

For journalists, a basic understanding of global health is now required to cover a wide range of topics -- not just stories about disease outbreaks or medical advances, but also Congressional policy debates, foreign policy and international relations, economics, food issues, military conflicts, and natural disasters. This guide provides up-to-date background information for reporters covering those issues. A specific [reporting manual on HIV/AIDS](#) is also available.

Though it has long been a major element of foreign aid and development assistance, global health has risen significantly in recent years on the U.S. policy agenda. That's in part due to the growing burden of diseases in lower-income countries, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, among others. Also, potential infectious disease outbreaks -- from the H5N1 virus ("avian flu") scare in 2005/2006 to the H1N1 pandemic ("swine flu") in 2009 -- have focused attention on how such diseases can spread rapidly in an increasingly globalized world, and on the infrastructure needed to monitor and address them.

In response, [donor nation funding](#) to address health issues in lower- and middle- income countries has grown substantially, with total development assistance for health worldwide growing from \$7.2 billion in 2001 to \$22.1 billion in 2007. The creation of the multilateral Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) in 2002 provided a major impetus for increased funding, as well as a structure to organize health initiatives.

The U.S. -- in addition to being a major funder of the Global Fund -- is the largest donor in the world for global health, driven in large part by the creation of the [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief](#) (PEPFAR) in 2003, with an authorization of \$15 billion over five years. The legislation was reauthorized in 2008 at \$48 billion for an additional five years.

In his fiscal year 2010 budget request to Congress, President Obama proposed a six-year, \$63 billion [Global Health Initiative](#) (GHI), which would direct \$51 billion to prevent and treat HIV, TB, and malaria, as well as \$12 billion towards other global health problems, including maternal (e.g., pre- and post-natal care) and child health.

The GHI, which represents an amalgam of existing programs, will likely increasingly be the focus of global health policy discussion in the U.S. Much of that attention will be on financing -- How much will U.S. global health aid grow? How much of any new funding will go towards different programs and diseases? However, there are a wide range of other issues raised by the GHI, including: increasing coordination across a multitude of aid programs, strengthening the health systems of lower-income countries, emphasizing the health of women and girls, and integrating foreign aid with other elements of foreign policy.