



FRIENDS
OF THE GLOBAL FIGHT

AGAINST AIDS,
TUBERCULOSIS
AND MALARIA

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HOW THE GLOBAL FUND MAKES AMERICA STRONGER AND SAFER

The United States' global leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria has saved tens of millions of [lives](#) around the world while making this country safer and stronger. A powerful instrument of that leadership is the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#) (Global Fund), a public-private partnership that raises about \$5 billion per year from donors across the G7 and G20 to invest in to local partners to fight infectious diseases and strengthen health systems in countries that are key to U.S. foreign policy interests. The Global Fund works with U.S. bilateral programs: the [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief](#) (PEPFAR), the [President's Malaria Initiative](#) (PMI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) [TB Program](#). Together, they improve political and economic stability around the world by reducing the mortality from the deadliest epidemics in human history. And as some of the most visible and effective examples of American leadership, these programs bolster the image of the U.S. around the world at a time of intense geopolitical competition with China and Russia.

By investing in the Global Fund, the U.S. maximizes the national security value of its health assistance. The Global Fund works in places that U.S. agencies cannot, helps build global support for U.S. health goals and mobilizes international funding to share the burden of winning the fight against HIV, TB and malaria. To retreat from the fight now would undo the progress made against these epidemics and the tremendous goodwill we have earned—and show the U.S. shrinking from our global leadership before ascendent competitors.

Health programs: A powerful tool for competition with China and Russia

The Global Fund and the U.S. HIV, TB and malaria bilateral programs are some of the best tools for demonstrating U.S. leadership, making America stronger and safer, and cultivating partners in an increasingly competitive world. In Africa, this task is more urgent now than ever before, as perceptions of China and Russia [continue to rise relative to the U.S.](#) While China offers opaque infrastructure loans and Russia provides security assistance to despots, the U.S. leverages its distinct medical and innovation advantages as tools of soft power. With clear and measurable results, health assistance is the U.S.'s most visible, enduring and effective form of diplomacy in many low-income countries.

The goodwill generated by these programs is a clear strategic asset for the U.S. [Survey data from Afrobarometer](#) shows that people across Africa consider health to be the second-most important problem for governments to address. The first, unemployment, is also addressed by the economic gains created by improving health outcomes. 66 percent of people in Africa [prefer democracy](#) to any other form of government. HIV, TB and malaria programs help instill democratic values like transparency in government, equity in service delivery and equality under the law. U.S. investments help governments across Africa work toward [self-sustaining health programs](#) that create better health outcomes and strengthen state capacity.

Certainly, U.S. competitors see global health programs as a strategic advantage for the U.S. The State Department [identified a Russian influence operation](#) aimed at undermining U.S. health programs in Africa, which included [spreading disinformation](#) about a research project funded in part by the United States. By contrast, China has sought to emulate the U.S. by establishing its own [health diplomacy and assistance initiatives](#). As part of its Belt and Road Initiative, China created a "Health Silk Road" program to establish health cooperation across funded countries, and government strategy documents have emphasized controlling infectious diseases such as HIV, TB and malaria as objectives of China's health diplomacy.

Detection abroad, protection at home

COVID-19 showed in stark terms that disease outbreaks pose an enormous and urgent threat to the United States. Biological threats continue to proliferate, including recent outbreaks of Mpox, Marburg virus disease and H5N1 avian influenza. Strong health surveillance and laboratory systems are essential for preventing and responding to all forms of biological threats, whether they are deliberate attacks, accidental outbreaks or naturally occurring events.

For more than two decades, HIV, TB and malaria programs have provided funding and expertise to strengthen health systems to not only control these epidemics, but also enable them to better detect and contain outbreaks of all kinds. [One study](#) published in the Lancet showed that more than a third of the Global Fund's investments also contributed to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. In 2023 alone, the Global Fund invested almost \$100 million in augmenting disease surveillance systems. HIV and TB diagnostic machines were easily repurposed to test for COVID-19 during the emergency phase of the pandemic. [PEPFAR supports](#) more than 70,000 facility and community health clinics linked to 3,000 laboratories, creating rapid information-sharing networks that enable all countries to leap into action faster when an outbreak is identified.

These investments also promote U.S. biodefense by improving the efficacy and safety of laboratories around the world. Since 2021, the Global Fund has [invested \\$735 million in laboratory systems](#), including laboratory-based disease surveillance, improving biosafety and biosecurity mechanisms, and improving laboratory infrastructure and equipment. Through PEPFAR, the U.S. government has worked with countries to build and improve more than [11,000 laboratories and point-of-care testing sites](#) abroad. The U.S. has also helped more than 330 public health laboratories in low- and middle-income countries achieve accreditation to international standards.

READY FOR ANY THREAT

PEPFAR supported the establishment of a CDC office in Rwanda in 2002. Since then, the CDC has worked with Rwanda to strengthen its National Reference Laboratory (NRL) and other public health labs to fight HIV, malaria and other infectious diseases. In 2020, the NRL achieved the top [international standard](#) for medical lab quality and competence. In 2024, that same NRL detected the world's most serious outbreak of Marburg Disease, a highly virulent and deadly pathogen similar to Ebola. Thanks to laboratory strengthening supported by PEPFAR, Rwanda was equipped to contain the outbreak and prevent it from spreading to other countries.

The HIV, TB and malaria epidemics also pose [an enduring threat](#) to the safety, readiness and operational effectiveness of U.S. and partner countries' military forces. The [2023 National Biodefense Posture Review](#) establishes that the Department of Defense (DOD) "requires a resilient force enabled by capabilities that also address emerging disease threats." With force protection in mind, DOD has been an implementer of the PEPFAR program since its inception through the Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program. U.S. military researchers have been responsible for some of the most important developments in HIV and malaria research, such as the [landmark RV144 HIV vaccine trial](#), the first to demonstrate the effectiveness of an HIV vaccine; and the [first controlled malaria infection, which led to the creation of the world's first malaria vaccine](#).

Healthy states are stable states

Disease outbreaks often emerge in conflict zones. Violence destroys health systems and causes mass displacement, creating conditions for infections to spread and compounding the misery of affected populations. The reverse can be true, too. Epidemic outbreaks, which erode social cohesion and drain resources, are [associated with social unrest and civil conflict](#). It is in the interest of the United States to prevent violent conflict and strengthen fragile states by addressing the root causes of instability. HIV, TB and malaria programs can be a valuable part of those efforts.

High rates of HIV, TB and malaria are associated with severe macroeconomic downturns. Illness reduces the size and productivity of the workforce and is a barrier to foreign direct investment. [One study](#) estimates global economic losses due to TB deaths will amount to \$17.5 trillion between 2020 and 2050. Another report found that achieving the global target of reducing malaria incidence by 90% by 2030 could boost economies by [more than \\$142 billion](#). The microeconomic impacts are also profound. Epidemics strain resources such as healthcare, food and water, leading to competition and conflict between communities. Lack of economic opportunity can lure people to join violent extremist or criminal groups for income, according to the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Security](#).

Disease outbreaks can also reduce trust in government institutions, leading to political instability. The Global Fund works to build inclusive, responsive institutions and improve governance as a key part of creating more effective public health responses. This includes [helping governments](#) create more transparent, data-driven policies while empowering communities and civil society to hold their leaders accountable. One study in [the Annals of Global Health](#) established a strong association of Global Fund investments with partner countries' improvements on several indices of accountable, democratic governance.

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LOCAL NETWORKS IN CONFLICT ZONES

The Global Fund’s model of local multistakeholder partnerships allows its work to continue even in conflict zones that are otherwise inaccessible to international actors. In Sudan, where the brutal civil war has created one of the world’s worst health and humanitarian situations, the U.S. has been forced to withdraw its diplomatic and development presence due to safety concerns. With more than [70% of hospitals no longer functioning](#), incidence of infectious diseases is skyrocketing. The Global Fund has channeled [\\$190 million](#) to respond to surging malaria and TB cases and hold together a health system on the brink of collapse.

Global health programs are even more important in countries already experiencing violent conflict. Conflict can [turbocharge emergence and transmission of diseases](#) by displacing populations, devastating workforces and health infrastructure and increasing vulnerability to infectious diseases by disrupting access to safe food, water and medication. Once a country is gripped by conflict, HIV, TB and malaria progress can be quickly reversed. Burma, long hailed as a success story in the fight against malaria, has seen a [1,000% increase in malaria resistance](#) since the outbreak of civil war in 2021.

The Global Fund prioritizes health needs in what it calls [challenging operating environments](#), which include conflict zones and otherwise unstable states. The Global Fund’s programs are designed and implemented by vetted local actors—often civil society organizations—meaning it can continue to operate in areas where other bilateral and multilateral agencies may not. In fact, 30% of Global Fund allocations go to these countries. In Afghanistan, the Global Fund has provided essential TB services after the withdrawal of U.S. and partner governments in 2021. It is able to quickly respond to destabilizing new dynamics, such as providing health services for the anticipated mass return of [Afghan migrants from Pakistan](#).

The Global Fund’s expertise in challenging operating environments allow it to fund lifesaving work even in countries experiencing active armed conflict. In Ukraine, which had one of the highest burdens of HIV and TB outside of Africa even before Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, the Global Fund [mobilized emergency funding](#) to support continuity of service and assist more than 14 million people displaced by the war. The Global Fund also continues to support continuity of vital, life-saving programs in Haiti, where armed conflict has severely damaged the health system.

U.S. leadership in the Global Fund and in bilateral HIV, TB and malaria programs makes America safer and stronger. For decades, these programs exemplified American generosity and leadership. Now—as biological threats draw closer, violent conflicts spread wider and competitors grow bolder—investing in these programs is essential for strengthening national security and maintaining American influence. To retreat from these commitments would jeopardize progress toward epidemic control of the three largest infectious disease killers, make U.S. citizens more vulnerable to disease, and undermine U.S. leadership on the world stage.

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1634 Eye Street, NW Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20006
theglobalfight.org

Cover photo: Drosella, a community health worker, conducts home visits to test families and children for malaria in Mubuga, Rwanda. The Global Fund/ Brian Otieno.