

WHO Thematic Platform for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Research Network (Health EDRM RN)

Terms of Reference (revised April 2024)

Background

Reducing risks associated with emergencies and disasters to protect people and promote population health is one of the [WHO's three billion goals in the Thirteenth General Programme of Work \(GPW13\)](#) and draft 14th General Programme of Work (GPW14). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 300 million people were affected by emergencies and disasters every year. The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 \(Sendai Framework\)](#) highlighted the importance of health in reducing risks from disasters. In 2019, WHO released the [Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management \(Health EDRM\) Framework](#) to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the [International Health Regulations](#) (2005), the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2015), and [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#) (2016).

The WHO Thematic Platform for Health EDRM was launched by WHO and UNDRR formerly (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, UNISDR) in 2009 as an international platform to advocate and catalyse action for Health EDRM. Given the increasing needs to enhance evidence to implement Sendai Framework and WHO Health EDRM Framework, in 2018, the [WHO Thematic Platform for Health EDRM Research Network \(Health EDRM RN\)](#) was established by WHO as a subgroup of the Thematic Platform.

The Health EDRM RN is a collaborative mechanism between WHO and participants of the research network. The Health EDRM RN is not an independent legal entity.

These Terms of Reference outline the governance aspects of the Health EDRM RN.

Objectives

The Health EDRM RN aims to serve as an international multi-stakeholder and inter-disciplinary platform to exchange information, share views and support WHO in the area of Health EDRM research, specifically the development of:

- a) information sharing platforms on research, evidence, policy, and programmes relating to Health EDRM being undertaken across the six regions of the WHO, and
- b) partnerships among stakeholders to enhance the scientific and technical work on Health

- EDRM and inform the international Health EDRM research agenda, and
- c) collaboration and partnerships to build and broaden the Health EDRM research network.

Participants

Those participating in the research network are referred to as “Participants.”

- a) Participants may join the Health EDRM RN if they are representing national authorities, United Nations organizations, other intergovernmental organizations, non-profit organizations, academic and research institutes.
- b) Individuals who represent or are funded by private or for-profit entities are subject to conflict-of-interest assessments by the Secretariat as per the relevant WHO rules and policies prior to joining the Health EDRM RN.

The benefits to participants include

- a) Periodic updates with up-to-date information about Health EDRM research and evidence
- b) Announcements about opportunities to join international collaborative research activities to implement the objectives of Health EDRM RN.

Participants are expected to contribute:

- a) updates of knowledge and evidence on Health EDRM
- b) technical support for international collaborative research activities convened by the Secretariat

Such contributions made by participants of the Health EDRM RN will be acknowledged by WHO in accordance with its applicable rules, policies, and practices, which include acknowledgement on WHO webpages, printed materials, or conference presentations about specific projects the Participants contribute to. However, participation in the Health EDRM RN:

- a) Shall not be considered or implied as a formal engagement with WHO
- b) Shall not be used as a title or affiliate
- c) Shall not be considered as an endorsement by WHO of the participant of the Health EDRM RN, or his/her name, brand, products, views, or activities including research
- d) Shall not be used for commercial or promotional purposes.

Participants of the Health EDRM RN will promote its objectives and abide by these Terms of Reference. Upon the registration, Participants need to submit designated documents including their curriculum vitae and signed agreement forms.

Participants who do not wish to remain in the network shall notify WHO accordingly. In addition, WHO, under its sole discretion, may terminate the participation of any participant in the Health

EDRM RN.

Secretariat

Subject to the availability of sufficient human and financial resources for this purpose, the secretariat and planning support for the Health EDRM RN is provided by WHO. Following the agreement in the Technical Workshop for Concepts & Guidance for the Implementation of Health EDRM by Countries attended by responsible departments and units of HQ and Regional Offices held in November 2018, the [WHO Centre for Health Development \(WHO Kobe Centre, WKC\)](#) has acted as the secretariat in collaboration with the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (“WHE”) since 2019,

The secretariat has the duties below to:

- a) manage the registration of Participants and provide conflict of interest assessment as needed
- b) maintain the updated list of Participants
- c) provide Participants periodic updates
- d) convene periodic Core Group (described in the section of “Core Group”) Meetings virtually or in-person as needed
- e) facilitate international collaborative research activities that support implementation of the objectives of Health EDRM RN.

Core Group

The Core Group facilitates the development of the Health EDRM RN, the realization and implementation of its objectives, as well as the coordination of its activities.

The Core Group comprises the following membership:

- Co-chairs (2)
- WHO HQ focal point (1)
- WHO Regional Office focal points (6)
- WHO Kobe Centre (secretariat) focal point (1)
- Other members (0-5)

The Core Group will meet on annual basis, as appropriate, through teleconference or in person. For annual Core Group Meetings, a maximum five additional “other members” can be appointed to reflect opinions of key stakeholders on Health EDRM. Prior to the annual meeting,

the co-chairs will provide WHO the list of candidates for the “other members.” The Secretariat, in consultation with other WHO focal points, will decide and appoint the “other members” for the annual meeting. This appointment is updated every year and may be terminated at any time by the Secretariat if WHO’s interest so requires.

Role of Chairs

The “co-chairs” are external experts of Health EDRM research and provide WHO strategic advice on enhancing scientific evidence on Health EDRM. The co-chairs will collaborate with the Secretariat to provide periodic updates on Health EDRM knowledge and evidence to support the Health EDRM RN. For this purpose, the co-chairs, in consultation with the Secretariat, may convene online meetings with Health EDRM RN Participants to collect up to date knowledge and expert opinions as needed.

The co-chairs are appointed by the Secretariat in consultation with relevant WHO departments and units. The length of appointment is two years and can be extended following the agreement between the Secretariat and co-chairs. The assignment may be terminated at any time by the Secretariat if WHO’s interest so requires.

Status

The operation of the Health EDRM RN shall in all respects be administered in accordance with the WHO Constitution, WHO Financial and Staff Regulations and Rules, Manual provisions, applicable policies, procedures, and practices.

The Health EDRM RN cannot conduct any action in its own name or in the name of WHO.

Publications

As a general rule and subject to its discretion, WHO shall be responsible for issuing publications about Health EDRM RN activities. Dissemination of Health EDRM RN materials will only be made by WHO. Any exceptions must be submitted in writing and decided by WHO on a case-by-case basis.

Copyright in any publication made by WHO shall be vested in WHO. This applies if the work is published by WHO. It applies to compilations of works by Participants, work prepared with input from one or more Participants, and publications based on the work of the Health EDRM RN.

Copyright in a publication prepared and issued by a Participant shall remain vested in that

participant or shall be put in the public domain if such participant so chooses.

“Publications” include any form, whether paper or electronic, and in any manner.

Participants may cite or refer to Health EDRM RN publications, except for the purposes of promoting any commercial products, services, or entities.

Any publication about Health EDRM RN activities issued by a Participant other than WHO shall contain appropriate disclaimers as decided by WHO, including that the content does not necessarily reflect the views or stated policy of the participating organizations, agencies, and institutions (including WHO, acting as the Secretariat for the Health EDRM RN).

Financing

Each Participant is, in principle, responsible for meeting their own expenses in relation to the Platform (including, but not limited to, travel and subsistence for the attendance of Platform meetings).

Termination

WHO may at any time decide not to continue the work of the Health EDRM RN, in which case all reference to activities as being conducted under the auspices of the Health EDRM RN shall cease upon communication to Participants to that effect.

Liability

Under no circumstances shall WHO assume any liability for acts carried out by Participants regardless of whether such acts were carried out in the name of the Health EDRM RN. Furthermore, WHO in its sole discretion, may refrain from implementing any decision of the Health EDRM RN if in the view of WHO, such decision gives rise to undue financial, legal, or reputational liability or is contrary to WHO Rules, Regulations Administrative practices, and programmatic and technical policies.

Amendments

WHO may at any time review and amend, if needed, these Terms of Reference. Participants shall be informed of such amendments.