GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

What You Should Know

U.S. investments in global health security protect American national security by rapidly detecting disease threats and stopping them at their source. This includes investments in the frontline health workforce, field epidemiology training, data standardization and reporting, research and development (R&D) of medical countermeasures, and technical support—all of which strengthen health systems. The emergence of COVID-19, and its unabated spread, underscores the need to increase these investments.

Whole-of-government prioritization of global health security is vital to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats. U.S. global health security efforts take an interagency approach critical for bringing the right expertise and resources to the table. Agencies involved include the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Health and Human Services (including agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority), and the Department of Defense.

U.S. leadership is critical to deliver political, diplomatic, and financial commitments for health security. U.S. investments incentivize partner countries to work collaboratively to tackle disease threats. Global cooperation across sectors and nations, working toward mutually agreed-upon measurable targets and goals, is essential.

Congressional Calls to Action

Translate lessons learned from COVID-19 into sustainable investments in global health security.

“Panic and neglect” funding, surging only when a crisis arrives and subsiding when political attention moves on, leaves the world vulnerable to future threats. Increased and sustained U.S. investments, including both bilateral and multilateral initiatives like the new Pandemic Fund at the World Bank, will increase preparedness worldwide and enhance U.S. national security.1

Invest in capacity-building for both national and global health security systems. Critical investments include supporting infrastructure for national immunization planning and delivery, data standardization and reporting, frontline workforce development, and technical assistance to reduce risk by identifying and filling critical gaps. These investments will ultimately strengthen health systems to be prepared for future health emergencies.

Prioritize R&D of new medical countermeasures for pandemic threats in domestic and global response strategies.

R&D for vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics is essential to stay ahead of emerging disease threats. Investments to support global, equitable access to new tools, and global partnerships like the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, are essential. Strengthening manufacturing capacities in low- and middle-income countries is also needed to ensure countermeasures are fit for purpose and rapidly deployed.
Global health security is intrinsically linked with national security. Large-scale health emergencies contribute to geopolitical and economic insecurity, which threatens the health, safety, and livelihoods of Americans. Investments in global health security also support critical building blocks of strong health systems that underpin economic resiliency and stability. Strong health systems with robust detection, prevention, and response capabilities — including sustained R&D investments; strong infection prevention and control measures, including access to water, sanitation and hygiene; and a well-trained workforce — are critical for preventing and mitigating public health crises, and for providing essential health services that promote healthy, prosperous societies.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed nearly 6.6 million people worldwide and is projected to cost the global economy at least $12.5 trillion, shows the devastating result of our collective failure to sustainably invest in global health security. U.S. investments in global health and support to partner countries gave many the foundational capacity needed to avert large-scale humanitarian crises. Increased investment is needed to respond to the threat of zoonotic spillover and to bolster domestic and international health resilience. However, investments in global health security must not come at the expense of other global health programs.

Strong health systems with robust detection, prevention, and response capabilities are critical for preventing and mitigating public health crises, and promoting healthy societies.

Why is this investment important?

Global health security is intrinsically linked with national security. Large-scale health emergencies contribute to geopolitical and economic insecurity, which threatens the health, safety, and livelihoods of Americans. Investments in global health security also support critical building blocks of strong health systems that underpin economic resiliency and stability. Strong health systems with robust detection, prevention, and response capabilities — including sustained R&D investments; strong infection prevention and control measures, including access to water, sanitation and hygiene; and a well-trained workforce — are critical for preventing and mitigating public health crises, and for providing essential health services that promote healthy, prosperous societies.

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Resources


Global Health Security Agenda: https://www.ghsindex.org/ar/the-global-health-security-agenda/

Global Health Security Index: https://www.ghsindex.org


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Citations

