Why does PEPFAR invest in human resources for health?

Human resources for health (HRH) – defined as workers whose primary intent is to improve health – are critical to providing life-saving HIV services. However, HRH shortages are common in most high-HIV burden countries, limiting access to and quality of HIV services. A key contribution PEPFAR makes to the global HIV/AIDS response is an investment in HRH to do the right things (deliver high-impact HIV services to the populations with highest HIV burden), in the right places (areas with the highest HIV burden), at the right time (getting ahead of and ultimately controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic).

What impact has PEPFAR’s investment had?

As of September 2015, PEPFAR supported country governments in adding 190,000 new health care workers to the health system in sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide to provide HIV and other health services. Achievements include:

- Rapid scale-up of highly trained providers to deliver services in health facilities and communities most affected by HIV/AIDS
- A transformative effect on health training institutions – from improved curricula to increased faculty retention – that produced 190,000 trained HRH and will continue training HRH for many years to come
- Major investments in future physicians and nurses, with HRH training and production capacities strengthened in 40 medical schools and 20 nursing schools across 14 sub-Saharan African countries
- Strengthened HRH data systems to drive decision making, improved HRH policies and regulations to support both HIV services scale up and quality of services provided, and support for increased HRH retention

What is on the horizon for human resources for health?

PEPFAR’s future HRH investments will include a continued focus on direct support for sustained control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, while also leveraging those investments to strengthen HRH in addressing health epidemics more broadly. To directly support epidemic control, HRH investments will use data from high-HIV burden areas to drive investments in HRH strategies related to supply, recruitment, deployment, retention, quality, and sustainability. HRH investments will also be leveraged to respond to other health epidemics, particularly in addressing the Ebola response in select countries in West Africa.

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