Promoting Health Professional Education: Improving the Health System’s Response to Epidemic Control

S. McQueen1, N. VanDinter2, P. Donkor3, J. Hakim4; 1USG, DC, USA, 2HRSA, Rockville, USA, 3Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Accra, Ghana, 4University of Zimbabwe College of Health Sciences, Harare, Zimbabwe

Program/Project Purpose: To address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, health systems need adequate numbers of quality health care workers (HCWs) who are able to provide the full continuum of HIV services. For five years, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funded Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has been one of the flagship programs helping to assure there are adequate numbers of well-trained HCWs who can provide the HIV/AIDS services needed to address the epidemic.

Structure/Method/Design: MEPI helped to alleviate the health workforce crisis and contributed to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Through a combination of interventions, MEPI addressed HCW education issues and assisted in laying the foundation for stronger health care systems. MEPI’s accomplishments center on five key programmatic themes: Innovation and Capacity Building, Retention, Research, Communities of Practice, and Sustainability.

Outcome & Evaluation: To increase research capacity, MEPI strengthened research governance, support structures, and provided direct training in research methodology. Research support to MEPI schools resulted in 376 research publications.

MEPI piloted innovative eLearning strategies which are now being rolled out more broadly.

Lessons were shared electronically through the MEPI website where forums, webinars, and technical articles were accessed by users in over 192 countries. Monthly website access reached over 3,500 users.

A MEPI Network was created with 13 funded institutions in 12 countries that now fosters partnerships with more than 40 institutions around the world. More than 90% of new staff positions, initially funded by MEPI, will be sustained by local institutions, ministries or other grant funding.

In three countries alone, 54,000 individuals have received HIV-related services supported by MEPI-trained providers.

Under MEPI more than 2,000 non-physician HCWs directly participated in HIV/AIDS care, treatment and prevention training.

Going Forward: Students and faculty who participated in MEPI programs are on the frontlines of HIV/AIDS care and are modeling evidence-based practices. MEPI optimized host-country leadership and international collaboration to support medical education. MEPI struck a balance between accessing the technical expertise of high-income countries and grounding programming in locally-defined priority areas. MEPI has strengthening learning at local levels, to build health system resilience and responsiveness. By strengthening pre-service education and research capacity MEPI has helped bring the UNAIDS 90/90/90 goal within reach.

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