



# SMITHSONIAN'S SHARED HEALTH PROGRAM: A NEW APPROACH TO GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

The Smithsonian is expanding its focus on environmental research to address pressing global health challenges that impact both animal and human wellbeing. The new “Shared Health” program builds on the One Health framework, which recognizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. Traditionally, One Health has concentrated on the spread of pathogens from animals to humans (zoonoses), but the Smithsonian’s approach goes further by examining how environmental damage—such as pollution, climate change, and habitat loss—disproportionately affects vulnerable communities and contributes to broader health challenges.

The Shared Health program leverages the Smithsonian’s vast expertise in ecology, conservation biology, and disease ecology, incorporating a wider range of disciplines, including social, cultural, and environmental sciences. This interdisciplinary approach highlights the importance of healthy ecosystems, not only for preventing zoonotic diseases but also for addressing non-communicable diseases, which are the leading cause of human death. The program emphasizes that good conservation practices are essential for maintaining human and wildlife health by focusing on the quality of terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments.

A cornerstone of the Shared Health program is its commitment to global partnerships. The Smithsonian’s National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NZCBI) will lead the program, drawing on its extensive experience in conservation projects worldwide, including in Kenya. In this country, the Smithsonian already partners with local and international organizations through its Global Health Program (GHP), which focuses on emerging infectious diseases and wildlife conservation. Specifically, an emerging initiative called Ecosystems, Finance, Health (EFH) proposes integrated financing for health and nature, by enabling the financial sector to invest in solutions that link ecosystems and food systems to the health of rural and urban populations. The Shared Health program will bring together previously unconnected projects, such as wildlife tracking, disease prevention, and ecosystem management, to create a more cohesive and impactful strategy.

Through this integrated effort, the Smithsonian aims to provide innovative solutions to today’s conservation and public health challenges. The Shared Health program will stabilize wildlife populations and preserve ecosystems but also address critical health issues affecting the most vulnerable human communities. By coordinating efforts across multiple environments and disciplines, the Smithsonian will increase its reach, attract new partners, and contribute to lasting global health improvements.



**Life on a Sustainable Planet (LSP) is a vital initiative from the Smithsonian designed to advance and inspire global engagement in environmental stewardship. This comprehensive program applies the Smithsonian’s expertise in science, outreach, and education to foster holistic approaches to preserving ecosystems, building resilience, and educating the world about sustainable climate solutions. Smithsonian scientists partner with communities and organizations around the world, conducting research and educational programs to shape the future. LSP programs save and protect biodiversity, champion sustainable practices, and offer innovative solutions to the challenges posed by our changing climate.**