



# WHE Learning Strategy

## WHO HEALTH EMERGENCIES PROGRAMME LEARNING STRATEGY

OCTOBER 2018

A learning strategy to create a ready, willing and able workforce – **a workforce of excellence** – for health emergency work.



World Health  
Organization



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## WHO Health Emergencies Programme Learning Strategy

**Since its establishment** in mid-2016, the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) has radically reformed the way the Organization works in emergencies. This new way of working has highlighted gaps in competencies of existing personnel and the urgent need to prepare an adequate surge capacity for emergency work. The creation of a workforce of excellence, to which this strategy contributes directly, is critical to achieving the ambitious target of the Organization's General Programme of Work for 2019–2023 (GPW13), and in particular to ensure 1 billion people are better protected from health emergencies.

Recent emergencies highlight the urgent need to have a workforce within the Organization that is ready, willing and able to work in the increasingly challenging environments of health emergencies in a globalized, urbanized and connected world where people, vectors and goods are on the move, giving rise to and amplifying threats from a multitude of infectious hazards, natural disasters, armed conflicts and complex emergencies. These threats call for a trained and prepared workforce that can be called upon when needed – drawn not only from the Health Emergencies Programme, but also from other WHO programmes, partners, Member States (MS), civil society and volunteers. This strategy is intended to serve as the overarching framework for all learning and training activities in WHE and can be used to build surge capacity across and beyond the Organization.

This first-ever WHE Learning Strategy aims to create a coordinated, coherent and high-quality approach and standards for learning and training across the Programme that are cost effective and cross the three levels of the Organization to contribute to the creation of a workforce of excellence for health emergency work.

The strategy adopts a competency-based approach to learning and uses three interconnected learning pathways for leadership, public health and operational streams that can be crisscrossed by personnel.

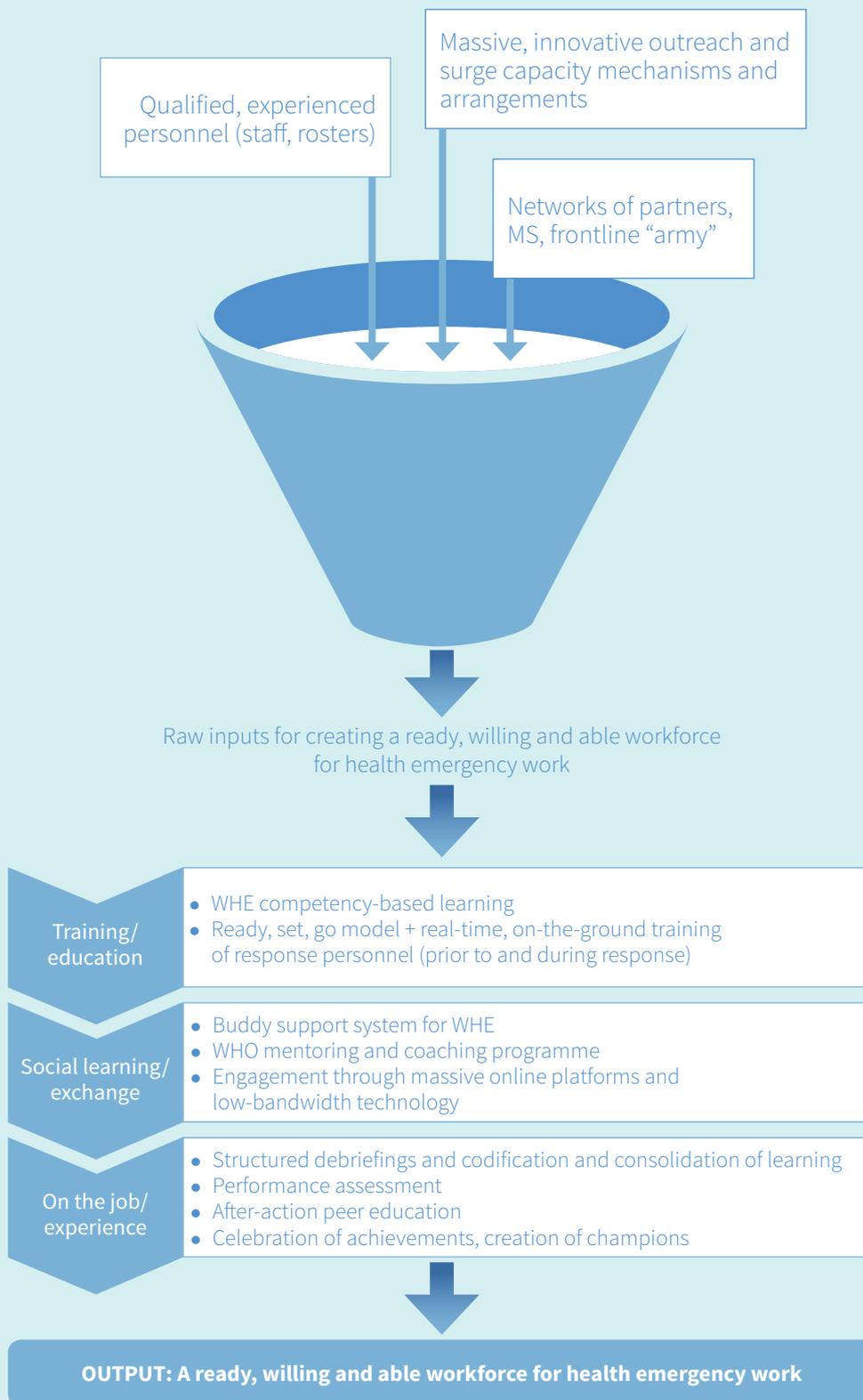
The strategy reinforces and builds on the reality that learning occurs through three main avenues: formal training or **education**, relationships (mentoring, coaching and buddying) or **exchange**, and on-the-job **experience**. Personnel will be offered a mix of these three main strategies to plot their selected learning pathway.

The strategy introduces standards for learning and training, requires the use of a learning management system to track learning, certification and achievement of competencies, and is accompanied by a training framework and the specifications for a functioning training resource centre that can be used across the Organization for planning and delivering learning events. It will lead to the development of an engagement strategy so that WHO can scale up quickly to mobilize up to thousands of trained personnel – staff, partners and frontline workers – if the event response so demands, as it did for the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

The strategy defines several typologies for learning: mandatory, hazard-specific or disaster-cycle-based, pre-deployment, leadership and function-specific. Learning delivery will include the use of low-bandwidth massive open online courses to reach up to millions of responders regardless of their geographical locations, supplemented by face-to-face training delivery.

To ensure implementation and increase efficient use of human and financial resources, the strategy further defines governance and management systems for implementation that involve novel ways of working across the Organization, regular updating of the strategy, as well as evaluation of its impact. The strategy was developed by the WHE Training Task Team, with the support of a group of external consultants, and in collaboration with nearly 100 WHO staff across the Organization. It is founded on reviews of existing trainings within WHO and by partners who work in emergencies and uses the latest approaches to meaningful, sustainable learning and effective training aimed at developing competencies for essential functions for health emergency work.

# Overview of the Creation of a Workforce of Excellence for Health Emergency Work



# 1. SETTING THE SCENE

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## **Pandemics, epidemics, natural disasters**

and humanitarian crises require fast, efficient and effective responses to save lives, reduce disease and suffering, and minimize socio-economic loss to communities and countries.

The influenza pandemic of 2018 highlighted the massive and widespread nature of some health emergencies that exceed the capacity of any country or agency to respond effectively. During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, hundreds of thousands of responders – professionals and volunteers – had to be mobilized. Even the most qualified responders, including highly-trained doctors and nurses from high-income countries, needed additional training to acquire the knowledge and skills to work safely and effectively responding to the dangerous disease within the context of West Africa. In ongoing, complex and protracted emergencies such as in Syria, where access by professional and trained response teams is hindered or limited, the health response is often implemented by NGOs and volunteers who need further support to gain the latest knowledge and skills to mount an effective response in very challenging and dangerous environments.

Health emergencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are increasingly complex. The emergence of dangerous pathogens with epidemic and pandemic potential is rising along with the rapid globalization of travel and trade, and with major developments in technology. Natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies and epidemics are now increasingly occurring in urban settings where, for the first time ever in human history, more than half of humanity lives. This makes it even harder to respond to disease outbreaks, epidemics and other health emergencies. We are witnessing an increasing toll on human lives due to health emergencies. Many chronic humanitarian crises now require a complex set of interventions, demanding new competencies in response teams, to be delivered to millions of people who are dependent on external aid for even the most basic life needs.

Key to the new reality is the expectations of affected populations themselves. Regardless of where they live or their current socio-economic status, all countries and their peoples have a right to, and now demand, access to the best possible interventions in emergencies that increase the chances of their survival, including the highest possible levels of

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