



GLOBAL HEALTH SERIES

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Global Health Security

INTRODUCTION

*Over the past two decades, policymakers and philanthropists have increasingly recognized that wise public health investments lead to significant social and economic returns. In 2018, for instance, the international community spent \$38.9 billion on global health assistance, an increase from previous years. These investments have helped improve access to quality health care for people living in low- to middle-income countries. **The ELCA Advocacy office is sharing a four-part Global Health Series to explore and learn about the global health sector and our church's engagement in this area.***

The ELCA engages in global health by supporting clinics, hospitals and the training of health care professionals and community health workers. Our church encourages us, as Lutherans, to support ministries and other efforts that promote disease prevention and treatment globally. "When we understand health in this larger context, we realize that we cannot be healthy by ourselves. We help each other attain good health through our ways of living together and through supporting those who provide all forms of health care services and healing. Health care, therefore, must be a shared endeavor" (ELCA social statement [Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor](#)).

Unfortunately, the global health system is full of inequities; currently, governments per year in high-income countries spend over [\\$5,180 per person](#) on health care, compared to just [\\$44 per person](#) in low-income countries. The disparity in health care investments often means that people living in poverty lack adequate health care.

GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) define "global health security" as a state in which public health systems are resilient enough to prevent, detect and respond to acute infectious diseases. The United States and many other countries have made significant investments in global public health programs over the past 20 years. These investments have enabled the international community to address a range of global health challenges in low- and middle-income countries. From expanded vaccine access to treatments for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, such efforts have improved quality of life for many people. However, much of the global community remains vulnerable to infectious disease outbreaks.

Epidemiologists and public health experts have been raising alarms about infectious-disease events

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for many years now, and the ongoing coronavirus outbreak is an unfortunate case in point. In today's interconnected world, an infectious disease can be transmitted from a remote area to any major city in [36 hours](#), which illustrates how vulnerable we all are.

There are ongoing efforts to improve global response to disease outbreaks. In the past few years, we have seen governments and public health institutions work collaboratively to lay the foundation for strengthening countries' capacity to prevent, detect and respond to existing and emerging infectious diseases. We saw this collaboration during the Ebola outbreak in Africa and the Zika outbreaks in South and North America. While the responses weren't perfect and many people died, country partnerships allowed these diseases to be brought under control.

Additional efforts include the [Global Health Security Agenda](#) (GHSA), a multilateral initiative launched in 2014 to help countries build capacity for managing infectious disease threats and elevate health security as a global priority. The United States is among the 67 countries committed to the work of this initiative through 2024, and the CDC plays an important part. In addition to its leading role in implementing the GHSA, the CDC [monitors global public-health threats](#), provides training and mobilizes its staff to support [international responses to disease outbreaks](#).

Investments in health systems
could prevent

**97 million premature
deaths by 2030**



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ELCA ADVOCACY

ELCA advocacy on global health aims to ensure that the U.S. government will continue to support global health programs with both funding and expertise. As we have seen during the current coronavirus outbreaks, the United States must work with other governments and multilateral institutions to enhance the global capacity to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks before they become pandemics. This work must include the strengthening of health systems in low- and middle-income countries.

You can take action to support this work. Find Action Alerts to direct your voice at impactful moments from ELCA.org/advocacy/actioncenter. Learn more about ELCA Advocacy priorities at ELCA.org/resoures/advocacy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Financing Global Health](#) (The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, April 25, 2019)
- [Report: Preparedness for a High-Impact Respiratory Pathogen Pandemic](#) (Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, September 2019)

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