

Global Health Technologies Coalition Outside Witness Testimony for the Record
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
US House of Representatives – 2020
Jamie Bay Nishi, Director, Global Health Technologies Coalition
USAID Global Health Programs FY 2021 Appropriations

Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on fiscal year 2021 (FY21) appropriations for global health programs at the US Agency for International Development (USAID). We appreciate your committed leadership in global health, and we hope that your support will continue. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC), a group of 30 nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and aligned businesses advancing policies to accelerate the creation of new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools that bring healthy lives within reach for all people. To this end, we strongly urge the Committee to continue its established support for global health research and development (R&D) by:

1. Sustaining and supporting US investment in global health research and product development by robustly funding the Global Health accounts at USAID and the State Department. This means rejecting cuts to global health programs called for by the Administration for FY21 and supporting at minimum sustained funding at FY20 levels for each disease or population-specific program under the USAID and State Department global health accounts.
2. Instructing USAID—in collaboration with other agencies involved in global health—to prioritize R&D within each of the disease and condition areas under USAID’s Global Health Programs account and requiring leaders at the State Department and USAID to work together with other US agencies to develop a whole-of-government global health R&D strategy to ensure that US investments in global health research are efficient, coordinated, and streamlined.
3. Calling for the expansion of the annual report on USAID’s health-related research and development strategy, which is vital for transparency and oversight, and for the public release of the annual report required by the Global Health Innovation Act (P.L. 115-411), which details the development and use of global health innovations by the programs, projects, and activities of the Agency.

GHTC members strongly believe that in order to meet the world's most pressing global health needs, it is critical to invest in research today so that the most effective health solutions are available now and in the future. Sustainable investment in R&D for a broad range of neglected diseases and health conditions is critical to tackling both endemic and emerging global health challenges that impact people around the world and at home in the United States. My testimony reflects the needs expressed by our member organizations working in nearly one hundred countries.

Critical Need for New Global Health Tools

While we have made tremendous gains in global health over the past fifteen years, millions of people around the world are still threatened by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and other neglected diseases and health conditions. In 2018, TB killed 1.5 million people, surpassing deaths from HIV/AIDS. 1.7 million people were newly diagnosed with HIV.

Nearly half of the global population remains at risk for malaria, and drug-resistant strains are growing. Women and children remain the most vulnerable with around 80% of all global maternal and child deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa, with 1 out of every 13 children in the region dying before the age of 5—often from vaccine-preventable or other communicable diseases. These figures highlight the tremendous global health challenges that still remain and the need for sustained investment in global health research to deliver new tools to combat endemic and emerging threats.

New tools and technologies are critical, both to address unmet global health needs and to address challenges of drug resistance, outdated and toxic treatments, and difficulty administering current health technologies in poor, remote, and unstable settings. We must also continue investing in the next generation of tools to prepare for emerging threats. As humans live closer and closer to wildlife, the threat of emerging infectious disease outbreaks will intensify. The recent outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, has demonstrated once again that we do not have all the tools needed to prevent, diagnose, and treat many neglected and emerging infectious diseases—a reality we also saw during the Zika epidemic and West African Ebola epidemic just a few years ago. Yet, the impact of the rVSV-ZEBOV (ERVEBO) Ebola vaccine on the ongoing Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrates the power of having the right tool at the right time to respond to a health emergency. As of January 2020, ERVEBO has been used to vaccinate more than 250,000 at-risk individuals. With a 97.5% efficacy rate against the Ebola Zaire virus, this vaccine is highly protective and is now a vital tool for this and future Ebola outbreaks—and it was developed with help and funding from the US government. It is critical we keep investing in the development of next-generation tools to fight existing and emerging disease threats so that we have tools ready to go when we need them.

USAID Contributions to Global Health R&D

USAID is the only US agency with a mandate to focus on global health and development. For that reason, the Agency is uniquely positioned to support the end-to-end development of new global health technologies—from defining a global health challenge, designing a tool to address it, developing that tool through clinical trials, and delivering that tool to communities most in need—in a way that is not replicated elsewhere in the US government, particularly for late-stage research and product development. USAID’s global presence and unique understanding of the needs of patients in different settings and contexts is key to developing health innovations that are transformative on the ground. We applaud the efforts that USAID has made in fostering innovation in health technologies, including:

- Supporting research to develop safe, effective, and accessible tools to prevent HIV in the developing world—including HIV vaccines and microbicides, which have tremendous potential to prevent HIV infection in women—and a low-cost, rapid, disposable HIV/AIDS diagnostic test designed for infants.
- Supporting the development of vaccines, antimalarials, insecticides, and novel vector control tools against malaria, including a promising single-dose cure.
- Playing a key role in the global effort to fight TB by supporting research to develop new therapeutics, including innovative drug regimens and diagnostics for drug-susceptible and drug-resistant tuberculosis. The world’s first child-friendly TB medicine was developed with seed funding from USAID, and now the Agency is supporting an all-oral treatment

regimen in late-stage clinical trials that could reduce the time it takes to treat drug-susceptible tuberculosis from 6 months to 4 months.

- Developing interventions to help women and children during childbirth in low-resource settings where there may not be electricity, refrigeration, or access to trained health workers.
- Developing new drugs and diagnostics for a select group of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), including tools to fight dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases that have been deployed from Indonesia to the Florida Keys with promising results.
- And developing tools for low-resource settings to combat emerging infectious diseases, primarily through the Grand Challenges for Ebola and Zika programs.

Global Health R&D Funding at USAID—Addressing Critical Gaps

USAID is an important partner in global health product development, and it is critical for the agency to bolster this function of its global health programming. This means that global health programs within USAID require robust funding in order to ensure they have appropriate resources, both for ongoing programs and forward-looking R&D efforts.

For the vast majority of USAID’s global health programming, there are no dedicated funding streams or programs expressly supporting global health R&D. This means that decisions on USAID’s investments in developing new global health technologies—the tools needed to make programming more successful and efficient and to further the agency’s global health mission—are made at the program level, based on overall funding allocations for each disease or population-specific health area. To ensure research is appropriately prioritized, global health programs need appropriate resources. Funding cuts—such as those proposed in the Administration’s FY18, FY19, FY20, and FY21 budget requests—would put significant strain on USAID’s global health programs and jeopardize the agency’s ability to balance current programming needs with needs for new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools to accelerate global health gains.

USAID recognizes the value of global health R&D, and how new global health tools can help finally curb infectious disease outbreaks, end preventable maternal and child deaths, and achieve an AIDS-free generation. The agency’s annual report on its Health-Related Research and Development Strategy is an important tool, in which USAID details its work in global health R&D and describes how these efforts advance the Agency’s overarching global health goals. Yet, over time, the level of detail included in this annual report has diminished, reducing the report’s functionality as a tool of transparency and oversight. For that reason, we urge the Committee to include report language in the FY21 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill directing USAID to include in the report the specific funding amounts dedicated to research and product development by each program within the Bureau for Global Health; specific information about health product development goals and timelines; details about USAID investments in drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and devices; details about collaborations with other federal agencies and private-sector partners; and an assessment of any critical gaps in product development for global health and recommendations for filling such gaps. This level of reporting is critical to provide insight into how USAID thinks strategically about R&D investments and ensure that partners have the information they need about the Agency’s goals and priorities to pursue opportunities to collaborate on life-saving R&D.

Thanks to strong Congressional support for transparency and oversight of the agency's work on global health research, the Global Health Innovation Act (P.L. 115-411) passed at the end of the 115th Congress authorizes, for five years, a separate annual report that details the use of global health innovations broadly in the programs, projects, and activities of USAID and describes how USAID collaborates with other agencies in support of global health product development. We urge the committee to direct USAID to make this report public on the Agency's website or through other channels to ensure its maximum impact.

In addition, while there are areas of USAID's global health portfolio that are leading the way in R&D, there are areas where a lack of resources and prioritization are acute. For example, USAID does not currently incorporate research for new vaccines for tuberculosis into its programming, and has made limited investments in new preventative technologies, despite TB becoming the world's largest infectious disease killer. USAID could also advance its role in R&D for NTDs. While the agency does important work to provide treatments for five of the most prevalent NTDs, new tools are needed to reach the end game for these most common NTDs, including more sensitive diagnostics to ensure that elimination goals have been met—which, in addition to meeting clear epidemiological needs, would also ensure that our investments have had the desired results and would indicate that resources can be concentrated elsewhere for maximum impact. Relatively small investments in R&D for new NTD tools could have an incredible return for both public health and our historic investment in the effort to end NTDs. To continue to make progress against all NTDs, USAID should implement a comprehensive NTD R&D strategy to ensure that prevention and treatment tools are available for the full range of these diseases.

GHTC stresses the need for USAID to continue to prioritize science, technology, and innovation to advance its global health and development mission. GHTC urges the Committee to continue to direct USAID's global health programs to include and expand R&D for new tools, allocate sufficient resources to support this work, and encourage detailed, public annual R&D reporting by USAID, which provides the only oversight policymakers and advocates have into the agency's R&D decision-making processes.

Collaboration Across the US Government

In addition to USAID, support for global health R&D in the US government comes from the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Biological Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Each of these agencies plays a unique and essential role in moving new global health technologies from concept to reality, and strong interagency collaboration is essential to leverage limited US government resources and ensure taxpayer dollars are used most effectively. To this end, we urge the Committee to encourage USAID to work with CDC, DoD, FDA, NIH, HHS, and BARDA to develop a whole-of-government strategy for global health R&D to coordinate priorities and resources and streamline operations.

Investing in Global Health R&D As a Strategic National Security and Economic Decision

Global health R&D is important for delivering lifesaving tools to those who need them most. However, US government investments in R&D—through USAID and other agencies—yield

benefits in addition to humanitarian and development goals. As recent outbreaks of novel coronavirus, Zika, and Ebola demonstrate, diseases know no borders. Health crises abroad can become health crises at home, and it is imperative that we sustainably invest in R&D for a broad range of neglected infectious diseases so that we understand emerging disease threats and have tools ready to go when we need them. Global health is American health, and investments in global health R&D are investments in global health security.

Global health R&D is also a smart economic investment in the United States, where it drives job creation, spurs business activity, and engages academic institutions. **In fact, 89 cents of every US dollar invested in global health R&D benefits US-based researchers**, many of whom conduct their research at US universities. **US government investment in global health R&D between 2007 and 2015 generated an estimated 200,000 new jobs and \$33 billion in economic growth.**

Recommendations

Global health research that improves the lives of people around the world—while also promoting global health security, creating jobs, and spurring economic growth at home—is a win-win investment. Recognizing this, GHTC respectfully requests that the Committee do the following:

1. Robustly fund the Global Health Programs accounts at USAID and the State Department and reject short-sighted calls to cut funding for this important work. This means at minimum continued funding at FY20 levels. As there is no specific line item that dictates funding for global health R&D, it is important to uphold investment in the entire Global Health Programs account of the USAID budget and fully fund each disease-specific account. USAID should include research for new health technologies in each of its global health programs and articulate how investments in R&D are strategic to achieving broader global health goals. We ask that this support not come at the expense of other poverty-focused humanitarian and development accounts.
2. Call for the expansion of the annual report on USAID's health-related research and development strategy to include specific funding amounts dedicated to research and product development by each program; specific information about health product development goals and timelines; details about USAID investments in drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and devices; details about collaborations with other federal agencies and private-sector partners; and an assessment of any critical gaps in product development for global health and recommendations for filling such gaps.
3. Call for the public release of the annual report required under the Global Health Innovation Act (P.L. 115-411) to ensure transparency and oversight.
4. Request that leaders at the State Department and USAID work with leaders at other US agencies, including NIH, CDC, FDA, DoD, HHS, and BARDA to develop a whole-of-government global health R&D strategy to ensure that US investments in global health research are efficient, coordinated, and streamlined.

On behalf of the members of GHTC, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Committee for the opportunity to testify, and for your continued support of these life-saving investments.