

11. PRESIDENT'S EMERGENCY PLAN FOR AIDS RELIEF (PEPFAR)

PEPFAR is the US President's Emergency Plan for HIV and AIDS Relief, worth US\$15 billion over five years. This is the largest commitment by any nation to a single disease. It is, however, highly controversial and requires recipients to sign up to many conditions. These contravene VSO's publicly stated advocacy positions.

VSO programmes **must not** pursue applications for PEPFAR funding. This does not apply to USAID funding.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

PEPFAR is the largest commitment ever made by any nation for an international health initiative dedicated to a single disease. It is highly controversial and, as a result, it is important that VSO's position regarding accessing PEPFAR money is clearly outlined.

When passed through Congress, it was decided that PEPFAR money should be divided in the following way:

- 55 per cent for the treatment of individuals with HIV and AIDS (and in the financial years of 2006 through to 2008, 75 per cent of this is to be spent on the purchase and distribution of antiretroviral drugs)
- 15 per cent for the palliative care of individuals with HIV and AIDS
- 20 per cent for HIV prevention (of which at least 33 per cent is to be spent on abstinence until marriage programmes)
- 10 per cent for helping orphans and vulnerable children (and in the financial years 2006 through to 2008, at least 50 per cent of this is to be provided through non-profit, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including faith-based organisations, that implement programmes at the community level).

KEY DEBATES

PEPFAR provides large amounts of money and has been very important in increasing access to treatment for HIV and AIDS. VSO recognises this achievement.

However, PEPFAR's funding for HIV prevention is much more contentious. PEPFAR requires governments and NGOs receiving funding to sign up to many conditionalities about how the money can or cannot be used. Clauses covered include drug trafficking, terrorism, sex work, abortion, promotion of condom use, promotion of abstinence, lack of support for harm reduction, and favouring branded over cheaper generic drugs.

Some international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) accept PEPFAR funding and some do not. Some organisations actively campaign against PEPFAR. Some INGOs accept PEPFAR funding while being opposed to PEPFAR positions, but seek to work with and around the conditionalities. Others argue that, despite the large amount of money provided by PEPFAR and the numbers of people it has helped to get onto treatment, it is actually fundamentally detrimental to addressing HIV and AIDS successfully. PEPFAR funding can also have onerous monitoring and evaluation requirements.

VSO'S POSITION

Many of the clauses outlined above undermine VSO's commitment to a rights-based approach to HIV and AIDS and are not consistent with comprehensive, evidence-based HIV-prevention interventions. Conditionalities that could potentially be imposed by PEPFAR are not compatible with VSO's publicly stated advocacy positions in *Gendering AIDS*. VSO believes it is also not compatible with the Code of Good Practice for NGOs working in HIV and AIDS, which VSO has signed.

There is also some financial risk in accepting PEPFAR funding. There appear to have been cases where NGOs have spent the money on their programmes and subsequently had to pay it back as they were deemed to have contravened one of the PEPFAR clauses. Clearly, VSO believes signing up to a clause means abiding by it; however, in some cases, the demand for repayment has been linked to work carried out by the NGO with funding separate from PEPFAR. This is not absolutely clear cut, but there is a potential risk. In any case, VSO believes PEPFAR should not dictate what NGOs can do with money raised from other sources.

VSO advises its programmes that they must not pursue applications for PEPFAR funding because it clashes with our publicly stated advocacy positions. This position is now mandatory and represents an absolute ban on applying for PEPFAR funding.

VSO recognises this position may possibly result in some lost donor funding opportunities, but we do not want to accept donor money at any negative cost. VSO does not anticipate the amounts of money lost will be huge, as in most cases there are alternative sources of funding available that do not come with the same conditions attached as PEPFAR.

This position is about PEPFAR and is not applicable to USAID funding, unless it contains similar restrictive clauses to the PEPFAR ones outlined above.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- VSO programmes must not apply for PEPFAR funding.
- This does not apply to USAID funding.
- VSO programmes will prioritise working with HIV and AIDS donors whose aims and objectives are more compatible with VSO's own positioning on HIV and AIDS.

RESOURCES

- AVERT (2007) *President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief*: www.avert.org/pepfar.htm
- PEPFAR (2003) *The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief*: www.PEPFAR.gov



VSO 317 Putney Bridge Road
London SW15 2PN
Tel: +44(0)20 8780 7500
Fax: +44(0)20 8780 7300
www.vso.org.uk

For the full positions visit
www.vsointernational.org/hiv-aids

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