

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

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Summary

PAHPA charges ASPR with providing leadership for international policies, programs, and initiatives that deal with preparedness and response. ASPR is leading the development of an HHS-wide Concept of Operations Plan, in coordination with the Office of Global Health Affairs, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Food and Drug Administration. This session was to begin the dialogue with domestic and international stakeholders regarding the current state of international public health and medical response, identifying gaps and challenges, and to discuss ways HHS can collaborate to forward international response efforts. Participants raised several recurrent themes that HHS should consider for its international policies.

Session Highlights

- Improved information-sharing among public and private partners involved in international humanitarian response is needed. The need for public/private partnerships and how to best interact with each other was discussed.
- Better coordination is needed among the private sector and the government on the ground in preparedness and response efforts for events overseas.
- Building both in-country capacity for community preparedness and response, and developing the overall public health infrastructure so that efforts are sustainable is necessary. Better response training and education abroad is needed.
- Several groups have programs to educate and train people within countries. Utilizing organizations with existing relationships to conduct education programs would be most effective. Training local personnel will promote community preparedness and improve the national preparedness and response infrastructure.
- It's necessary to define the point of transition from a relief effort to a development effort, and understand how that shapes the way we respond to an event overseas. Agencies that step in after a public health catastrophe or emergency often do not pay enough attention to the longer-term implications of how they go about providing their medical and material assistance. The magnitude of such assistance, particularly in the resource-poor context that is the reality in most developing countries, can undermine local economies, as well as local development and capacity-building efforts. Those providing emergency assistance need to take responsibility for including an assessment of any such local development efforts when they do their initial analysis, work with development groups to harness their resources, and both provide their emergency support in ways and amounts that can be absorbed, and that help complement and contribute to development efforts.
- Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) are probably in the best position to help because they work at the community level to build relationships within communities based on trust. These efforts need to be supported.
- Culture is important. Preparedness and response efforts must be appropriate to the respective culture to be effective; different cultures and their morés have to be respected.

- Industry representatives expressed interest in beginning a dialogue about medical countermeasures with international partners, and on broadening the international market for countermeasures.

Key Questions and Comments

- *A participant asked if the US Department of State was going to continue to be the point of reference for international response or international preparedness.* In the end, State is still the lead for international response, but many international cooperation efforts will also involve the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and HHS.
- *A participant asked about managing expectations with regard to the international efforts.* Cultural sensitivity, and even language barriers, were raised as key components of any successful international outreach, and should be a top priority in an effort to facilitate international cooperation.
- *An inquiry about whether or not there was a list of members of the National Biodefense Science Board (NBSB) was made.* The list has not been completed, but the NBSB will be holding their first meeting in mid-December and hopes for strong private-sector turnout.
- Interaction with the HHS Office of Global Health Affairs was discussed.