

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

21 November 2019

The Honorable Mark Green  
Administrator  
United States Agency for International Development  
Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, D.C. 20523-0016

I recently learned that the United States Agency for International Development has decided to end its "PREDICT" surveillance program for emerging zoonotic infectious diseases. I write to convey strong support for the program and encourage USAID to build on PREDICT's achievements to identify potentially threatening unknown viruses.

PREDICT and the USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats budget account have been critical components of our nation's efforts to improve global and national health security. The work that these projects do may help our country and our world to avoid future catastrophic epidemic and pandemic events akin to Ebola and HIV.

According to information I have received, some at USAID believe this program to be a mismatch with its mission of providing economic aid to developing countries. However, international development—for all the excellent progress it has helped make for poor nations—also brings increased risk of the spillover and emergence of zoonotic diseases into human populations. Improved transportation and commerce were likely drivers in the spillover of HIV and Ebola from animal reservoirs into human populations. Part of the mission of bringing economic development to developing countries is also helping them to mitigate potential negative domestic and international consequences.

Although PREDICT was engaged in producing new scientific knowledge, it has also trained over 5,000 people in Asian and African countries to do this scientific and medical work, and it has helped to build or strengthen 60 medical research laboratories in poor and middle-income countries. Building health systems capacity has been a priority of the previous two administrations, as well as receiving bipartisan support in Congress for many years.

According to news reports, your agency is closing the program down because it has reached the end of its current five-year funding cycle. I am not reassured that,

according to the New York Times on October 25, "similar research will be part of future budget requests, 'but it's still in the design-and-procurement cycle, so exactly what will continue is a bit of a black box.'" My concern is without the focus of some continuing program, PREDICT's important work to fully identify potential zoonoses—and expand the medical and scientific capacity of our bilateral partners—will not be completed.


I have further learned that USAID plans to continue this important global health security work but has not yet shared with Congress the details of such plans. The analytical and modeling work of PREDICT has been quite successful. My concern is that there may be an interim between the end of PREDICT and whatever USAID envisions to follow on, and that the important global health security momentum gained could be lost, leading to delays that increase costs in terms of dollars and human lives.

I request that you answer the following questions as soon as possible so that we may evaluate the decision to end the PREDICT program.

- Why did USAID choose to shutter the PREDICT program, rather than seek extension until a successor program was in place or announced?
- How will the decision to end PREDICT affect USAID's overall efforts to combat emerging infectious diseases?
- What provision has USAID made for seeing if other US agencies that address global health will collaborate or take up the functions of this program?
- What programs, funding, or other global health security initiatives does USAID intend to undertake to build on PREDICT's achievements? When will those initiatives begin?
- If USAID cannot yet share details of these initiatives, when does USAID expect it will be able to inform Congress?
- How will you consult with Congress prior to making any final decisions on the composition of these initiatives?

I look forward to the courtesy of your response as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

  
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator