

Adapting An Advocacy Alliance on Frontline Health Workers to Leverage Ebola's Spotlight

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Introduction

In January 2012, United States-based non-governmental and private-sector organizations came together to launch the Frontline Health Workers Coalition (FHWC) to address a need for greater and more strategic focus and investment in frontline health workers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The FHWC has successfully garnered greater attention to the need to invest in frontline health workers to ensure equitable access to health services in LMICs.

In late 2014, the Ebola epidemic in West Africa created a major media and policy spotlight on the need for greater attention to the needs of local frontline health workers. Although not oriented as an emergency response advocacy alliance, the FHWC membership mobilized quickly to simultaneously spotlight local frontline health workers needs in West Africa and call for greater attention to the centrality of well trained and supported frontline health workers to building resilient health systems from the community level. Activities included developing a set of policy recommendations for action in West Africa and globally, commissioning a costing analysis for scaling up the health workforce in West Africa, and multifaceted communications efforts.

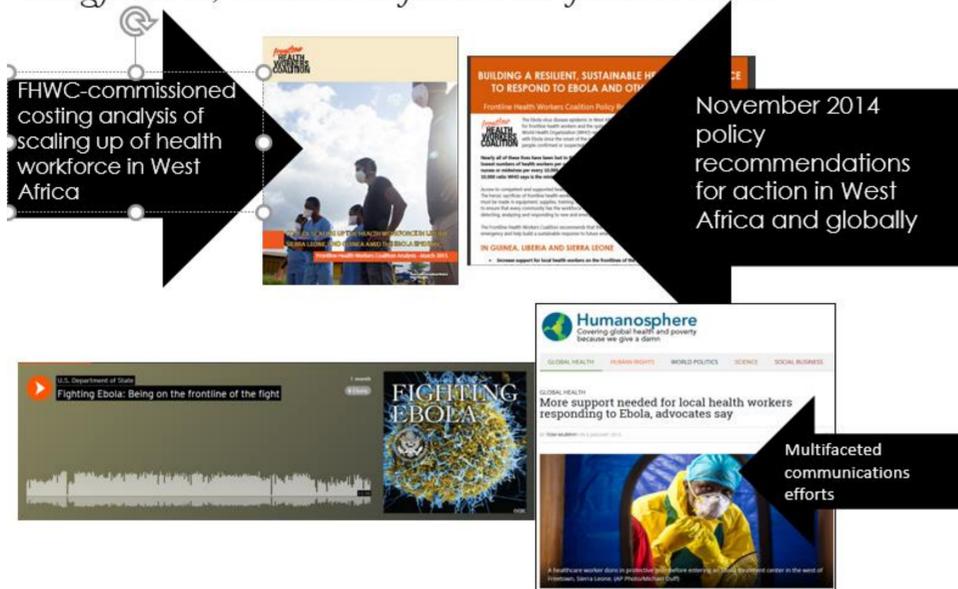


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FHWC's response to Ebola

Calling for resilient, sustainable workforce in West Africa and worldwide

frontline
HEALTH
WORKERS
COALITION



Participants heard presentations from FHWC leaders, discussed lessons learned by FHWC and other alliances in best practices to adjust health workforce advocacy to current trends in the field, and discussed greater collaboration on how to better advocate in the future to global donors and multilateral institutions. Key lessons from the session were published as part of the Conference report "The Role of Communities in Building Resilient Health Systems: Lessons from the 2016 Conference" (http://crackingthenuthealth.com/wp-content/uploads/marketing_photos/cracking_the_nut_health_final_publication.pdf).

Results

Key ingredients to successful adjustment of FHWC's advocacy to the Ebola epidemic were the flexibility of members and partners to quickly change workplans and activities, the trust already developed between FHWC's members and policymakers, and developing clear and bold recommendations for addressing long- and short-term HRH challenges in West Africa and in LMICs worldwide.

Key ongoing challenges identified included balancing advocating for long-term strengthening of frontline health workforce with the immediate challenge in emergency like Ebola epidemic, connecting on-the-ground realities in West Africa to US and multilateral global health policy and investments, calling attention to critical issues without exploiting spotlight, and maintaining interest of policymakers once the emergency disappeared from the headlines.

Objective and Setting

The objective of this review was for health workforce and systems experts at the Cracking the Nut: The Role of Communities in Building Resilient Health Systems conference in Washington, DC, on July 19, 2016, to look at lessons learned in adjusting the planned activities of an existing advocacy partnership—the Frontline Health Workers Coalition—to spotlight and influence greater attention to the needs and impact of frontline health workers in building resilient health systems.

Policy Implications

Participants at the session and conference organizers concluded that resilient partnerships—flexible, adaptable, and based on mutual trust—can be leveraged in unexpected ways during times of global crises like West Africa's Ebola epidemic of 2014-2015 to address both acute and pervasive gaps in access to trained and supported health workers in LMICs.