Transitioning Health Care Worker Support: A Resource Framework from the PEPFAR Experience

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Background

To expand access to HIV/AIDS services, PEPFAR has been partially or wholly supporting health care workers (HCWs) in over 30 countries. While this model has resulted in timely access to quality treatment and care, it is not sustainable. Some countries have transitioned responsibility for HCW salaries and management from PEPFAR to governments, nongovernmental organizations, or other entities. Other countries are in the initial stages of transitioning HCWs.

To help PEPFAR country teams work with stakeholders and transition HCW support to country-owned entities, USAID and the USAID- and PEPFAR-funded Capacity*Plus* project conducted key informant interviews in four African countries where transition was underway—Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, and Uganda. The interviews led to development of the Health Care Worker Transition Framework (Figure 1) and a technical resource that compiles key questions, case studies, lessons learned, and tools.

Figure 1. Health Care Worker Transition Framework

Ongoing stakeholder engagement is necessary to ensure adequate planning for HCW transition. Stakeholders include subnational and local-level government, civil society, professional associations and councils, preservice educational institutions, universities, and the private sector.

Key questions:
- Which stakeholders need to be engaged?
- What will facilitate stakeholders' ongoing engagement?
- How will decisions be made and communicated?
- How can the risks that stakeholders perceive about engaging in the transition process be mitigated?

Sample resources:
- Terms of reference for a transition stakeholders' group
- Ministry of Health transition memo to affected cadres

Finance: Based on a country's economic status and the transition's magnitude, a PEPFAR team may consider supporting: setting salary and allowance levels; budgeting and projecting HCW resource requirements; mobilizing financial resources; and gathering data on HCW expenditures.
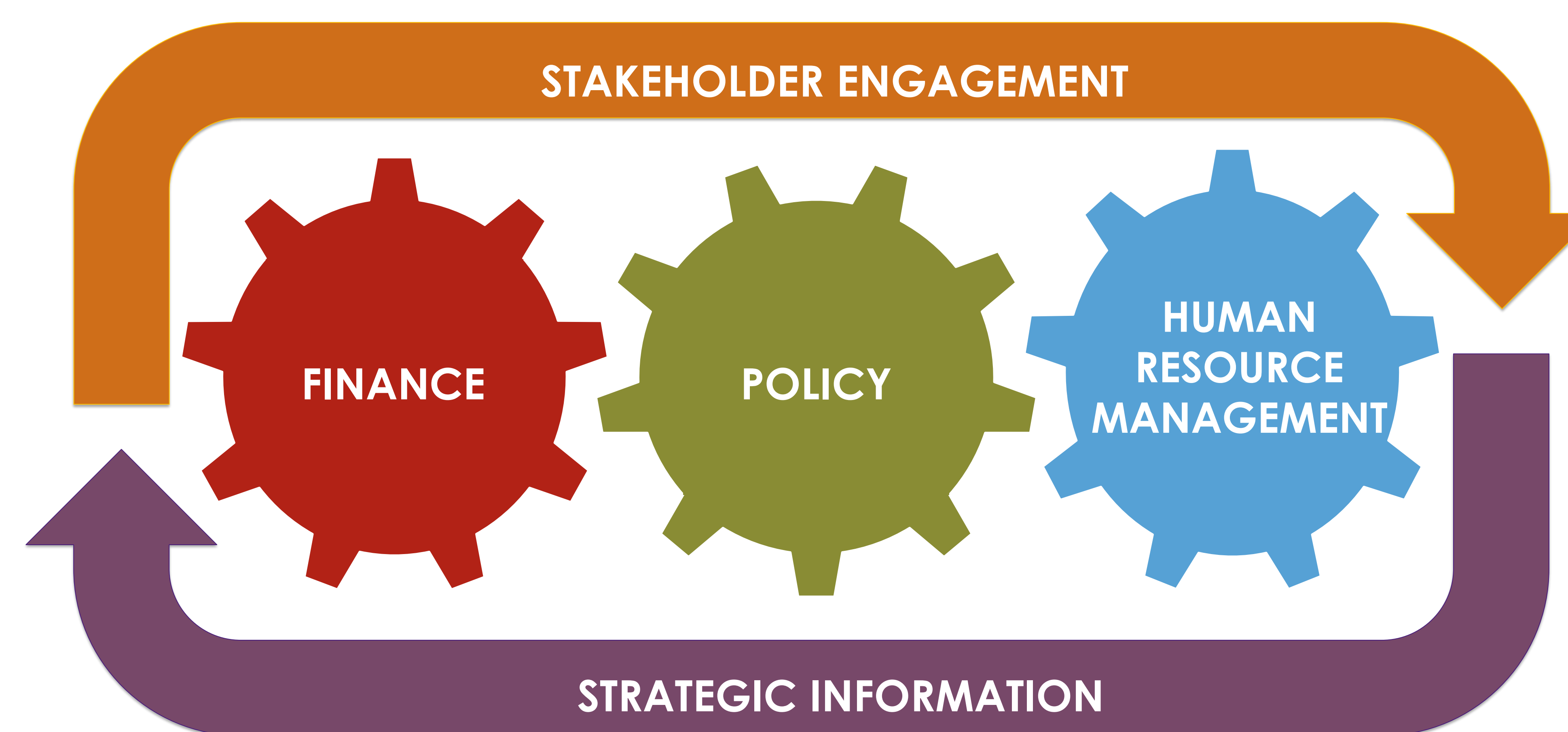
Key questions:
- What resources are available to support HCW transition?
- What information is needed to calculate transition costs?
- What tools will be used to forecast expenditures, create scenarios, and develop costing strategies?

Sample resources:
- Sustainable financing strategy
- Budget motivation for human resources for health (HRH) support

Human resources management includes workforce planning and analysis; HR information systems; work environment and conditions; and performance management.

Key questions:
- What HRH data are currently available?
- How do donor-funded positions map to staff establishment categories? Do salary/benefit packages differ?
- How will transitioned workers fit into HRH plans and contribute to emerging health service delivery needs?
- How can transitioned health workers be attracted and retained under their new contracts?

Sample resources:
- Letter of appointment and contract
- Health facilities data tool

HCW transition may require changing or developing policies regarding professional standards, licensing, and accreditation; authorized scopes of practice by cadre; employment and labor laws; and subcontracting structures.

Key questions:
- Will HCWs have different standards or licensing requirements post-transition?
- What compensation policies or terms of service rules or regulations might impact the transitioned workers, and who should address them?
- What policy changes might be needed to enable subcontracting of community-based organizations for services?

Sample resources:
- PEPFAR-host country collaboration agreement
- Provincial-level transition terms of reference

Gathering strategic information is an important step in formulating a transition strategy. Information may cover: HCW vacancies, salaries, and funding sources; HCW numbers, names, locations, and contract periods; credentials; functions; and national health funding levels.

Key questions:
- What information is needed to inform decisions related to the transition process?
- How can information best be presented to support its use in decision-making?
- Who will monitor and evaluate the transition?

Sample resources:
- Transition of Staffing Situational Assessment Data Collection Tool
- HRH Staffing Inventory
- HR Mapping Tool & User Guide

Conclusions

In addition to serving as resources for countries that are transitioning cadres from PEPFAR funding, the Health Care Worker Transition Framework and accompanying technical resource may be helpful for countries that are scaling up their health workforce, rolling out new cadres, and for health workforce planning in general.

Transitioning HCW support is a complex and nonlinear process. Country experiences suggest that an effective transition should incorporate the interlinked components of the HCW transition framework.

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