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# THE CORONAVIRUS AND GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

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In today's interconnected world, **a major pandemic only takes 36 hours to spread around the globe.** In recent years, repeated outbreaks of infectious diseases – from the ongoing Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to the global outbreak of the Coronavirus – have reinforced the importance of investments in preparedness and global health security to combat pandemics and save lives.

## THE NEXT PANDEMIC

The Coronavirus – which originated in Wuhan, China – has spread to nearly every continent over the past month, with cases reported in nearly 120 countries including the United States, Japan, Germany, and Australia. On January 30th, the World Health Organization declared the virus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. As of March 12th, the disease has over 127,000 confirmed cases, with 63% of cases concentrated in China – but with outbreaks occurring in South Korea, Iran, and Italy. The outbreak is expected to slow global economic growth to the lowest levels since the 2008 financial crisis. As a result of the outbreak, the World Bank, IMF, UN, and United States have postponed high level diplomatic meetings that could help drive and coordinate a global response.

The 2019 Global Health Security Index found that no country is fully prepared to handle a major pandemic. If diseases like the Coronavirus continue to spread while countries still have significant gaps in global health security, the international community could face severe consequences in health, economics, and security:

- A pandemic on the scale of the 1918 Spanish Flu outbreak could lead to as many as 80 million deaths.
- Global pandemics could cost the global economy \$60 billion per year - \$6 trillion by the end of the century. A potential disease outbreak across just nine Asian countries could place more than 1.3 million U.S. export-related jobs at risk.
- In countries like Yemen and the DRC, ongoing conflict and instability leads to protracted and more deadly pandemics, as violence can increase transmission rates and hinder an effective response from healthcare workers.

## IS THE UNITED STATES PREPARED?

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said that the U.S. is “sparing no effort to protect our people” and help China contain the outbreak, and recently announced that the U.S. will commit up to \$100 million to combat the virus. Vice President Mike Pence, who is leading the White House Coronavirus Taskforce, has also stressed the importance of a “whole-of-government-approach” to tackling the pandemic.

- Congress passed and President Trump signed an emergency supplemental funding bill, to provide \$8.3 billion in response to the pandemic – including \$1.25 billion for key State and USAID global response.
- The State Department has sought to share best practices with countries at risk in the Asia-Pacific region, engaging with multilateral and international partners, and encouraging China to accept the aid of U.S. experts.
- The CDC has focused on preventing a rapid escalation and has deployed teams across the country to manage contact-tracing. They are also studying the virus' genome to improve detection.
- Unlike the 2014 Ebola Outbreak where the U.S. had a strong ground presence in West Africa, USAID has no programs in China, but sustained investments across other developing countries will be critical as new outbreaks emerge, especially in countries with limited capacity to respond.

## LEGACY OF U.S. INVESTMENTS IN GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

American leadership in global health security is critical in preventing and controlling pandemics like the Coronavirus, Ebola, and Zika. U.S. investments in health systems around the world – including infrastructure like hospitals and roads, skills training for healthcare workers, and public education campaigns – can help countries contain pandemics at their source. While the costs of pandemics are high, the success of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which helped curb the AIDS epidemic and has saved 18 million lives since 2003, demonstrates that progress is possible. Importantly, investments in global health have far reaching impacts – PEPFAR's investments in strengthening overall health systems also helped countries prevent and respond to the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

The Trump Administration's Global Health Security Strategy calls for the U.S. to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases at home and abroad, in close cooperation with international partners.

**Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA):** The GHSA was launched in 2014 as an international partnership of 65 nations, international organizations and NGOs. Through setting targets and facilitating cross-country collaboration, the agenda works to improve nations' capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases around the world, bolstering international health security.

- America's support for the GHSA helped mitigate disease outbreaks in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Burkina Faso in 2017 thanks to improved equipment, training, and facilities. The U.S. has also enhanced disease monitoring systems in 13 countries, allowing for the rapid detection of diseases and quicker response.
- The U.S. has committed an initial \$1 billion to reach GHSA targets in 31 countries, making an additional \$150 million investment in 2018 to help advance the agenda through 2024.
- Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar celebrated the GHSA for driving "significant progress" in strengthening health security around the globe.

**CDC's Division of Global Health Protection:** The Division of Global Health Protection works with partner countries to help build core public health capacities that are needed to identify and contain outbreaks before they reach the United States.

- CDC has responded to over 2,200 outbreaks and other global health emergencies since 2007, with 500 emergency mobilizations since 2015 alone.
- CDC has trained 12,000 people in field disease detection since 1980.

**U.S. Agency for International Development:** USAID Administrator Mark Green called the Global Health Security Strategy a critical piece of building resilience against diseases like Ebola that "jeopardize the health, security, and prosperity of all countries, including the United States." USAID's global health and development programs make it less likely for diseases like Ebola to spread rapidly – and make it easier to respond if they do.

- In 2014, the Ebola outbreak was projected to spread to as many as 550,000 people and cost more than \$32 billion. This worst-case scenario was avoided due to America's swift whole-of-government response, as USAID, the State Department, and the CDC provided immediate assistance and helped stabilize communities. However, USAID has faced unique challenges in tackling the ongoing Ebola epidemic in the DRC – which is now the second most deadly in history – as over 100 armed groups are active at the outbreak's epicenter, and healthcare workers have been unable to reach and treat those in need.
- Through its PREDICT program, USAID invested \$207 million in training and helping developing countries detect and monitor animal viruses that have the potential of spreading to humans, between 2009 and 2019. The program collected over 140,000 biological samples from animals and discovered more than 1,000 new viruses between 2009 and 2019. In 2019, the program was not renewed for an additional five-year funding cycle.