



# The transformative power of global health research

## *Leadership in innovation saves lives and provides economic benefits to the US*

America's ingenuity and innovative entrepreneurial spirit have played a major role in internationally hailed global health successes. US investments in global health research contributed to such breakthroughs as the eradication of smallpox, a 74 percent drop in measles deaths worldwide, and the creation and delivery of more than 172 million bed nets that are reducing malaria incidence. And US funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment research has a dramatic impact on the global epidemic, cutting mortality rates worldwide and HIV incidence in some populations.

US leadership in global health research is also a priority for American citizens. Recent polling suggests that up to 84 percent of Americans think it is important for the US to improve health globally through research and development. When US policymakers are asked to prioritize our nation's investments, it is important to consider the concerns named by citizens as well as the areas in which Americans excel. There can be no greater example than our investment in global health research, which brings together American creativity and imagination; demonstrates the American character and our country's dedication to improving lives worldwide; contributes to a safer world and a more stable global economy; and yields economic benefits for the nation.

### Existing tools are not enough

Although existing tools to combat global diseases have made tremendous progress, more are needed to stop the spread of life-threatening illnesses. We need new vaccines, tests, drugs, and other health tools to prevent, diagnose, and treat disease to address existing and emerging global health threats.

For example, the number of drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) cases is rising worldwide. The current vaccine in use is almost 100 years old, and TB drugs are 50 years old. Although safe and effective treatments exist for seven of the most common neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), the remaining NTDs do not have adequate treatments. And although deaths of children under five from diarrheal disease have declined by nearly half since the 1980s, 31,000 child deaths every week from diarrhea is still too many.

### The benefits of global health research

Despite progress made against global health diseases, the world needs new tools to address current and emerging challenges. Supporting global health research is not only in America's character, it is also the right investment to make for economic rewards:

- Global health research helps create American jobs and spurs economic growth. In California, the global health sector supports 350,000 high-quality jobs and \$19.7 billion in wages and salaries.<sup>1</sup>
- Investing in global health research produces cost-savings and efficiencies that are poised to save significant money well into the future. In the US alone, polio vaccination over the past 50 years resulted in savings of \$180 billion, funds that would have otherwise been spent to treat those suffering from polio.
- Global health research harnesses a national treasure—American scientists at work—while also developing the next generation of health tools that will save lives worldwide.

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Photo: Siri Wood

Global health research can help save lives worldwide while also creating US jobs and spurring economic activity.

### Protecting national security

US efforts in global health research are key to the mission of American foreign policy to increase national security, build stronger economies, strengthen US relations around the world, and reduce infectious disease. And these efforts yield crucial returns to American businesses and citizens.

For example, global health diseases and a range of other challenges take root in impoverished and hopeless conditions. Investing in international development and global health research are effective ways to bring stability and security to these parts of the world at a fraction of the cost of military action.

Infectious diseases are also emerging at unprecedented rates, while at the same time the rapid international spread of disease has vastly increased. Recent outbreaks in US states of diseases like Chagas and dengue fever illustrate that infectious disease knows no boundaries. Developing new tools to address these and other conditions protects the lives of people abroad, as well as Americans.

### A wise American investment

Global health research not only improves people's lives, it is also a smart economic investment for the United States that drives job creation, spurs business activity, and benefits academic institutions. For instance, in Washington State, \$4.1 billion in business activity is generated annually from global health activities, and more than 43,000 jobs have been created or supported by global health projects.<sup>2</sup> The economic impact from global health in North Carolina is roughly \$2 billion, supporting more than 7,000 jobs and \$508 million in salaries and wages.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, history has shown that investing in global health research produces cost savings and efficiencies. For instance, for every dollar spent on measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, more than \$21 is saved in direct medical costs.

US leadership in research has resulted in lifesaving breakthroughs for global health diseases. US policymakers should continue to protect our nation's strong history in global health research—spending that creates jobs, spurs economic growth, and improves the lives of Americans and people around the world.

<sup>1</sup> University of California Global Health Institute. *The Importance of the Global Health Sector in California: An Evaluation of the Economic Impact*. San Francisco, CA; 2009. Available at:

<http://www.ucghi.universityofcalifornia.edu/docs/eir-final.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Beyers B, Devine J, Weatherford S, Hagopian A. *Economic Impact Assessment of Global Health on Washington State's Economy*. Seattle WA: University of Washington; 2007 Available at:

[http://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/pdf/wastateglobal\\_economic\\_impact.pdf](http://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/pdf/wastateglobal_economic_impact.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Garcia-Mosqueira A, Tang S, Page K, Becker C. *Why Global Health Matters to North Carolina: The Economic Impact of the Global Health Sector on North Carolina's Economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University; 2010. Available at: [http://globalhealth.duke.edu/policy-docs/NCEcon\\_Report\\_Final\\_March\\_2010.pdf](http://globalhealth.duke.edu/policy-docs/NCEcon_Report_Final_March_2010.pdf).

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### About the Global Health Technologies Coalition

The Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC) is a group of more than 30 nonprofit organizations working to increase awareness of the urgent need for tools that save lives in the developing world. These tools include new vaccines, drugs, microbicides, diagnostic tests, and other devices. The coalition advocates for increased and effective use of public resources, incentives to encourage private investment, and improved regulatory systems. Learn more at [www.ghcoalition.org](http://www.ghcoalition.org).