



# CONCEPT PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

*Deliberations of the Global Health Security Alliance  
Workshop at  
Hamburg, Bundeswehr Command & Staff College*

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Global Health Security Alliance (GloHSA)  
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## Global Health Security Alliance

The Global Health Security Alliance is an independent network of international experts from policy, academics, security and private sectors, driven by the shared understanding that health and security issues have increasing and interrelated global impacts which require a transnational and multi-sectoral approach for mitigation. The GloHSA vision is for an effective, universal interconnection of diverse stakeholders dedicated to solving global health security challenges, particularly focused on protecting and strengthening health systems as a core function of society.

Events like the 2014 Ebola outbreak and Cholera epidemics in Yemen and Haiti, have highlighted how crises that outstrip health system capacities can fuel instability as well as prompt security sector interventions. Likewise, insecurity from armed conflict, disasters, and mass migration can destroy health systems and reverse global health achievements.

The recognition of this interplay between security and health has given rise to the concept of “global health security” (GHS). To date, efforts in this arena have largely focused on promoting states’ capabilities to detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks.

Progress in this regard notwithstanding, threats to global health security have escalated over the past five years. Namely, the destruction of health systems from armed conflict including in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, climate change-derived health impacts, and the rise of antimicrobial resistant pathogens all threaten future health security crises with global repercussions.

Over the last year, discussions regarding GHS threats have gained prominence in forums from the Munich Security Conference to the 2017 G7 and G20 meetings. The urgency of these threats, as well as the recognition that addressing them may require joint efforts among security, development and health actors, provide an opportunity to consider key issues and challenges with respect to the future direction of this enterprise.

## Aims

In October 2017, the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College facilitated a workshop on the future of global health security, convening experts in security policy, global health, military medicine and foreign affairs. Workshop participants considered three core questions:

1. What should the next generation of global health security efforts emphasize?
2. What should the role of non-health sectors, particularly the security sector be in promoting global health security?
3. How should goals be defined and a Global Health Security enterprise, with its plurality of stakeholders and actors be governed?

This Concept paper outlines these deliberations, and reflects feedback received during private consultations with experts as well as in public forums including the Berlin World Health Summit 2017 and a Hertie School of Governance panel discussion. A more detailed white paper elaborating on the ideas presented here is forthcoming.

## Definition

Initial workshop discussions focused on generating a definition of global health security that distinguishes it from related concepts like global health and health

system strengthening by explicitly connecting it with notions of security. The definition generated by workshop participants is as follows:

*“Global Health Security is the collective ability to mitigate health threats that have the potential to destabilize societies, states and regions. The goal of Global Health Security is to establish resilient health systems in order to promote peace and security for all.”*

Features of this definition that appealed to participants included:

- its emphasis on the interconnectedness between security and health requiring a multi-sectoral approach
- its focus on health system resilience as integral to the concept of global health security
- its explicitness about the collective responsibility of global health security being a public good as such not rivalrous and not exclusive requiring the exercise of public authority at national and international level
- the notion that global health security promotion is a proactive enterprise about threat mitigation, rather than one that concerns crisis response alone

## **What should the next generation of GHS efforts emphasize?**

Fragile States, specifically conflict affected states and war zones with damaged or collapsed health systems are the most likely places for epidemics and other GHS threats to emerge. To date there has been little focus on developing strategies for protecting and recovering health systems in fragile settings, in some cases because of concerns about the political dynamics of doing so. In fact, there are currently no widely accepted methods or indicators to identify vulnerabilities to health systems or monitor health systems at risk of disruption.

Furthermore, most states in acute or chronic crisis lack some or all of the critical health subsystems necessary to robustly address emerging threats to populations health. For example, animal disease surveillance and response subsystems to detect emerging zoonotic threats remain poorly resourced and integrated into disease surveillance systems in most nations. Participants recommended:

1. Developing and monitoring indicators of threats and disruptions to national health systems. These indicators should:
  - a. Enable domestic and international stakeholders to anticipate and identify significant early trends that suggest health system's risk of dysfunction.

- b. Identify existing and emerging vulnerabilities for investment to mitigate risk and increase resilience (e.g. animal health surveillance, diagnostic and response systems must be strengthened to address zoonosis).
  - c. Suggest targets for intervention of international stakeholders to act in response to acutely dysfunctional and/or critically-underperforming systems.

2. Developing ethical and legal frameworks to inform decision making related to supporting health systems in fragile situations. This framework must reflect International Humanitarian Law and human rights law and address salient concerns of involved state and non-state actors in relation to providing access to health care, health system protection, addressing corruption, and potential disruption or displacement of state (nation) health resources by external actors.

## **What should the role of non-health sectors, particularly the security sector be in promoting global health security?**

The ambition of Global Health Security is to bring together critical interdisciplinary actors to protect threatened health systems, mitigate the impacts of health system collapse, reduce the chances of global health security repercussions, and develop health system resilience to

prevent future threats. National and international security organizations have historically responded to crises and disasters. The UN Interagency Standing Committee's guidelines on their roles and responsibilities have guided their engagement in these efforts. With the rise of the security paradigm in health, the engagement of the security sector in global health is becoming more frequent. Participants acknowledged a range of concerns about the increased involvement of security actors in global health. Normative standard development for the ethical application of security organization capabilities would be enhanced, participants felt, by delineating the most appropriate security sector capabilities relevant to GHS and defining threshold criteria for their use. In addition, participant recommendations included:

1. Articulate areas for investment of security resources in building capacity and advancing resilient national and regional health systems to mitigate risk of potential or emerging health threats.
2. Practice GHS responses through multi-sectoral international exercises. One goal of these exercises should be to build a more integrated response between national and international security organizations and health system stakeholders.
3. Studying the health, social, economic, security and political outcomes and

impacts of security sector engagement in Global Health Security.

## **How should the Global Health Security enterprise, with its plurality of stakeholders and actors be governed?**

Global health security is a collective responsibility to secure health systems that support not only human life but also the foundation for a "healthy functioning state". As such governance from the local to the international level is required to coordinate and facilitate GHS efforts. Among the international organizations, the World Health Organization (WHO) with the power vested in it by its Constitution and the International Health Regulations, is uniquely well positioned to coordinate and promote GHS efforts. Recognizing the need for the WHO and others to effectively collaborate, participants recommend the following actions:

1. Enhancing coordination among UN agencies and other health authorities to support WHO securing threatened health systems prior to crisis as outlined in the Sendai Framework.
2. Establish a formal United Nations Security Council (UNSC) subsidiary body to first advise the UNSC on Global Health issues and second to coordinate responses with WHO and other relevant GHS entities, if necessary.

3. Global Health Security is best served by effective governance from sovereign states working through whole-of-government mechanisms. Responsive international private and public support for integrated state-led efforts before, during, and after health crises is critical to effectively and efficiently build sustained functioning health systems. When states are unable to lead health crisis responses, every effort should be made to support reestablishment of legitimate governing authority.