GLOBAL SURGERY

What You Should Know

Surgical conditions represent a significant global disease burden. Surgical conditions represent nearly one-third of the global disease burden. An estimated 17 million people die annually from surgically treatable conditions. Millions more suffer surgically preventable disabilities. Globally, 5 billion people lack access to safe, timely, and affordable surgical care. Only 6% of surgical procedures benefit the poorest third of the world’s population.

Addressing surgical care can improve health and economic outcomes. Lack of access to surgical care perpetuates poverty, inequity, and economic instability. Without greater investment in surgical care, low- and middle-income countries could lose $12.3 trillion in gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030 and as much as 2% of GDP annually.

Surgical care is cost-effective and is essential to U.S. global health efforts. Surgical care addresses a wide range of health areas, including maternal health; cancer and other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs); injuries; infectious diseases; and congenital anomalies. Improving access to surgical care advances U.S. global health priorities and is essential to resilient health systems. Every dollar invested in surgical capacity generates an estimated $10 in improved health and productivity, making surgical care a best buy in global health.

Congressional Calls to Action

Provide dedicated funding for U.S. global surgery efforts. Commit funding for neglected surgical conditions under the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), supporting health system strengthening through development and implementation of national surgical, obstetric, trauma, and anesthesia plans.

Support U.S. foreign assistance agencies and global health investments for surgical systems strengthening. Ensure integration of surgical care and systems strengthening across development and humanitarian agencies to achieve progress on health and security priorities, including maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and food security, NCDs, health systems strengthening, and global health security.

Continue U.S. partnership with WHO and other multilateral organizations to strengthen global surgery efforts. Ensure high-level collaboration with multilateral bodies, including the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the United Nations General Assembly. Support the World Health Organization (WHO) in monitoring implementation of the 2015 WHA Resolution for strengthening emergency and essential surgical and anesthesia care. Support WHO-recommended national and regional data collection and progress reporting; inclusion of surgical systems strengthening and surgical and anesthesia care in WHO’s health systems and universal health coverage strategies; and coordinated funding for surgical systems strengthening in LMICs.
Surgical care is not a single disease or issue—it is a tool for disease prevention and treatment. It is critical for strengthening health systems, health security, the global economy, and improving health outcomes. High-quality surgical systems include infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, including access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), which help strengthen the response to other health threats such as emerging infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance.12

USAID has recognized the benefits of initial investments in surgical care capacity for maternal health.13 Additional investments in surgical care will scale the impact of U.S. government programs across health systems globally. Targets for primary health care, children’s health, the health workforce, NCDs, and health systems strengthening and resilience cannot be achieved without access to safe, timely, and affordable surgical care. Fortunately, surgery is one of the most cost-effective health interventions—and is achievable with today's knowledge and technology.

Nearly every person everywhere will require a surgical intervention during their lifetime. Integrating surgical care into global health and humanitarian programs will save millions of lives each year; contribute to economic growth, equity, and poverty alleviation; and help bridge the health care gap, especially for the poorest billion.14
Resources


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Citations


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


