

USAID ANNOUNCES NEW \$125 MILLION PROJECT TO DETECT UNKNOWN VIRUSES WITH PANDEMIC POTENTIAL

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Office of Press Relations

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Today, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is launching an ambitious new project that will work with partner countries and the global community to build better preparedness for future global health threats. *Discovery & Exploration of Emerging Pathogens - Viral Zoonoses (DEEP VZN)*, a five-year, approximately \$125 million project (pending availability of funds), will strengthen global capacity to detect and understand the risks of viral spillover from wildlife to humans that could cause another pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how infectious diseases threaten all of society, up-ending people's lives and attacking societies at their cores. It is also a strong reminder of the connection between animals, humans, and the environment, and the effect that an emerging pathogen spilling over into humans can have on people's health and on global economies. The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to advancing global health security, international pandemic preparedness, and global health resilience. Outbreaks do not respect geographic boundaries and can spread rapidly, jeopardizing the health, safety, and economic security of every country — including the United States. DEEP VZN will advance the U.S. Government's global health security and foreign policy priorities by supporting efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to new infectious disease threats abroad.

The Washington State University Paul Allen School for Global Health will implement DEEP VZN with a consortium of partners that includes the University of Washington, FHI 360, PATH, and Washington University in St. Louis.

Since 2009, USAID's **Global Health Security Program** has supported work to safely discover and understand new viruses from animals at high risk locations. The vast majority, more than 70 percent, of outbreaks in people originate from animals. At a time when people are coming into more frequent contact with wildlife, DEEP VZN will build and expand on previous work by significantly scaling up USAID's efforts to understand where, when, and how viruses spillover from animals to humans. USAID will share information it gathers with host-country and global partners to develop and implement interventions in communities to reduce the risks of virus spillover and therefore, potential outbreaks. Data and information gathered by DEEP VZN will also play a critical role in developing diagnostics, medicines, and vaccines for new viruses. Developing these tools now is essential for being better prepared for the future when new viruses spillover and stopping them from causing outbreaks that could become pandemics.

DEEP VZN is a critical next step in the evolution of USAID's work to understand and address the risks posed by zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. DEEP VZN will work in targeted countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that have both a high risk for viral spillover and the capacity to safely conduct viral discovery. Identifying and understanding unknown viral threats will help these countries—and the world—be better prepared to detect, prevent and respond to future biological threats.

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