South Korea Donor Profile

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Global health is one of South Korea’s five priority issues; it spends above DAC average share of ODA on the sector

South Korea’s total health ODA stood at US$255 million in 2016 (the latest year for which complete data is available), equivalent to 10% of total ODA. This is above the average share of ODA spent on health by other members of the OECD DAC (8%).

Global health has been a priority issue in South Korea’s long-term development policy since its inclusion in the Strategic Plan for International Development Cooperation for 2016 to 2020. In South Korea’s annual International Development Cooperation Action Plan for 2019, health is one of five top priorities for the year, with a focus on improving the environment for health and medicines by building capacities of hospitals and medical care.

Three of the four flagship development initiatives that were abolished in 2017 had a health focus. Although the initiatives themselves ended due to a presidential impeachment process and subsequent change in government, the health budget has been protected and the committed funding over the five-year period will be used to fund government programs with a similar focus. The initiatives included the ‘Better Life for Girls’ initiative supported projects on girls’ health and education (US$200 million; funding will now be mainly re-allocated to maternal and child health projects.) The ‘Science, Technology and Innovation for Better Life’ initiative aimed to promote science capacity, research and development, and entrepreneurship (US$200 million). The ‘Safe Life for all’ initiative focused on combatting infectious diseases (US$100 million). Lastly, the ‘Better Education for Africa’s Rise’ initiative aimed to foster industrial and technical manpower (another US$100 million). As South Korea increases its ODA budget in coming years, funding for health is expected to also increase.

Bilateral investments were US$209 million in 2017 (the latest year for which bilateral data is available), at a similar level to 2016 (US$217 million). Within bilateral health ODA, funding focused on medical services (29%), basic health infrastructure (18%), health policy and administrative services (10%), reproductive health care (10%), and basic health care (9%).

Bilateral funding is largely channeled through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the public Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH). KOICA’s mid-term health strategy for 2016 to 2020 highlights the importance of health as a human right and essential factor for socioeconomic development. According to the strategy, South Korea’s goal is to contribute to the achievement of universal health objectives by improving access to quality health and medical services and care for all.

South Korea is scaling up its focus on family planning and reproductive rights. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) opened a regional office in Seoul, South Korea, in February 2019. The office is intended to strengthen the organization’s engagement with South Korea on matters related to public health, sexual and reproductive health, and an ageing population. UNFPA and South Korea plan to cooperate in implementing South Korea’s ‘Action with Women and Peace’ initiative, launched last year. In addition, a South Korean diplomat is serving as the president of the executive board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, providing an opportunity for South Korea to play a bridging role between developed and developing countries and among different stakeholders.

South Korea channeled around 15%, or US$38 million, of its total health ODA multilaterally in 2016 (the latest year for which complete multilateral data is available). This is far below the OECD DAC average (56%). Assessed contributions to the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) accounted for 68% of this amount (International Development Association (IDA) 33%, WHO 29%, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) 5%). The remaining 32% went to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi; 11%), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund; 10%), regional development banks (8%), and UN organizations (3%).

South Korea has pledged US$15 million to Gavi for the period 2019 to 2021. At the Global Fund’s sixth replenishment, South Korea pledged US$25 million for 2020-2022. South Korea contributes to UNITAID, a global health research and development initiative focused on tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and hepatitis C. It has pledged US$15 million to UNITAID for the period 2019 to 2021, which represents a 15% increase in annual contributions compared to its 2013 to 2018 contribution. South Korea contributed US$2 million to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in 2018, but there is no disbursement planned for 2019. Funding for Gavi, the Global Fund, UNITAID, and the GPEI is raised through an air-ticket solidarity levy on international flights, which is pooled in
South Korea’s global health policy is largely determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Within MOFA, the Development Policy Division leads on developing global health policies. The Multilateral Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance Division manages relations with multilateral health initiatives such as the Global Fund and Gavi.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) and the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH) are also engaged in improving global health. Their global health programs include medical and health-care assistance programs, including the provision of medical devices, equipment, and disaster relief. MOHW is responsible for core and voluntary contributions to the WHO.

SOUTH KOREA'S ODA TO HEALTH

US$ millions

OECD CRS, and imputed multilateral contributions to the health sector. DAC secretariat estimations. In 2017 prices.
RECIPIENTS OF SOUTH KOREA’S HEALTH ODA, 2016
Total: US$255 million

- Bilateral: 85.1% (US$217m.)
- Other: 5.0% (US$14m.)
- WHO (assessed & CVCA): 4.3% (US$11m.)
- IDA: 5.1% (US$13m.)

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the health sector. DAC secretariat estimates. In 2017 prices.

SOUTH KOREA’S KEY GLOBAL HEALTH COMMITMENTS
US$ millions


Data from government and listed organizations
TOP 15 DAC DONORS TO HEALTH, 2016
Total health ODA; US$ millions; in 2017 prices; incl. bilateral and multilateral funding

United States: 10,448
United Kingdom: 2,359
Germany: 1,184
France: 671
Japan: 871
Canada: 799
Netherlands: 599
Norway: 568
Sweden: 530
Australia: 372
Italy: 271
Korea: 256
Belgium: 204
Switzerland: 197
Denmark: 161

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the health sector (DAC Secretariat estimates)

TOP 10 DAC DONORS TO HEALTH, 2016
Health ODA as % of total ODA

United States: 28.1
Canada: 19.2
Luxembourg: 15.8
United Kingdom: 13.3
Ireland: 13.2
Norway: 12.3
Netherlands: 11.1
Australia: 10.6
Korea: 10.4
Sweden: 10.3

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the health sector (DAC Secretariat estimates)