Introduction

• The Center for Innovation and Impact, located within USAID and the Global Health Bureau, is a small team tasked with identifying and supporting health technologies which have the potential for catalytic impact in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
• They tackle a variety of issues, but I focused on the Maternal and Child Health initiative as well as COVID-19 response.

Results

• We were able to identify innovations with lifesaving potential.
• All of the innovations that made the final selection list are fully functional in low income settings. For example, we were able to spotlight ventilators that work without electricity and informational platforms which can inform illiterate people of key health information in their local languages.

Objective

I located assessed deployable COVID innovations which could be scaled in countries of critical need in the next 6-9 months.

Methods

• Innovations were assessed based on four categories: COVID relevance/potential impact, demand/suitability/sustainability, organizational capacity of innovators and timeline for progression to scale.
• I was one of four people working on this effort.

Discussion

• One big takeaway for me was the fact that when health systems aren’t fully robust then every other health need faces challenges during a crisis. For example, HIV/AIDS and Maternal and Child Health efforts needed extra attention even though most of the money was made available for issues directly addressing COVID.

Questions

• I was so impressed with the culturally sensitive approach that the health experts around me were taking, but I still wonder about the implications of doing diplomacy in the field of global health and aid work.

Conclusion

• Responses to global health crises require lots of coordination and a clear line of communication between those who make the decisions and the target population they aim to benefit.

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