

Preparing for COVID-19 in Low and Middle Income Countries: Leveraging U.S. Global Health Assets

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There is growing concern about the potential impact of COVID-19 in low and middle income countries (LMICs), particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/19/can-africa-avoid-being-next-europe-fight-against-coronavirus/>), which, outside of China, have thus far reported relatively few cases. While it is not clear if this is due to a lack of testing, because they may be at an earlier stage of the epidemic, or other factors, cases have now been reported in many LMICs and are rising rapidly (https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331487/SITREP_COVID-19_WHOAFRO_20200318-eng.pdf) in some. Should coronavirus spread significantly in sub-Saharan Africa (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/03/18/coronavirus-africa/>) and elsewhere, the impact could be extreme, given already low-resourced health systems and multiple other health challenges. As the COVID-19 pandemic has already demonstrated, the global response is highly interdependent, and a widespread outbreak in LMICs will not only impact their populations and health systems but would likely have significant health and economic impacts worldwide. The U.S. government has a critical role to play in this regard, through its long-standing global health programs as well as specific emergency efforts to address COVID-19 in LMICs.

To assess where the U.S. government has existing global health assets that could be mobilized when and if needed, we identified all countries that received U.S. government bilateral global health assistance in FY 2018. We also identified LMICs that the U.S. has designated as high-priority (<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/mar-2-2020-administrator-green-37>) receiving COVID-19 assistance. Table 1 provides a full list of countries. Table 2 provides a full list of reported cases of COVID-19 as of Mar 19, 2020. Table 3 provides a full list of programs (country-level funding for the programs). The findings are as follows:

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- There are a total of 68 countries that either received U.S. bilateral global health assistance in FY 2018 (64 countries) and/or have been identified as high priority COVID-19 countries (25 countries).
- More than half of these countries (47 of 68) had reported COVID-19 cases as of March 19, 2020.
- Of the 25 COVID-19 high priority countries, 20 are also countries that received U.S. global health assistance in FY 2018.
- Most of the countries receiving U.S. assistance are in Africa, followed by Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Most of the reported cases in these countries are in the East Asia and Pacific region, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean.
- PEPFAR and the maternal and child health program, respectively, operate in the greatest number of countries (38 each), followed by the family planning and reproductive health program (36). About a third of countries in each of these program areas are also COVID-19 priority countries.

Overall, we found significant overlap between the countries identified as high priority for COVID-19 and those with existing U.S. global health assets, suggesting an opportunity to leverage long-standing programs and expertise. At the same time, however, it is highly likely that many other LMIC countries not identified as COVID-19 high priority will experience growing case-loads and require enhanced assistance. Further, it remains unclear how ongoing U.S. global health efforts will be impacted, including whether some will be scaled back as resources, including personnel, are diverted to address COVID-19 and/or if country health systems become overwhelmed by COVID-19, undermining their ability to continue. The recent [emergency supplemental COVID-19 bill](https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-u-s-response-to-coronavirus-summary-of-the-coronavirus-preparedness-and-response-supplemental-appropriations-act-2020/) (<https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-u-s-response-to-coronavirus-summary-of-the-coronavirus-preparedness-and-response-supplemental-appropriations-act-2020/>) signed into law on March 6 provides an infusion of \$1.29 billion specifically for U.S. global health and other assistance for the outbreak, although it is likely that additional funding will be needed. Still, given the need for the U.S. (and other donors), to confront their own COVID-19 epidemics, any additional foreign assistance may face stiff competition with growing domestic demands, including for stimulating the economy.

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Table 1: COVID-19 Cases in Countries Receiving U.S. Global Health Assistance, by Region

Region	Countries Receiving U.S. Global Health Assistance		# of COVID-19 Cases (as of 3/19/20)
	#	# with COVID-19 Cases	
Europe/Eurasia	1	1	16
Africa	34	21	565
East Asia/Pacific	10	6	1,822
Latin America/Caribbean	9	8	1,132
South/Central Asia	8	7	714
Near East	2	1	69
TOTAL	64	44	4,318

NOTES: Reflects countries receiving bilateral assistance through USAID and the Department of State in FY 2018 except NTD countries, which reflect information available on Nov. 13, 2019, and GHS countries, which reflect FY 2019 presence. # of cases includes confirmed and presumed positive cases.

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, accessed:

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>), as of March 19, 2020; Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of data from U.S. Foreign Assistance Dashboard (foreignassistance.gov, accessed 11-12-19); USAID NTD Program website ([NeglectedDiseases.gov](https://neglecteddiseases.gov), as of 11-13-19); KFF personal communication with USAID, 12-19.

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Table 2: COVID-19 Cases in Countries Receiving Bilateral U.S. Global Health

Region	Country	# of COVID-19 Cases (as of 3/19/20)	Total FY 2018 Funding [^]	# of USG Programs	Family Planning/ Reproductive Health	PEPFAR (HIV)	Malaria	Matern. & Child Health
South/Central Asia	Afghanistan	22	\$39,500,000	3	X	-	-	X
Africa	Angola	—	\$37,418,000	3	X	X	X	-
South/Central Asia	Bangladesh	17	\$66,000,000	6	X	-	-	X
Africa	Benin	2	\$24,000,000	4	X	-	X	X
Africa	Botswana	—	\$64,764,000	1	-	X	-	-
Latin America/Caribbean	Brazil	621	\$300,000	2	-	X	-	-
Africa	Burkina Faso	33	\$29,000,000	5	X	-	X	X
East Asia/Pacific	Burma	—	\$30,482,000	4	-	X	X	X
Africa	Burundi	—	\$31,340,000	4	X	X	X	X
East Asia/Pacific	Cambodia	37	\$33,911,000	8	X	X	X	X
Africa	Cameroon	13	\$63,674,000	4	-	X	X	-
Latin America/Caribbean	Colombia	102	—	1	-	-	-	-
Africa	Côte d'Ivoire	9	\$135,876,000	6	X	X	X	X
Africa	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	14	\$181,458,000	8	X	X	X	X
Africa	Djibouti	1	\$300,000	1	-	X	-	-
Latin America/Caribbean	Dominican Republic	34	\$13,901,000	1	-	X	-	-
Latin America/Caribbean	Ecuador	199	—	1	-	-	-	-
Africa	Egypt	256	\$10,050,000	2	X	-	-	-
Africa	Eswatini	1	\$65,768,000	1	-	X	-	-
Africa	Ethiopia	6	\$204,363,000	8	X	X	X	X
Africa	Ghana	11						
Latin America/Caribbean	Guatemala	9						
Africa	Guinea	1						
Latin America/Caribbean	Guyana	7						

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Latin America/Caribbean	Haiti	—	\$123,586,000	5	X	X	—	X
South/Central Asia	India	194	\$66,216,000	5	X	X	—	X
East Asia/Pacific	Indonesia	311	\$35,962,000	5	—	X	—	X
Near East	Iraq	192	—	—				
Near East	Jordan	69	\$21,000,000	2	X	—	—	—
South/Central Asia	Kazakhstan	44	—	—				
Africa	Kenya	7	\$523,112,000	7	X	X	X	X
South/Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	3	\$4,300,000	1	—	—	—	—
East Asia/Pacific	Laos	—	\$3,500,000	2	—	—	—	—
Africa	Lesotho	—	\$79,574,000	1	—	X	—	—
Africa	Liberia	2	\$34,500,000	5	X	X	X	X
Africa	Madagascar	—	\$52,000,000	4	X	—	X	X
Africa	Malawi	—	\$194,893,000	6	X	X	X	X
East Asia/Pacific	Malaysia	900	—	1	—	—	—	—
Africa	Mali	—	\$66,300,000	7	X	X	X	X
Latin America/Caribbean	Mexico	118	—	1	—	—	—	—
East Asia/Pacific	Mongolia	6		—				
Africa	Mozambique	—	\$427,685,000	7	X	X	X	X
Africa	Namibia	3	\$66,879,000	1	—	X	—	—
South/Central Asia	Nepal	1	\$43,866,000	6	X	X	—	X
Africa	Niger	—	\$22,000,000	4	X	—	X	X
Africa	Nigeria	8	\$398,561,000	7	X	X	X	X
South/Central Asia	Pakistan	454	\$7,000,000	1	—	—	—	X
East Asia/Pacific	Papua New Guinea	—	\$5,474,000	1	—	X	—	—
East Asia/Pacific	Philippines	217	\$28,500,000	3	X	—	—	—
Africa	Rwanda	8	\$114,591,000	6	X	X	X	X
Africa	Senegal	31						
Africa	Sierra Leone	—						
Africa	South Africa	150						
Africa	South Sudan	—						
South/Central Asia	Tajikistan	—						
Africa	Tanzania	6						

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East Asia/Pacific	Thailand	272	—	1	-	-	-	-
East Asia/Pacific	Timor-Leste	—	\$2,000,000	2	X	-	-	X
Africa	Togo	1	—	1	-	-	-	-
South/Central Asia	Turkmenistan	—	—	-				
Africa	Uganda	—	\$463,396,000	8	X	X	X	X
Europe/Eurasia	Ukraine	16	\$34,644,000	3	-	X	-	X
South/Central Asia	Uzbekistan	23	\$4,000,000	1	-	-	-	-
Latin America/Caribbean	Venezuela	42	—	1	-	-	-	-
East Asia/Pacific	Vietnam	85	\$31,349,000	4	-	X	-	-
Near East	Yemen	—	\$3,500,000	1	-	-	-	X
Africa	Zambia	2	\$415,961,000	6	X	X	X	X
Africa	Zimbabwe	—	\$170,107,000	5	X	X	X	X
Number of Countries	68	4,560	\$5,765,368,000	-	36	38	27	38

NOTES: * X indicates country receiving bilateral assistance through USAID and the Department of State in FY 2018 except N and GHS countries, which reflect FY 2019 presence. ^ Total does not include some country-level funding (i.e., NTD and global ForeignAssistance.gov; it also does not include funding for regional or “worldwide” program efforts that may reach additional funding is not available on ForeignAssistance.gov, country does not have a USG program that is supported by country-level funding reported. # of cases includes confirmed and presumed positive cases.

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, accessed: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> (<https://foreignassistance.gov>, accessed 11-12-19); USAID NTD Program website, accessed 12-19.

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