



## Workshop

**Community Protection as a core element of Health Emergency Preparedness  
and Response**

**Advancing Evidence-Based Operational Concepts and Practice**

**Co-organized by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and the WHO Health  
Emergencies Programme – Community Protection and Resilience Unit**

15 October 2025

Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany

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## Call for abstracts

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) Centre for International Health Protection (ZIG) in collaboration with the WHO Health Emergencies Programme – Community Protection and Resilience Unit invites submission of abstracts for oral presentations on the topic of *Community Protection as a core element of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response - Advancing Evidence-Based Operational Concepts and Practice*.

### Background

Community protection approaches to Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HEPR) span a wide range of strategies, including risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), community-based early detection and response and participatory research and the engagement of frontline actors like community health workers (CHWs) and health volunteers. These approaches are increasingly recognized as preconditions for effective and equitable Public Health (PH) interventions in health emergency preparedness and response. This understanding goes hand in hand with the appreciation of communities as starting and end point of health emergencies and the value of e.g., community trust, local knowledge, and participation. Moreover, there has been a notable shift in focus towards community protection and national and international health equity.

Community protection includes community-centred approaches to health emergencies. This means to include those that are community-led, such as those led by community-based groups and organizations, and those that are professionally led, such as those delivered by national health authorities across jurisdictional levels. Public health authorities can take important action to enable and empower the work of these community-based or intermediary initiatives during emergency events by actively enabling their involvement and participation.

Although community-centered approaches to Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HEPR) emphasize placing “communities” at the heart of their strategies in theory, in practice, communities are often excluded — not consulted, not involved, and largely absent from the processes designed to serve them. This disconnect highlights the critical need to understand how these approaches are actually implemented across different settings and contexts. Specifically, it is essential to examine the policies and practices that guide community engagement in detecting and responding to health crises. This includes evaluating the effectiveness and impact of initiatives that prioritize listening to communities, addressing their concerns, and ensuring their participation in decision-making, emergency planning, and implementation. We therefore invite abstracts especially from persons who closely work with communities.



## **Workshop Objectives**

This workshop aims to bring together researchers and practitioners in the field to discuss concepts in community-centered HEPR, and to critically reflect on their implementation across diverse settings and the ways in which ways theory is translated into context-sensitive practice. As such, this event aims to provide a platform for interdisciplinary exchange and to identify research gaps and priorities for future work.

- To analyze the conceptual and operational dimensions of community protection in health emergency preparedness
- To examine relationships and accountability between authorities and communities, including in fragile, conflict-affected, and humanitarian contexts
- To evaluate how the community health workforce contributes to early detection, response, and community trust
- To strengthen an evidence-informed and practice-oriented understanding of community protection in HEPR

## **Abstract Submission**

We are inviting contributions from public health researchers and practitioners on the current scholarly debate and practice of community-centered approaches in HEPR in various contexts. We particularly welcome multidisciplinary contributions and contributions that examine the meanings, boundaries, and implications of employing these concepts in real-world setting.

Topics for contributions include:

### **Governance, Accountability, and Community Participation**

- Community leadership and participation in preparedness planning and implementation
- Building trust and ensuring accountability in multi-level governance structures
- Relationships between national and international authorities and communities

### **Community Protection in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings**

- Roles of community health workers and other members of the community workforces, volunteers, and civil society under conditions of displacement, fragility, or insecurity
- Strategies to support safety, continuity, and social support functions through intersectoral approaches

### **Operationalizing Community-Based Detection and Response**

- Community-based early detection, response, and service delivery
- Methodologies to evaluate community protection outcomes and effectiveness of the community health workforce

**Format**

Please send your max. 300-word abstract no later than 15 July 2025.

For abstract submission or any inquiries please contact: ZIG2@rki.de.

**Evaluation procedure**

All submitted abstracts will be reviewed by the Workshop Committee. Selection of abstracts will be based on the following criteria:

- Abstract quality
- Relevance to the workshop theme
- Originality and conceptual clarity
- Applicability and practical significance

The corresponding author will be notified of the outcome of the review by August 1, 2025. It is expected that presenters will attend in person. Presenting authors whose abstracts have been accepted will receive further instructions for presenting their abstracts.

**Publication**

RKI and WHO intend to publish a synthesis of the conference presentations in form of a discussion paper in a high impact global health journal (e.g., TLGH). Declaration of agreement to the publication's terms and conditions will be requested at the time of acceptance of your abstract.

**Financial Support**

RKI will support transport, accommodation and visa costs for up to 10 investigators from Low- and Middle-Income Countries who have been accepted to present an abstract.