HEALTH WORKERS AND THE GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY AGENDA

September 2014

Effective responses to global health threats require strong health systems, yet only 20% of the world's nations are adequately prepared to respond to pandemic disease. The health systems components that facilitate emergency response—a skilled workforce, disease surveillance and other health information systems, adequate infrastructure for clinical care, laboratory diagnostics, and supportive health-sector management—also support health workers on a daily basis to respond to many other population health needs.

The Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA)—a broad, multilateral initiative supported by the US Government in partnership with other nations, international organizations, and public and private stakeholders—emphasizes the importance of effective **prevention**, **detection**, and **response** to infectious outbreaks and natural disasters. As the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has demonstrated, global health emergencies can put countries, regions, and the world at risk for social, political, and economic disruption and instability.

US LEADERSHIP FOR THE GHSA

The US is playing a critical role in the global health security response. Game-changing technological and biological solutions to global health threats now exist but must be scaled to reach the most remote and underserved communities. By partnering with key international, regional, and local stakeholders, the US Government is working to support a coordinated response to global health security threats.

FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKERS AND THE GHSA

Frontline health workers are often the first point of contact communities have with the health system and are therefore key to effective country responses to national and global health threats. **Frontline health workers play a critical role in supporting the GHSA because they**:

- Communicate signs of epidemics or emerging infectious diseases
- Deliver preventive and curative care according to national quality standards and protocols
- Perform laboratory analysis to diagnose and understand the magnitude of the emerging threat
- Manage supply chains and medical logistics systems to adequately equip health workers
- Provide data for ongoing disease surveillance and response
- Coordinate with veterinarians, as recent epidemics and pandemics include zoonotic diseases
- Act as HR managers and policy-makers to provide essential supervision and decision-making
- Support a functional health system that is needed to respond to all population health needs.

INTRAHEALTH'S INITITIATIVES

IntraHealth International strives to ensure that health workers are present where they are needed, ready to provide high-quality care, connected to data and peers, and have safe workplaces. IntraHealth partners with countries to foster strong health systems with the capacity to detect and respond to emergencies. Current initiatives include:

1. **mHero Mobile Phone Outreach**
   IntraHealth International and UNICEF have joined forces to help Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare communicate with health workers in real time as the country fights to contain the Ebola outbreak. By combining two existing technologies—IntraHealth's iHRIS software and UNICEF's mobile phone SMS platform—we have created a powerful communication tool called mHero. Using mHero, the Ministry can instantly send critical information to health workers' mobile phones all over the country, including reports of emergency cases, reminders about safety protocols, and reference and training materials. It can also be used to test and improve health workers' knowledge and provide supportive supervision and peer-to-peer support.

2. **iHRIS Human Resources Information Systems**
   During global security crises such as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, accurate, timely health systems data are essential to help governments, donors, and partners make decisions regarding what actions to take and where to place resources. iHRIS, IntraHealth's free, open source human resources software, is currently being used by governments and health professional associations in 20 countries—including many in West Africa—to manage over one million health worker records. iHRIS data allows officials to quickly analyze how many health workers are available to respond to an emergency, where they are, and what competencies they have.

3. **Health Worker Crowdsourcing Application**
   IntraHealth's prototype mobile phone application will build empowered communities of health workers by enabling them to share experiences, opinions, and needs with managers and policymakers. The application can be rapidly customized to collect community-based reports that are essential to bio-surveillance.

If you are interested in learning more about the contribution of health workers to the Global Health Security Agenda, please contact Kate Tulenko, Senior Director of Health Systems Innovation: ktulenko@intrahealth.org.

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