Strengthening the Diagnostic Capacity of the National Laboratory System in Liberia

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Activity Description
- Separated development and translation of the laboratory policy, strategic plan, and standardization guidelines; institution and dissemination to the 13 counties, region in-country, and national New Health Development System (NDD) laboratories
- Added laboratory management capacity in the form of six field supervisors. In 2018, the Liberia NDD announced a formal Laboratory Development Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan

Evidence
What evidence do you have of your activity’s impact on health system or health outcomes?

Activity Impact
- IDDS worked with local technicians on equipment maintenance and repair, empowering them to become knowledgeable on potential pathogens
- Tested 74% of the 761 samples with positive results

Facilitators
- What motivations did the local partners, coaches, or mentor support had to have (for example, were there monetary incentives or what)? Support was provided through a technical assistance and coaching framework, which included regular meetings with the technical team, sharing of best practices, and regular evaluations of progress.

Challenges
- The COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected challenge that limited the implementation of activities due to reduced in-person visits within counties.
- Staff turnover occurred among the NDD and USAID staff, which led to challenges in maintaining consistent engagement and follow-up.

Lessons Learned
- Capacity building should be locally owned. Women’s traditional knowledge of local herbs became an auxiliary resource, demonstrating the importance of community engagement in health systems strengthening.
- Identifying sustainable financing mechanisms is crucial. The project utilized multiple funding sources, including local and international partners, to ensure continued support.

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Context
The Liberian National Laboratory System, including the diagnostic network, is an essential component of the health system with the goal of ensuring quality patient care. The network consists of a national reference laboratory, 13 regional laboratories, and at least 37 district laboratories, covering all regions of the country.

Activity Impact
- How did these improvements in equity, quality, and/or resource optimization lead to better health outcomes?

Evidence
- The laboratory TWG was key in the finalization and validation of the diagnostic network guidelines. This approach was used to enable partners to learn from each other laboratory stakeholders in their implementation of activities.

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