

ONE HEALTH: A COMMON FACET IN USAID STRATEGY AND POLICY

BACKGROUND

The world today is unprecedented in [its complexity](#). To solve global development challenges and better mitigate against and respond to humanitarian disasters, we must break down historical silos and collaborate across sectors. [One Health](#) is a pragmatic approach that **supports collaboration across sectors** for long-term, holistic solutions.

WHAT IS ONE HEALTH?

[One Health](#) is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. If you work in development and humanitarian assistance, you may already be applying a One Health approach without calling it as such.

Integration and cross-sectoral collaboration have long been promoted at USAID. What is new is that One Health is now being formally and internationally acknowledged as a necessary approach to tackling complex problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss, emerging health threats, food safety, and food and water security, which require strategic, transdisciplinary solutions. USAID teams who apply a One Health approach synergize resources, examine options through a multidisciplinary lens to minimize potential conflicts, and design innovative and comprehensive solutions that benefit multiple sectors.

ONE HEALTH IN RELEVANT STRATEGIES FOR USAID

Promoting more holistic and integrated development and humanitarian assistance increases efficiency and long-term, sustainable outcomes. One way USAID does this is by incorporating a collaborative One Health approach in its major strategies to address complex challenges.

The United States [National Biodefense Strategy and Implementation Plan](#) emphasizes the importance of engagement across sectors to protect against global health security threats. USAID's [contributions to the strategy](#) specifically promote “a One Health approach that recognizes the interconnections among people, animals (domestic and wildlife), plants, and the environment as necessary to counter biological threats effectively and efficiently.” USAID's [Global Health Security \(GHS\) Program](#) works with partner

countries – as well as global, regional, and local public and private sector organizations – to help strengthen systems needed to prevent and mitigate the increasing occurrence and severity of emerging infectious disease threats. USAID’s GHS Program contributes to the National Biodefense Strategy commitment to assist at least 50 countries to achieve "demonstrated capacities" in five GHS technical areas by 2025. USAID’s GHS Program recognizes the connection between the health of the environment, animals and people, and implements a One Health approach through a variety of activities, including understanding and reducing the risks of zoonotic diseases that move between animals and humans; addressing increasing rates of drug-resistant pathogens; bolstering national surveillance systems, laboratory diagnostic capacity; training the next generation of health workers in applying a One Health approach; and informing the public and engaging communities about disease prevention and control. USAID has already provided billions of dollars to fight diseases such as [Ebola Virus Disease](#) and [COVID-19](#). The Agency will continue to support efforts to prevent and mitigate epidemics, pandemics, and emerging infectious disease threats, many of which are driven by climate change, land use change, and deforestation.

The [USAID Climate Strategy](#) (2022-2030) encourages cross-sectoral collaboration through its whole-of-Agency approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen resilience to climate impacts, and conserve ecosystems, benefitting the health of people and the planet. The strategy states that “USAID is committed to addressing the interconnections among human, animal, and environmental health using a multisectoral One Health approach.” [During its launch on Earth Day 2022](#), the USAID Administrator emphasized the need for cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve climate targets: “The goal of preventing six billion tons of global greenhouse gas emissions doesn’t belong to one bureau or initiative—we all have a role to play.” [By working across sectors](#), USAID supports the conservation and restoration of forests, mangroves, pasture, rangelands and other lands that absorb carbon and improves the health of people and animals. USAID also contributes to climate resilience in sectors such as water, food security, and health, and assists countries in an equitable and just transition to clean energy.

The U.S. Government’s [Global Food Security Strategy](#) (2022-2026) promotes One Health principles through multi-sectoral collaborative partnerships and the adoption of climate-smart and sustainable agribusiness models that value and account for natural resources, health and nutrition outcomes, and social inclusion. The strategy explicitly states that USAID “will consider the interactions and potential cross-sectoral impacts across human, animal, and ecosystem health, which reduces exposure and controls emerging threats such as pests and disease.” The strategy supports the expansion of integrated approaches, such as One Health, through activities including climate-smart and regenerative agriculture and grazing, improved soil and water management, reducing food loss and waste, and pests and disease mitigation. Activities should promote nutrient-dense products while adopting proper food safety practices to minimize the risk of zoonotic disease spread. Through the strategy, USAID encourages

business models that value and account for natural resources, health and nutrition outcomes, and social inclusion, which enhance sustainable agriculture and community resilience. [In response to COVID-19](#), which was the single largest shock to global food security in the last 50 years, USAID is strengthening supply chains to fulfill humanitarian needs, supporting safe production practices that increase biosecurity, and improving the resilience of vulnerable communities across the world.

OTHER STRATEGIES AND POLICIES ALIGNING WITH ONE HEALTH

Other pertinent strategies and policies for USAID capture the essence of One Health through their collaborative and integrative nature even though they do not all name One Health specifically:

- The [Global Water Strategy](#) (2022-2027) supports a vision of building health, prosperity, stability, and resilience through sustainable and equitable water and sanitation access and water resource management. The strategy reinforces One Health through its interconnected and mutually reinforcing objectives that include strengthening water governance structures, increasing access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services, improving management of water resources and related ecosystems, and reducing conflict related to water.
- The [USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy](#) (2014-2025) fosters coordinated efforts from multiple sectors (agriculture, health, water, education, environment, economic growth, livelihoods, and social protection) across multiple platforms (public, private, and civil society) to improve and ensure effective nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. It is aligned with the 2025 World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets and reaffirms both USAID's commitment to global nutrition, and our role as a major international partner in the fight against malnutrition.
- The [USAID Resilience Policy Revision](#) (2022) currently states that, "a One Health approach is fundamentally a risk-mitigation strategy." Although the policy is in revision and subject to change, it recognizes that taking measures to conserve natural resources and adopt climate-smart practices are essential steps to prevent uncontrolled development from degrading ecosystems. By protecting ecosystems through sustainable practices that also increase food security, public health, and livelihood opportunities, USAID can help communities to withstand shocks and stresses that improve their health and resiliency.
- The [USAID Biodiversity Policy](#) (2014) emphasizes integrated and collaborative programming by encouraging cross-sectoral engagement to improve understanding, collaboration and cohesion across bureaus and missions. It prioritizes the integration of biodiversity conservation into other development sectors, understanding that biodiversity and sustainable natural resource management are foundational to build healthier populations, increase resilience, and create lasting economic opportunities. The Biodiversity Policy is being updated in 2023, and will continue strong emphasis on cross-sectoral collaboration.

U.S. ONE HEALTH LEADERSHIP

For more information about how other U.S. government agencies are utilizing One Health, please follow the links below:

- [CDC's One Health Office](#)
- [USDA and One Health](#)
- [USGS One Health Approach](#)
- [FWS International Affairs and One Health](#)