

Hi, my name is Mighty Fine. I'm an expert with the American Public Health Association, and today we're going to talk about health in all policies.

Here in the U.S., mosquitoes are little more than a nuisance. But in parts of the world, they can cause widespread outbreaks of a life-threatening disease called malaria.

In the year 2000, malaria killed 17,000 people in Zambia, most of them children.

So to address this crisis, different sectors of the government came together. They cut taxes on malaria control products, worked to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and provided rapid diagnostic testing and widespread medication to treat infections.

But the government also coordinated with churches, mission hospitals, the nation's leading employers and nongovernmental organizations like the Zambia Scouts Association to tackle the problem.

These partnerships helped get supplies into Zambia, organized volunteers to deliver nets and medicine to people's homes and encouraged community members to take preventive steps against the disease.

And by 2008, malaria deaths in Zambia had dropped by 66%.

According to the Center for Global Development, this success was possible because the government partnered with all those other institutions.

This is part of what we call a health-in-all-policies approach — different public sectors combining their perspectives, and working together with the private sector to improve the health of all people.

A community's health is influenced by multiple aspects of life — like the widespread availability of parks, the rising costs of health care and even things like people's income, employment status and housing. These are what we call the social determinants of health, and they can have a greater impact than medical care on how long and how well people live.

Likewise, it's not just health care systems that can play a role in promoting public health. When they make health a priority, every government department has the potential to help keep communities healthy.

In practice, health in all policies means that every time decision-makers develop a policy or program, they consider the short-term and long-term impacts of their decisions on everyone's health.

Like in 2009, when the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development came together to create the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

They wanted to make sure that their community development efforts supported public health, with goals like more affordable housing and improved air quality.

None of these departments are public health organizations, but all of them play a role in building and maintaining healthy communities.

And when they get on the same page as far as prioritizing health in all policies, there's a better chance that health outcomes will improve.

Take public transportation. It might seem like it's strictly about city planning, but it actually addresses issues like deaths from car crashes and transit access for people with disabilities — which are important for communities and for public health.

And for the environment too. The U.S. Department of Transportation has found that when people have access to public transportation, they're less dependent on cars to get to school and work. That reduces motor vehicle emissions which can harm people's health, especially people with respiratory diseases.

So even seemingly unrelated policies — like those passed by the Department of Transportation — can impact people's health in short term and contribute to environmental factors that impact long-term health.

When governments factor public health into decision-making, they're taking a more proactive

approach than if they were simply addressing health impacts after a new policy has been implemented.

And prioritizing health-in-all decision-making can help governments get around budget constraints by spreading the work of public health among different sectors.

So overall health in all policies means making decisions that prioritize a community's health across all sectors — from transportation to housing to education and so much more. Public health is a complex thing, and it takes people working together to help ensure that everyone can live their healthiest lives.

Thanks for watching! This video is part of a series created by Complexly and the American Public Health Association to shed a little light on the important work that public health does. To learn more, visit apha.org.

Selected sources for more information

<http://millionssaved.cgdev.org/case-studies/zambias-national-malaria-control-program>
<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/isrn/2013/495037/>
https://www.globalhealthdelivery.org/files/ghd/files/ghd-024_malaria_control_in_zambia.pdf
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