



Global Health Leadership



To improve the health and security of all U.S. citizens—and to ensure sustainable thriving of the world population—the United States must maintain its leadership in global health through forward-looking policies, a long-term vision, and continued investment. Where should U.S. investments and attention be focused? The report *Global Health and the Future Role of the United States* highlights four priority global health challenges and identifies four opportunities to do business differently.

Why is Global Health Leadership an Opportunity?

American foreign policy rests upon the three-legged stool of defense, diplomacy, and development. The latter two employ “soft power,” or the use of resources to influence and attract other nations in a manner that is less commanding. Yet without infrastructure and resources to support a global health workforce, longitudinal knowledge is weakened and U.S. employees often lack the health or diplomacy expertise they need for health diplomacy and development to be truly effective. Lacking these strengths makes it difficult for the United States to be a leader in setting global agendas and investment priorities.

By the numbers:

- **7 bureaus** at the headquarters office and all the regional bureaus of the U.S. Department of State engage in health diplomacy, yet foreign service officers only receive **1.5 hours** of global health training.
- The United States currently has just **6 health attachés** posted in Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Switzerland.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has an average standing vacancy rate of more than **30 percent** for its overseas positions.

What's the Big Picture?

The evolving international landscape means a shift in how the United States, long a global health leader, engages in foreign policy and development assistance. As many middle-income countries experience economic growth, they may not need direct development assistance for health.

Yet as global health security threats emerge, addressing them through a coordinated, global response will be critical, supported by a strong backbone of a sustainable global health workforce. The United States has an opportunity to be more strategic in its health diplomacy and be a leader for other donor countries. Additionally, continued engagement in multilateral relationships can help realize global agendas in health and maximize returns on investments.



CASE STUDY FROM THE REPORT

DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE TO SARS OUTBREAK

During the 2003 SARS outbreak, the health attachés posted in Beijing brokered a memorandum of understanding between the Chinese Ministry of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to form the U.S-China Collaboration of Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases. The agreement was positive for containing the conducting research on SARS but it also served as a platform for collaboration in the subsequent H5N1 and Ebola epidemics. During the H5N1 pandemic in 2005, this agreement enabled smoother sharing of information, and during the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the agreement clarified roles each country would play in the response (in which China built a treatment center in Liberia and a 60-bed hospital in Sierra Leone).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Commit to Continued Global Health Leadership

Why?

Priorities for the U.S. government, such as global health security and reduction of child mortality, will depend on continued leadership, use of multilateral institutions, and increased bilateral engagement. However, the two agencies leading U.S. efforts in global health are structured in a manner that does not equip them to address relevant issues in a concerted fashion, maintain institutional knowledge, or build a standing workforce versed in global health.

How?

To protect itself from global threats, benefit from successes achieved in global health programs, and maintain a strong research and development pipeline, the United States should commit to maintaining its leadership in global health and actively participating in global health governance, coordination, and collaboration.

HHS and State should:

- **Improve the performance of key United Nations agencies, particularly the World Health Organization**
- **Remain firmly committed to innovative global partnerships that further U.S. global health goals**
- **Implement a more strategic approach to achieving global health goals, including:**
 - **A commitment by the U.S. Department of State to create a global health career track**
 - **Amendment of the Foreign Service Act through congressional action to establish a cadre of global health experts in HHS**

OTHER BRIEFS IN THIS SERIES

The report highlights four priority global health challenges and four key opportunities to do business differently.

DOING BUSINESS DIFFERENTLY



Digital Health Technology



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PRIORITIZING GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES



Women's and Children's Health



Global Health Security



HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria



Cardiovascular Health and Cancer Prevention

SPOTLIGHT ON: Global Health Leadership and Global Health Security

By continuing their leadership role within the Global Health Security Agenda partnership of more than 55 countries, the United States can contribute to global readiness and maintain awareness of potential health threats worldwide.

To read the full report and other related resources, including all of the briefs in this series, please visit nationalacademies.org/USGlobalHealth.