries or which encourages or pressures individuals to change their views on such procedures?

Answer:

USAID does not provide funding to WHO for activities focused specifically on gender identity issues. USAID supports WHO to provide technical expertise in the development of public health guidelines, which may include references to gender identity and stigma-related issues to reduce barriers to health services.

Question:

Before the pandemic, out of all its voluntary contributions to the WHO, the U.S. specified less than 3% each for preventing and controlling disease outbreaks and for emergency Operations. In light of the WHO's failure to prevent and adequately respond to the Covid pandemic and its wasteful use of funds to promote initiatives unrelated to health, has USAID increased the percentage of its contributions for preventing and controlling disease outbreaks, emergency operations, and pandemic prevention?

- a. Does USAID plan to shift more of its WHO contributions toward these purposes?
 - i. If so, by how much does USAID plan to increase the proportion of such contributions?
 - ii. If not, why not?

Answer:

From 2019 (before the COVID-19 pandemic) to 2023, USAID's Global Health Security (GHS) Program provided approximately \$7.3 million of regular global health security funding per year to WHO to work with partner countries on capacity building to prevent, detect, and respond to emerging infectious disease threats. This included supporting a global database of respiratory pathogens; strengthening countries' preparedness to respond to events of public health significance; supporting workforce development and national platforms to bring together stakeholders across all Ministries to combat infectious disease threats; and more recently, prepositioning funds for an initial rapid response to emerging infectious disease outbreaks such as Ebola and Marburg.

In 2022, with the support of Congress, USAID's GHS Program began an expansion of its portfolio into 50 countries to align with strategic targets laid out in the U.S. National Biodefense Strategy and Implementation Plan for Countering Biological Threats, Enhancing Pandemic Preparedness, and Achieving Global Health. This expansion shifted GHS resources to USAID Missions in 50 countries, enabling USAID Missions to invest resources in programs specifically targeted to partner country needs and regional contexts to improve Global Health Security. As a result of rigorous country-level analysis of gaps and strategic partners in 2023, 16 USAID Missions provided approximately \$18.6 million total in GHS funds to the WHO to strengthen partner country capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to emerging infectious disease threats.

Future commitments of USAID GHS investments in WHO will be driven by the on the ground needs of countries for strengthening pandemic preparedness and response systems and services.