**GLOBAL HEALTH OVERVIEW**

**WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Global health programs seek to improve the overall well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Toward this end, global health programming addresses the physical and mental health needs of individuals; treats and prevents the spread of infectious diseases; strengthens the capabilities of health workers and health systems; and increases the accessibility of health care services.

Strong health systems reduce the risk and cost of pandemics, long-term disability, and premature death, helping populations in developing countries become more productive and contribute to their own economies and societies.

Through investments in global health programs, the United States has contributed to saving millions of lives. Many diseases that threatened millions of people only a decade ago are in decline. U.S. leadership in global health initiatives has helped to halve preventable child deaths, decrease deaths from malaria by 60%, and reduce maternal mortality by 60% since 1990. Through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the United States has also provided lifesaving antiretroviral treatment (ART) for more than 14 million men, women, and children in need. U.S. efforts are at the forefront in the fight against future disease threats, promoting global health security, building resilient health systems with skilled frontline workforces, and advancing the development of essential tools to combat Ebola and Zika.

Global health programs are among the most important, cost-effective, and successful forms of foreign aid. For every $1 invested in global health, there is an expected 10- to 20-fold return in economic benefits. Investing in global health allows low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to move toward aid independence and increase their participation in the global economy. Furthermore, foreign assistance that specifically addresses global health — as well as humanitarian relief, democracy and governance, disaster assistance, agriculture development, and education — is a critical component of how the United States engages with the world.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS**

Maintain appropriate funding levels for all global health accounts, so that new global health objectives can be achieved and previous gains will not be lost. If the United States fails to live up to its commitments, the worldwide progress that has been made against maternal mortality, tuberculosis, malaria, HIV, and other diseases in LMICs could stagnate or even reverse. Sustained U.S. investment in global health programming and health systems strengthening is crucial, especially with the rise of chronic, noncommunicable diseases such as cancers, diabetes, and lung and heart disease, among others.

Encourage federal agencies to develop cross-agency strategies that integrate global health programs across development sectors, leverage multisectoral investments, and strengthen health systems to build resilience and self-reliance. In addition, these strategies should have well-defined targets and clear accountability mechanisms.

Support policies that will build strong local health systems and train sustainable health workforces. Strong, integrated health systems prevent devastating infectious disease outbreaks, bolster access to essential health services, enable rapid public health responses, prevent stockouts of essential medicines and other lifesaving health products, and help drive inclusive economic growth. Additionally, investments in health workers help save millions of women’s and children’s lives, improve overall global health security, and bear tremendous economic returns.

Continue to invest in global health research and evaluation programs that develop and implement new technologies and tools to assist countries in anticipating future health challenges.

Credit: United Nations Foundation/Allison Shelley
GLOBAL HEALTH OVERVIEW

WHY THIS INVESTMENT IS IMPORTANT

The United States is at the forefront of global health. U.S. leadership and investments in global health have accelerated progress towards real and tangible results: eliminating infectious disease epidemics, ending preventable maternal and child deaths, achieving an AIDS-free generation, and protecting the American public from health threats. U.S. investments also help to train and deploy essential frontline health workers, who not only vaccinate and attend deliveries, but also provide preventive care, treatment, medical information, and advice to help keep families and communities healthy. With U.S. funding, new innovations can tackle the next generation of rapidly evolving global health risks, including noncommunicable diseases and other neglected threats that increasingly affect the economies of key U.S. trading partners worldwide.

By integrating global health programs and services, U.S. agencies and practitioners leverage and maximize U.S. investments, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of health initiatives worldwide. Investment in one area of global health creates a ripple effect across all programs, increasing the economic and social returns. Furthermore, U.S. investments provide the foundation of capital upon which corporations and LMICs can build with increasingly larger contributions. This foundation provides the access to alternative sources of funding and technical assistance that ultimately helps countries become self-reliant. However, as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) looks for ways to support countries along this journey toward self-reliance, U.S. investments must sustain essential health and social services, preventing the reemergence of life-threatening diseases that the United States and its partners have fought so hard to control.

The U.S. government is far from alone in its efforts to improve global health. Significant contributions are made by other nations; multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO); public-private partnerships, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), and Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance; private foundations; and civil society organizations. These donor partnerships allow global health funding to be leveraged across multiple health sectors and to reach those most in need.

Global health programs help countries build and strengthen their health care services and systems, leading to economic and social stability, as well as independence from foreign assistance. Continued U.S. leadership and investment in global health are needed to build on achievements to date and to ensure a healthy future for citizens around the world.

RESOURCE

CONTRIBUTORS
Danielle Heiberg, Global Health Council, dheiberg@globalhealth.org
Victoria Rodriguez, Global Health Council, vrodriguez@globalhealth.org

REFERENCES