August 19, 2021

Ambassador Samantha Power
Administrator
United States Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Ambassador Power,

We are encouraged by the World Health Organization’s recent publication of updated global guidelines for screening and treatment of pre-cancer lesions for cervical cancer prevention. These guidelines provide a clear mandate and scientific rationale for wide-scale adoption of human papilloma virus (HPV) testing as the recommended screening method for women worldwide, including women living with HIV, in lieu of cytology or visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) screening. The guidelines specifically state:

Existing programmes with quality-assured cytology as the primary screening test should be continued until HPV DNA testing is operational; existing programmes using VIA as the primary screening test should transition rapidly because of the inherent challenges with quality assurance.

As you know, ensuring that 70% of all women receive screening for cervical cancer at ages 35 and 45 is a key pillar of the WHO’s strategy to accelerate the global elimination of cervical cancer. Rapid global uptake of HPV testing will facilitate the achievement of this target through more accurate diagnosis and improved prioritization of cervical cancer treatment resources.

Our coalition of advocates for the global elimination of cervical cancer gratefully acknowledges the role played by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as supporters of the global elimination strategy and WHO’s cervical cancer guideline development working group.

We recognize USAID’s key role as an implementing agency of the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), notably the significant achievements of PEPFAR’s Go Further program in increasing access to cervical cancer screening and preventive treatment for women living with HIV in high-burden countries. USAID investments in collaboration and science through the Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) mechanism jointly sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences and USAID have also been critical to inform our understanding of effective, integrated service delivery models to improve women’s health.

Given the clear mandate to move to HPV testing for cervical cancer screening, we would like to understand your process and timeline for moving all cervical cancer screening programs under USAID’s purview to HPV testing. Committing to the broader use of HPV testing within USAID’s programs demonstrates a clear commitment to quality of care for women living with HIV.

The world has made clear its dedication to end cervical cancer everywhere. Bolstered by your leadership, together we can transform the ambition of cervical cancer elimination into reality. We know how to eliminate cervical cancer. It is now a matter of when this goal will be achieved.
Thank you again for your leadership and your commitment.

1. TogetHER for Health
2. AVAC
3. American Cancer Society
4. FHI 360
5. Global Communities
6. Jhpiego
7. PATH
8. Pathfinder International
9. Population Services International
10. Advocates for Youth
11. AIDS Action Baltimore
12. American Medical Women's Association
13. BIO Ventures for Global Health
14. Cervical Cancer Action for Elimination
15. Cervical Cancer Prevention and Training Centre in Catholic Hospital, Battor
16. Conquering Cancer
17. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
18. ENGAGe Teens
19. EngenderHealth
20. ESGO Prevention Committee
21. Global Focus on Cancer
22. Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer (GIAHC)
23. Go Doc Go
24. Grounds for Health
25. Haiti sans Cervical Cancer
26. Housing Works
27. IAVI
28. Innovating Health International
29. International Association of Providers of AIDS Care
30. John Snow International
31. KILELE Health Association
32. Kizazi Chetu
33. Management Sciences for Health
34. MSI Reproductive Choices
35. Scope
36. Treatment Action Group
37. VCS Foundation
38. International Taskforce on Cervical Cancer Elimination in the Commonwealth
CC: Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
Natasha Billimoria, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Global Health
Michele Sumilas, Assistant to the Administrator of the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning