

PEPFAR Reauthorization: Improving Transparency in U.S. Funding for HIV/AIDS

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CGD Notes

In the bill reauthorizing PEPFAR, the U.S. Congress should mandate that funding data be aggregated and made public at least once per year.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was created in 2004 and authorized to spend \$1.5 billion over five years to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS in 15 focus countries. To continue beyond 2009, the program will need to be reauthorized by the U.S. Congress.

Research and analysis conducted by the Center for Global Development's HIV/AIDS Monitor team finds that PEPFAR funding data, while collected, are not adequately shared with PEPFAR staff or made public. Releasing the data publicly should be required in the program's reauthorizing legislation and is critical to assessing progress, tracking recipient spending, and improving programs that are not cost-effective. Releasing the data would also help PEPFAR staff to make better-informed funding and programming decisions; strengthen coordination among AIDS donors and recipients; and assist country governments in preparing their annual AIDS budgets.

PEPFAR Funding Data is Collected but Not Shared

As Table 1 shows, PEPFAR has a good system for collecting data about the amount of money obligated (i.e., committed) to each recipient and sub-recipient, as well as the amount of money obligated to each program area (e.g., blood safety, or antiretroviral drugs). Most of these funding data, however, are not publicly shared, even though there would be clear benefits to doing so. (For example, publicly shared data would improve coordination between PEPFAR and other AIDS stakeholders—recipient country governments, NGOs, and other donors—while avoiding funding duplication, because they would know where and how PEPFAR money is used.¹)

U.S. government staff working on PEPFAR do not have access to all of the PEPFAR funding data that is collected either. PEPFAR recipients are required to report quarterly on the amount of money they've withdrawn from the treasury (i.e., outlays), and the amount of money they've spent on their programs (i.e.,

Table 1: Summary of PEPFAR Funding Data Collected and Available

Type of Funding Data Collected by the USG	Accessible by PEPFAR Field Staff?	Shared Publicly?
I. Obligations		
Obligations to Prime Partners	Yes	Yes
Obligations to Sub-Partners	Yes	No
Obligations to each Prime Partner by Program Area	Yes	No
II. Outlays		
Outlays to Prime Partners	No (except USAID)	No
III. Expenditures		
Expenditures by Prime Partners	No (except USAID)	No

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expenditures). But these data are not accessible by field-level staff from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), or other agencies implementing programs in recipient countries.

There is also no data storage system through which PEPFAR field staff can easily find important funding information that would allow them to assess progress, hold recipients accountable, and improve programs that are not cost-effective. For example, a CDC staff member based in Johannesburg may know that Columbia University and Catholic Relief Services were both able to treat 1,000 patients, but they do not know how much each organization spent on this treatment. Recognizing the importance of these types of data, USAID has created its own system to track expenditures, but CDC and other PEPFAR implementing agencies do not have a similar system.

Mandate the Regular Release of Data

All of the funding data described above are already collected—either by PEPFAR or another part of the U.S. government. **In the bill reauthorizing PEPFAR, the U.S. Congress should mandate that these funding data be aggregated and made public at least once per year.** These data should include the annual: a) obligations to each prime partner, including a breakdown by program area; b) obligations to each sub-partner; c) outlays to each prime partner; and d) expenditures by each prime partner.

Benefits of Publicly Releasing Funding Data

Publicly releasing funding data on a regular basis will:

- Help PEPFAR staff make informed decisions about future funding and program priorities;
- Improve the cost-effectiveness of programs;
- Increase transparency and accountability by allowing results to be compared with investments;
- Strengthen coordination among all AIDS stakeholders at the country level; and

- Help host-country governments to prepare annual budgets for AIDS activities.

Arguments Against Releasing the Data Can Be Easily Addressed

The main argument against publicly releasing funding data is that some of the data are “procurement-sensitive.” U.S. government agencies are forbidden from publicizing any information about forthcoming funding awards until the award has been made.¹

Procurement-sensitive funding data, however, represents only a modest share of the total funding data collected by PEPFAR; it should not prevent the disclosure of data that are not procurement-sensitive. PEPFAR officials could easily release the funding data they collect, while redacting any data that is procurement-sensitive. Since funding data should be released on an ongoing basis (annually at minimum), the data that are redacted could then be released once the procurements have been made.

For More Information:

- See the HIV/AIDS Monitor Web site: www.cgdev.org/hivmonitor
- Read the HIV/AIDS Monitor Report “Following the Funding for HIV/AIDS: A Comparative Analysis of the Funding Practices of PEPFAR, the Global Fund and World Bank MAP in Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia”
- Contact Michael Bernstein at 202.416.5624 or mbernstein@cgdev.org, or HIV/AIDS Monitor Director Nandini Oomman, at 202-416-5620 or noonman@cgdev.org

Footnotes

¹ PEPFAR country-level staff do share funding data with the host country government and other donors, but this is done in an ad-hoc fashion, making it difficult for key AIDS stakeholders to easily and consistently access data about PEPFAR when it is needed. For details, see CGD. 2007. “Following the Funding for HIV/AIDS”. Available at <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/14569>

² Details on the restrictions related to releasing procurement-sensitive data can be found in Section 3.1 of the Federal Acquisitions Regulations.