

**The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)  
PEPFAR Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Meeting  
April 19, 2016  
US Department of State, Washington, DC  
Executive Summary**

The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Science Advisory Board (SAB), a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)-chartered body, met in Washington, DC on April 19, 2016 to provide guidance to US Global AIDS Coordinator Ambassador Deborah L. Birx on implementation and policy issues.

**PEPFAR Updates**

Ambassador Birx launched the meeting by highlighting advances in PEPFAR-funded countries' use of national and regional data to monitor programmatic outcomes and inform their efforts to accelerate epidemic control. Greater utilization of existing data has generated new questions and opened opportunities to find greater efficiencies in PEPFAR programming and ensure that resources are allocated for maximal impact. As an example, Ambassador Birx noted that PEPFAR's annual HIV testing yield (4.1% overall) is considerably lower than the estimated prevalence in many focus countries, raising the question of optimized testing yields and the need for innovative strategies to identify persons living with undiagnosed HIV infection. Similarly, improved use program data has illuminated important sex disparities in the care continuum. Although men achieve comparable HIV care outcomes once linked to treatment, their HIV testing rates lag those of women, indicating the need for greater targeting and outreach, which has the potential to benefit their own and their partner's health.

Shifting demographic trends also offer important insights into the urgency of the global response to the HIV epidemic. In highlighting the dramatic increase in persons 10 – 24 years old across Sub-Saharan Africa, Ambassador Birx underscored the success of prevention programming intended to reduce mother-to-child-transmission (PMTCT) but noted this has established a “youth bulge” characterized by millions of children who were spared perinatal infection who now require prevention to ensure that they do not acquire HIV infection as they transition into sexually active, young adults. To prevent this important demographic shift from offsetting hard-won declines in new HIV infections, PEPFAR has developed new programming that includes increased ART coverage and voluntary medical circumcision in young men, and empowering young women with educational and other supports shown to reduce infection rates.

Finally, Ambassador Birx discussed PEPFAR's increased focus on the geographic areas and population groups carrying the greatest burden of HIV infection and the need to implement cost-saving, alternative treatment delivery models that can accelerate achievement of 90-90-90 targets by 2020, even in a flat budget environment. As an example, innovations in the implementation of the Accelerated Children's Treatment (ACT) initiative have enabled nearly 200,000 children to gain access to treatment in just 15 months. Subsequent discussion among SAB members acknowledged these and other successes, as well as future directions needed to achieve countries' 90-90-90 targets.

### **HIV Epidemic Control Conference**

In February 2016, PEPFAR convened a conference entitled, “HIV Epidemic Control in a Time of Constrained Resources for PEPFAR,” which examined opportunities to accelerate epidemic control by committing to ambitious, country-level 90-90-90 targets, implementing WHO’s 2015 recommendations for treating all persons living with HIV infection regardless of CD4 cell count, and scaling up evidence-based prevention and treatment services that permit more people to receive services through alternative delivery models. The conference also focused on financing necessary to ensure the sustainability of new strategies for stemming the HIV epidemic, as well as improving the use of secondary data, implementing evidence-based prevention and treatment interventions, and fostering a robust pipeline of innovative approaches to maximize the impact of available resources. At the conclusion, Ambassador Birx identified seven action items that included the establishment of new expert working groups and other actions intended to strengthen the global response to the HIV epidemic.

### **Finance & Economics EWG Recommendations**

Co-chairs Jennifer Kates and Peter Berman provided an overview of the newly established Finance and Economics EWG, which is charged with helping to inform PEPFAR’s financial and programming decisions based on analysis of the future financing environment for HIV in low and middle income countries. In the months since its formation, the group has fine-tuned its referral questions and identified through several calls some preliminary considerations that will inform its work in the coming months. Included among these are new studies and reports, challenges with data standards and accessibility, the complexities of transitioning countries off of donor support, and other factors that will partially determine PEPFAR’s impacts.

### **TB/HIV EWG Recommendations**

Co-chairs Mark Harrington and Bill Pape introduced attendees to the Tuberculosis and HIV Expert Working Group (EWG), established in October 2015, and provided an update of its recent activities. In response to its charge of identifying effective interventions to prevent TB infection among persons living with HIV infection, the EWG presented sixteen draft recommendations for the SAB’s consideration. These fell into four broad categories, including the early initiation of antiretroviral treatment, isoniazid prevention therapy (IPT), and combination ART, IPT, and cotrimoxazole (CTX); screening, diagnosis, and treatment of TB for priority populations (e.g., children, prisoners, etc.); enhanced infection control strategies; and improved use of data, integrated programming, and enhanced coordination of laboratory and treatment services. The EWG committed to finalizing these draft recommendations within weeks.

### **AIDS 2016 Program Development**

International AIDS Society (IAS) Scientific Programme Committee Co-Chair Kenneth Mayer provided an update on the 21st International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016), including information on conference tracks, conference leadership, plenary speakers and topics, special sessions, symposia, oral abstracts, and poster sessions.

### **New Data Initiatives**

As part of PEPFAR's pivot to improve planning and programmatic monitoring, OGAC Director of Country Impact, Irum Zaidi, reported on the establishment of two new developments intended to advance the use of data to inform program monitoring and policy decision-making. First, PEPFAR has established an All Things Data Steering Committee, which seeks to address data governance and stewardship issues critical to harnessing available data to maximize programmatic impacts. Second, attendees learned of PEPFAR's ongoing support of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Health Data Collaborative, and partnerships with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) on the Country Data Collaboratives for Local Impact. Both initiatives will strengthen collaborations and leverage existing data for an enhanced response to global public health.

### **Stigma and Discrimination Workshop Report**

OGAC Office of Affected Populations and Civil Society Leadership (OAPCSL) Acting Deputy Coordinator A. Cornelius Baker provided an update on a recent workshop and subsequent activities to address HIV stigma and discrimination in health care, improve data collection, and develop recommendations for reducing attitudinal, legal, and other barriers to HIV prevention and treatment services in PEPFAR-funded countries. The office plans to share preliminary drafts with the SAB by Fall, 2016.

### **HIV Cure Research**

SAB member Judith Currier provided an update on the status of HIV Cure Research, which included a clarification of functional and sterilizing cures and highlighted five current approaches investigated in cure research. In addition to providing important context to mixed progress to date, she underscored the need for scalable, cost-effective new approaches derived from successes seen in early initiation of ART.