

Prioritizing Actions for Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness

Science-based Approaches for Prioritizing Capabilities for Preventing, Detecting, and Responding to Infectious Disease Epidemics and Pandemics at the Country Level

FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this symposium is to convene experts and interested groups in global health planning, including those in government, academia, nonprofit, and the private sector from both health- and non-health sectors, to discuss strengthening capacity for evidence-based prioritization of global health capabilities. Objectives of this meeting are the following:

- Discuss the needs and gaps for assessing and enhancing country capacity that are used to national action planning.
- Gain insight into how countries and organizations currently prioritize actions and investments for epidemic prevention, detection, and response.
- Assess evidence for effective prioritization approaches to building disease surveillance and risk communication capabilities.
- Identify governance structures that can support robust and reliable systems for global health investments.

9:00am–9:10am EST

Goals of this Session and Brief Summary of the Symposium's Overarching Objectives

Lisa Hilmi, CORE Group
Chair, Symposium Planning Committee

9:10am–9:30am EST

Actions for Evidence-based Prioritization of Global Health Security Capabilities

The goal of this discussion is to initiate an interactive discussion with all participants to identify key actions for evidence-based prioritization of global health security capabilities. Discussants will share 2-3 primary actions that they identified during the first two sessions to initiate the discussion.

Moderators

Julie Pavlin, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine
Kavita Berger, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

Discussants

Larry Brilliant, Pandefense Advisory
Richard Garfield, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Julie Wahl, Resolve to Save Lives
Jessica Petrillo, US Agency for International Development
Erwin Calgua, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

9:30am–9:55am EST

Interactive Exercise: Evaluating Actions for Evidence-based Prioritization of Global Health Security Capabilities

The goal of this exercise is to evaluate and down-select actions that could have the most impact for future preparedness, be feasible or practical to achieve, address an urgent need, and inform decision-making for prioritizing preparedness investments. Specific questions that will be explored in this discussion are:

- Which actions could have the biggest impact to preparedness planning?
- How practical or likely are these actions to be implemented?
- What is the urgency of these actions?
- Will the actions enhance decision-making about what areas or measures to invest in?

Facilitator

Kavita Berger, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

9:55am–10:20am EST

Interactive Exercise: Identifying Actors, Challenges, and Solutions for Achieving the Selected Actions

The goal of this exercise is to identify the key actors, enablers, challenges, and solutions for achieving the actions that may have the greatest impacts to preparedness planning, are feasible to implement, need to be addressed urgently, and inform decision-making. Participants will explore the following questions for each selected action:

- How can the actions be carried out (or be realized)?
- What things (activities, decisions, other) need to happen to allow them to be carried out?
- What are the challenges or hurdles preventing these actions from being carried out and what solutions may exist for overcoming these challenges?
- What actors are best positioned or equipped to carry out the actions?

Facilitator

Julie Pavlin, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

10:20am–10:30pm EST

Conclusions and Next Steps

Lisa Hilmi, CORE Group
Chair, Symposium Planning Committee

END OF SYMPOSIUM

ACTIONS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRIORITIZATION OF EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS CAPABILITIES

* These actions will be the focus of discussion.

Global Health Security Capacity and Functionality Assessment

- Need to ensure that capacity and functionality assessment are accessible and minimally burdensome, generate informative data, and can influence actions at the local, subnational, and national levels.
 - Need to ensure tools are available and accessible to all people, include language and communication experts, and are understandable to users.
 - Need to understand the context (e.g., ICT infrastructure, trust, and available resource allocations) for integration of the tool across levels.
 - Improve tools by focusing on specific activities such as partnerships and collaboration, long-term investment, data collection capacity, use of language, and policy and government frameworks.
- Need to include many sectors and diverse actors in the assessments and assessment tools to assess any given capacity effectively and as a system (rather than as a single capacity).
- Need to reduce the burden of assessments and enhance the value of local assessment efforts by:
 - Enhancing the capacity and systems (through staffing, expertise, data systems, political support, and other similar capacities) for assessment at the local level.
 - Evaluating effectiveness of the assessment tools at the local level.
 - Improving integration of local data into local, subnational, and national assessment and decision-making.
 - Using strategies like independent peer review processes and locally-relevant criteria to assess country capacity in systematically collecting data and sharing across regional, domestic, and international levels.
 - Collecting existing capabilities that are available through academic, government, and healthcare systems.
- Need to compile real world examples of successful implementation of actions when developing plans for addressing identified areas for improvement and strengthening overall capacity.
- Design and use assessments that do not compare capability levels across countries.

Interoperability and Information-Sharing

- Need to improve interoperability, interconnectedness and integration of assessment tools and data between the facility to national levels.
- Integrate and balance information sharing platforms, resources and other mechanisms of cooperation across sectors and multi-levels of governance to build equity and surveillance.

Data

- Need to access quality, actionable data in a timely manner to help assess capacity and functionality gaps, and analyze the data to inform decision-making and develop evidence-based policies.
- Need to develop data standards for assessments.
- Need to look at the complexity of the data and recognize the interdependence of capabilities to reframe preparedness and investment.
- Measure capabilities in a non-linear, and more intuitive manner, looking across sectors
- Need to access causal relationships among actions.
- Need to define informative and available data to reduce the burden of data collection by local actors
- Establish agreements to assist in data sharing, availability and use.

Preparedness Planning

- Need to include noninfectious diseases in discussions and their impact on populations and synergism with outbreaks.
- Align country and regional plans.

Frameworks

- Develop a maturity framework to inform ad hoc responses to epidemics.
- Develop a framework for translating capability gaps into tangible actions and within different cultural contexts, and method for assessing progress toward implementing those actions.
- Promote alternative structures to facilitate plans for countries that are missing governance structures that supported preparedness activities.

Policy

- Use implementation research/case scenarios to give government advice.
- Break broader strategy plans into smaller more manageable activities based on current capacity to decrease bottlenecks.
- Establish action monitoring within a rapid policy change that happens during an epidemiological emergency.
- Need to conduct policy impact evaluations to understand effectiveness of policy and financial investments.

OTHER CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS CAPABILITIES

* These actions are provided for reference. They will not be the focus of discussion.

Country Commitment and Policy

- Need for country ownership.
- Including local needs/capabilities in national and regional level response decisions – there has to be ownership and coordination across all levels and sectors.
- Build political commitment for building capabilities.
- Support governance on the ground at regional and country levels through capacity strengthening with technology and coordination.
- Promote alternative structures to facilitate plans for countries that are missing governance structures that supported preparedness activities.
- Increase technical sensibilities to include regional and cultural differences for wider health interventions within communities

Accountability

- Need to monitor and be open about status – use to amplify health safety across the country, region, etc. Publicize monitoring systems to increase cooperation.
- Promote stakeholder accountability for strategy plans through tracking tools and other resources.
- Develop a certification process and practicing process for data analysis, communication and relationship infrastructure for building specific capabilities.

Equity

- Link institutions and capacities to benefits from communities.
- Develop preparedness investments and collaborations that embed equitable access initially and throughout implementation.

Funding and Financing

- Ensure complementarity of and multiplex funding, including working with philanthropies to buy down risk for the government.
- Focus investment on institutional capacity-building domestically and internationally.
- Sustainable funding for financing the health sector – bring in private-public partnerships. Get country level engagement and ownership to support funding streams.
- Work with public and private sponsors and implementers to build capabilities.
- Refinance and strengthen of domestic pandemic preparedness, prevention, and response.
- Evaluate public health and pandemics budgets in LMICs that might have debt.
- Secure funding to facilitate health communications and build bridges with health journalists.

General Preparedness and Response Capability-Building

- Leverage existing structures, partnerships, and structures.
- Increase awareness of what's happening at the community level by building relationships and designing education around cultural practices to spread information.
- Take a systems-based approach to assessment and capacity building (bidirectional incentives).
- Test capabilities in an outbreak setting.
- Need for a system to continually evaluate and monitor efforts.
- Creation of resilient and sustainable health systems – need to strengthen leadership and support social protections.
- Focus on building capabilities at the community level rather than national level only.
- Close gaps in formal and structural working supervisory performance capacity to increase multisector approaches and coordination.
- Build integrated regional capacity to prepare for epidemics.
- Develop plans for scaling up core infrastructure to enhance response to epidemics.
- Organize the infrastructure (epidemiological surveillance teams, laboratory services and communication teams) to prepare for the next pandemic.
- Need to consider climate and environmental health when strengthening preparedness capabilities.

Risk Communication and Public Engagement

- Learn from the effective communications activities from previous public health actions to arm trusted messengers
- Reduce barriers to understanding of key information by translating them into straightforward content so trusted messengers can digest and communicate it forward.
- Establish standards that inform the evidence and data, communication, and decision-making in an emergency.
- Engage the public in an ongoing manner and provide a mechanism for direct and indirect avenues for communication.
- Communicate frequently – on schedule – using multiple media.
- Invest in this prior to an outbreak so systems are in place; do formative evaluations – testing of messages – as you go. Prepare materials on concepts that are hard to communicate before you have to communicate about them.
- Need people-centered, community-led engagement and partnerships.
- Need to overcome misinformation (and fake news), including those spread through social media (may need to consider new regulations).
- Increase number of translators who understand cultural complexities to build community trust.
- Incorporate research results from communications experts into reviewing and delivering communication materials around uncertainties.
- Collect success stories of communication within countries with a decentralized health system.

Vaccines

- Coordinate learning from organizations and countries with experience in quickly mobilizing delivery and procurement vaccine systems.
- Invest in local manufacturing opportunities to support vaccine dissemination and response time
- Address vaccine hesitancy.
- Make global supply chains for vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics to be more resilient to shortages.

Surveillance

- Invest in primary care and health surveillance by training community workers, especially those in remote settings, to increase future pandemic resilience.
- Increase data surveillance, use and sharing by implementing plans earlier and combining surveillance across social and environmental factors.

Partnerships

- Work with academia and other relevant organizations on implementation research including topics like government preparedness to strengthen guidance.
- Work with communities as partners and uphold commitments to them – actively identify diverse communities and marginalized populations.

Response

- Include mental health in preparedness planning.
- Create a team that responds to global health emergencies that could be pandemics that pose a health risk, but also to climate change, natural disasters, conflicts and displacement crisis.

Education and Training

- Provide opportunities for students and employees to gain experience in public and international health and maintain knowledge and skills.