

Monitoring HIV Policy Interventions in PEPFAR Partnership Frameworks

Nicole R. Judice,¹ Jeffrey Lane,² Elizabeth Hunger,¹ Nathan Wallace,¹ Ron MacInnis,¹ Andre R. Verani,³ Aaron B. Katz,⁴ Curran Kennedy,¹ Sallie Thieme Sanford,⁵ Amy Hagopian,⁴ Michelle Wu Yoon,⁶ Erin K. Hurley,³ and Mai M. Hijazi⁶

¹Futures Group; ²Foster Pepper, PLLC; ³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; ⁴University of Washington School of Public Health; ⁵University of Washington School of Law; and ⁶USAID Office of HIV/AIDS, Bureau for Global Health

Background

Partnership Frameworks are joint, non-binding strategic frameworks for cooperation among the U.S. government, partner country governments, and other partners to combat HIV and AIDS through service delivery, policy reform, and coordinated financial commitments. These documents aim to strengthen country capacity, ownership, and leadership and promote a more sustainable response to HIV and AIDS. Since 2009, the U.S. government has negotiated and signed 22 Partnership Frameworks with partner government counterparts. Each Partnership Framework provides a multi-year plan, including specific policy interventions to support sustained HIV and AIDS prevention, care, and treatment targets. The frameworks are publicly available at www.pepfar.gov.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) requires that U.S. government country teams routinely report on progress in reaching Partnership Framework goals and targets. This includes annual reporting on progress in implementing policy interventions—the majority of which are listed as the responsibility of partner governments. As a measurement tool, PEPFAR monitors six stages of the policy reform process:

- Stage 1—Conduct situation assessment
- Stage 2—Develop common policy agenda
- Stage 3—Develop policy
- Stage 4—Endorsement or approval of policy
- Stage 5—Implementation of policy
- Stage 6—Evaluation of policy implementation



Methodology

In 2012, we conducted a global analysis of planned policy interventions across the 22 publicly accessible PEPFAR Partnership Frameworks, with the purpose of understanding how the interventions are related to PEPFAR and country or regional priorities. Partnership Frameworks were signed with 16 nations in Africa (Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia); countries and organizations from the Caribbean and Central America regions; and the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Ukraine, and Vietnam. Methods used to conduct the analysis included a desk review of all Partnership Frameworks (accessed at www.pepfar.gov) and the quantification of policy interventions by procedural policy stage, technical area, country, and the relevant World Health Organization health systems building block. For our purposes, we defined “policy intervention” as “an activity related to advancing policies and their implementation in order to improve HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services or strengthen health systems.”

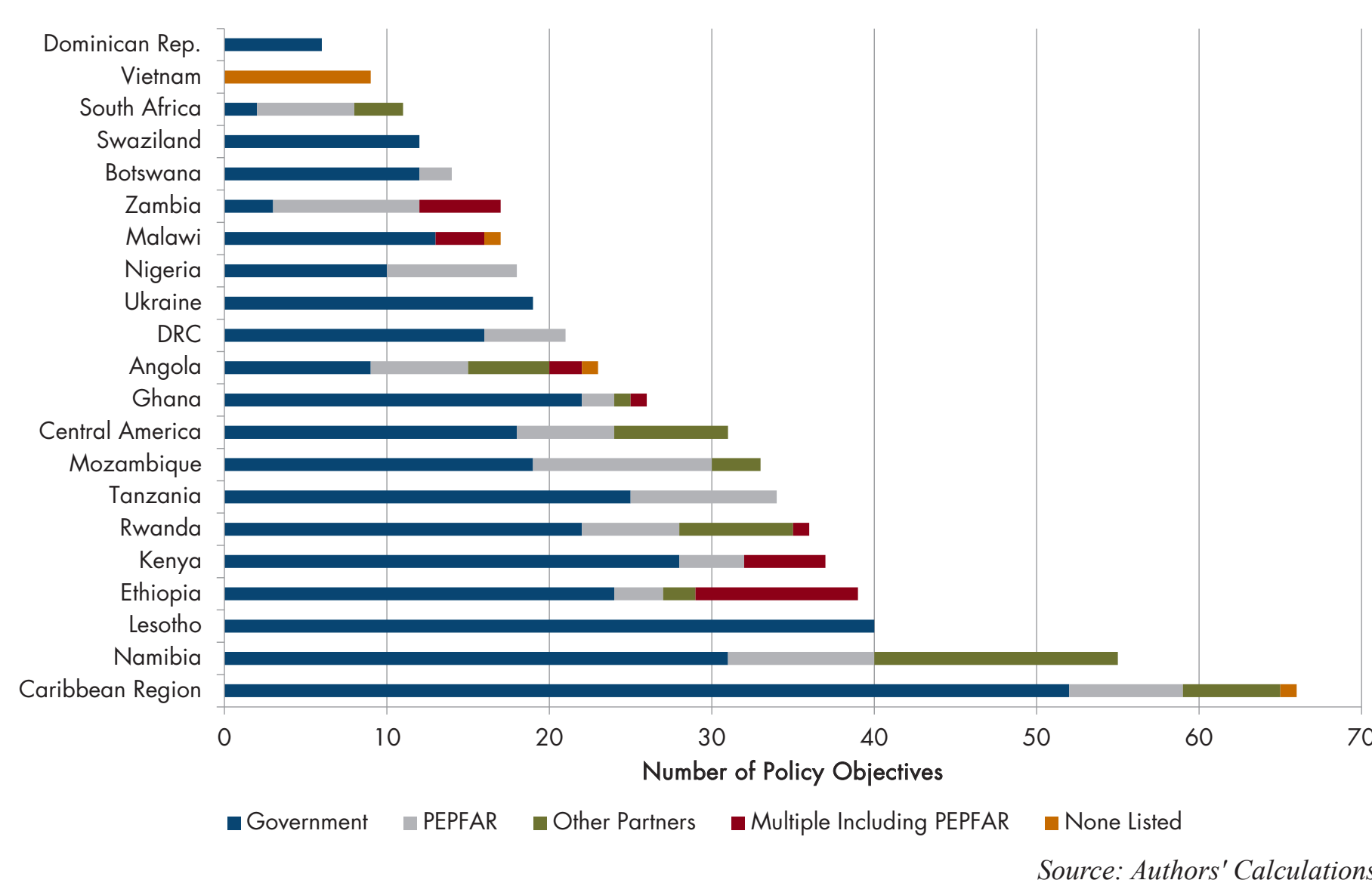
We also quantified discrete written policies identified in the Partnership Frameworks that are supporting the HIV response or will support the HIV response once developed, adopted, and implemented. For this sub-analysis, “policies” were defined as “actual or planned official government documents setting out policy in a particular area relevant to HIV/AIDS. Examples include but are not limited to specific proposed or actual legislation, regulations, guidelines, and strategic plans.” Each policy document was counted once.

In addition to the desk review, we conducted multi-country and multi-stakeholder capacity-building workshops for monitoring the policy process within PEPFAR-supported countries, including the Caribbean region (Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and The Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago); the Central America region (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama); and the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia. The workshops focused on the following:

1. National and cross-country sharing of progress, challenges, and best practices in implementing and monitoring policy interventions planned in Partnership Frameworks
2. Increasing awareness and knowledge of how policy influences public health and knowledge of policy monitoring approaches and tools
3. Drafting of country or region-specific Road Maps for monitoring policy interventions

Prior to the workshops, facilitators held discussions with participants about how they engage in the policy process in their country and how they monitor HIV- and AIDS-related policy interventions.

Figure 1: Number of Policy Interventions by Country/Responsible Actor



Summary Findings

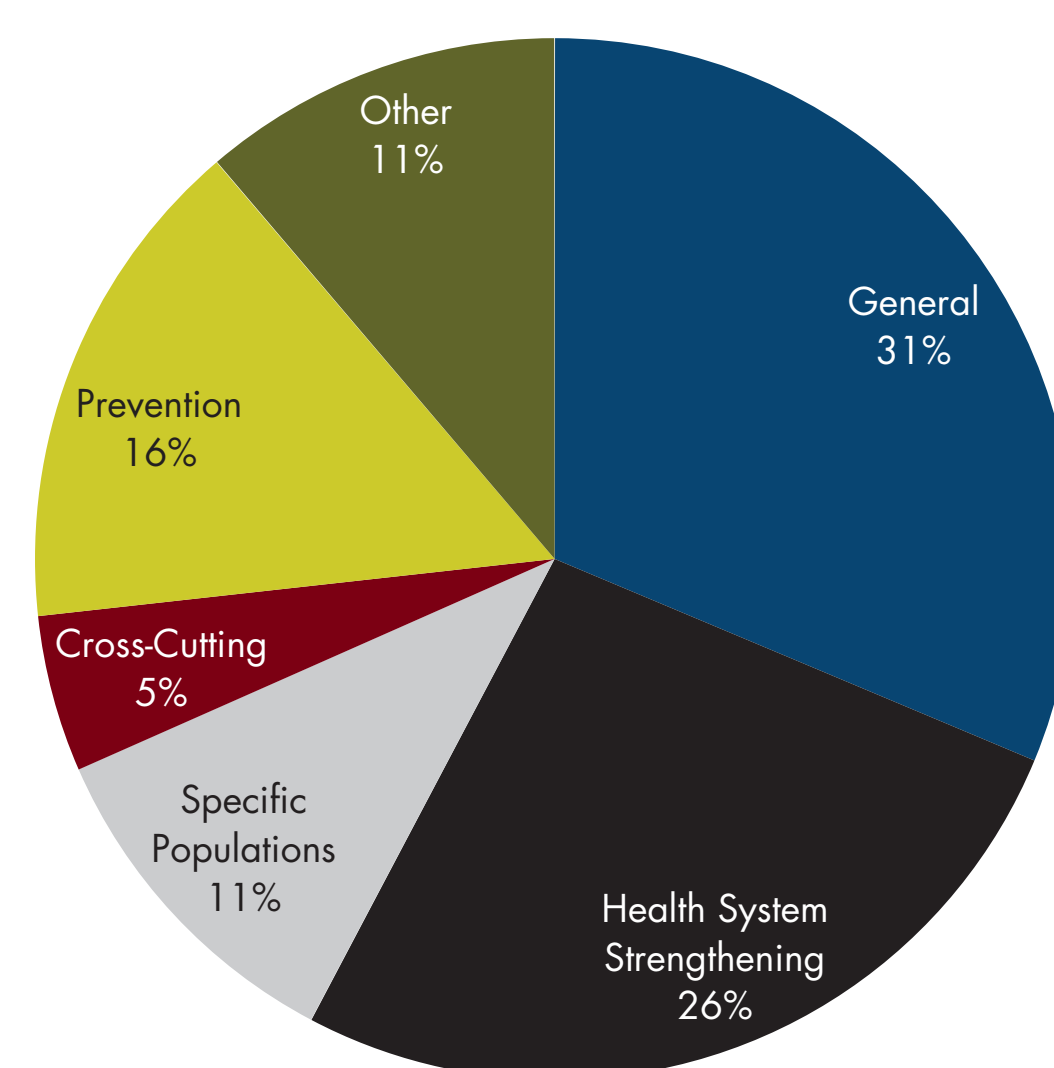
Desk Review Results: Overall, we identified 564 policy interventions to advance HIV and AIDS prevention, care, and treatment goals across the 22 Partnership Frameworks. Most of these interventions are focused on amending existing policies, creating new policies, or improving the implementation of current policies. These interventions spanned 20 technical areas, including advancing policy reform for human resources for health, orphans and vulnerable children, laboratory, and other areas.

When looking at the policy interventions by technical program area, the largest area identified in the Partnership Frameworks was health system strengthening (257 total interventions, 45%). Examples of health system strengthening include expanding the numbers and skills of health sector workers (“human resources for health”), strengthening laboratory networks, and improving commodity and supply management. The second largest area was addressing the needs of key populations (79, 14%). The third largest area was HIV prevention (75, 13%) across four categories. Examples of policy interventions include negotiating the price of medication in Central America and supporting stronger enforcement of provisions in the existing HIV/AIDS law in the Dominican Republic.

Among the 564 policy interventions, we identified 329 policies referenced across the Partnership Frameworks; 172 policies (52%) were in the pre-adoption stages (Policy Stages 1–4) and 157 policies (48%) were in the implementation or evaluation stages (Policy Stages 5–6). When looking at written policies by technical program area (see Figure 2), the largest area identified was general policies (31%), including mainly national omnibus HIV and health policies (e.g., national AIDS strategic plans). The second most common area was health system strengthening (26%), followed by prevention (16%). An example of a policy is the South Africa National HIV/AIDS and TB Management Policy; another example is the law in Haiti to protect HIV-positive individuals from stigma and discrimination.

Discussion Findings: All the country teams that participated in the pre-workshop discussions expressed the need to learn more about best practices and methodologies in policy monitoring and implementation in their geographical regions. The discussions revealed a lack of full understanding of how policies can be effectively monitored and their potential for a greater impact on health outcomes.

Figure 2: Written Policies in PEPFAR Partnership Frameworks by Technical Program Area



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Potential Solutions

The central tool used in the policy-monitoring workshops was the Road Map for Implementing and Monitoring Policy Interventions—an instrument designed to aid country and regional teams in monitoring the policy development and implementation process. Using the Road Map, teams identified important stakeholders and analyzed policy achievements by answering a series of questions aligned with the six PEPFAR policy stages. The teams discussed policies included in their country Partnership Frameworks and used a policy scoring sheet to identify and prioritize key policy interventions for monitoring HIV programs. A self-assessment tool of policy-monitoring capacity provided teams with discussion questions to help them identify what could be done to strengthen policy monitoring in their country.

Each team developed a post-workshop country action plan for monitoring policy interventions; the plans addressed issues such as increasing financing for HIV/AIDS, increasing the number healthcare workers or task shifting, updating treatment guidelines, reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and reducing gender-based violence.

Within the action plans, teams identified concrete steps and commitments to improve the policy-monitoring process, for example:

- Form policy-monitoring committees to foster better coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders engaged in HIV policies (United States government, host government, and civil society organizations)
- Foster commitment from the United States government, partner government, and other involved stakeholders to increase the level of activity around monitoring policy interventions
- Incorporate the policy-monitoring process into existing country monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- Build the capacity among stakeholders at all levels to monitor and implement policy through trainings, dissemination of materials, and related activities
- Prioritize a set of crucial HIV and AIDS policies to develop, implement, and monitor

Conclusion

PEPFAR and partner country governments have identified policy reform and monitoring and evaluation of the policy process as key components of PEPFAR Partnership Frameworks. This is reflected by the total number and broad range of policies identified across these joint strategies and by the inclusion of a monitoring framework to identify progress by policy stage. Given the priority of increasing country ownership of the HIV and AIDS response, all parties recognize that necessary policy reform and monitoring can and should be strengthened.

This comprehensive analysis and the capacity-building workshops highlight the need to

- Expand policy-monitoring programs, including the necessary human and financial resources
- Invest in capacities at the country level to monitor the achievement of policy goals
- Advance the use of existing and new policy monitoring tools and methodologies
- Integrate policy monitoring into existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Promote a greater understanding of the varied skill sets and capacities required to effectively develop and implement a broad range of policies
- Foster policy monitoring programs that involve a broad range of professionals, stakeholders, civil society organizations, and communities, in addition to country government and donor representatives

Policy monitoring by donors, partner country governments, and civil society stakeholders can help measure whether policy interventions are occurring as planned in order to further HIV prevention, care, and treatment and health system goals and, if not, can point to needed changes.

References

Partnership Frameworks can be accessed at www.pepfar.gov.

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). 2009. Next Generation Indicators: Reference Guide. Version 1.1. Washington, DC: PEPFAR.