QUESTION BANK FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS

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Introduction

This question bank is a menu of qualitative questions related to healthcare workers' knowledge, perceptions and practices during infectious disease outbreaks. The question bank will generate qualitative data on healthcare workers' subjective understandings of risks, case management, protection and wider outbreak operations. These data can be used to inform risk communication and community engagement activities as well as other response pillars. Some of the issues covered in these questions are complex, for example stigma or views on vaccine safety. These topics may benefit from more in-depth follow up where views and perspectives can be explored more thoroughly.

For the purposes of this question bank, healthcare workers encompass those people involved in the care of sick (or deceased) people or people working in support roles where they are likely to encounter infectious people. Healthcare workers could include doctors, nurses, community health and care workers, surveillance teams, ambulance drivers, midwives, traditional birth attendants, traditional and religious healers, burial teams, hospital porters and cleaners, and laboratory technicians. The healthcare workers could be working in these roles in government run settings, nongovernmental organisations, and in informal or private healthcare sectors; and they could be working in routine care or in specialist outbreak treatment facilities.

MODULE OVERVIEW

This question bank has eight modules which cover the following topics:

- Module 1. Role and type of setting or facility

- Module 2. Outbreak dynamics and health system impact

- Module 3. Transmission risks, infection prevention and control

- Module 4. Information and influence

- Module 5. Vaccination

- Module 6. Stigma

- Module 7. Outbreak operations and interventions

- Module 8. Recommendations

There are questions on healthcare worker support, training and resource needs integrated throughout the topics.

HOW TO USE THE QUESTIONS BANK

Adapting the tool for each outbreak and context

This tool is intended to be generic and applicable for any infectious disease outbreak. Throughout the tool, '[X]' is used in place of the disease name. Please replace '[X]' in the text with the relevant disease name. The questions will need to be reviewed and adapted depending on the disease, such as for Marburg virus disease, Ebola virus disease, mpox or Lassa fever. Please refer to an up-to-date and complete list of symptoms and transmission routes for the specific disease. The list of symptoms and transmission routes will need to be included in questions 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 (see highlighted sections). Some questions are only relevant where a treatment or vaccine is available, and these questions are highlighted.
Questions are not listed in order of priority. Each module includes a set of questions organised by theme to demonstrate what kind of evidence can be gathered to fill a knowledge gap. Selection of questions should be context- and disease-specific.
It is intended that partners will identify key areas for investigation according to their operational priorities and identified knowledge gaps. Within these areas, the partners can then select the most relevant questions and adapt them to reflect national and subnational contexts. To identify priority areas it is recommended that partners using this questions bank first consult with the pillar leads for risk communication and community engagement before.

QUESTIONS FOR DIFFERENT CADRES OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Not all questions will be equally applicable to all cadres of healthcare and support workers, and people using this tool should ask the questions most appropriate to the setting and role of each interviewee. A 'cadre' column in the question sets specifies which of the following types of healthcare worker each question is relevant for:

- All: A general question for all healthcare and support workers, including community health workers, nonclinical health or response workers

- TU: Healthcare workers in treatment unit or isolation facilities

- RHF: Healthcare workers in routine primary, secondary or tertiary health facilities

As well as differentiating between cadres, there may be a need to adapt or add questions depending on the context of the outbreak and the facility.

Ethics

Qualitative assessments conducted during an emergency response are meant to be rapid procedures. The findings should be operational for, and contribute directly towards, informing planned interventions. An emergency response assessment – qualitative or otherwise – is not a traditional research endeavour to test an experimental hypothesis, apply a new theory or conduct an exploratory analysis for a non-operational purpose. For these reasons, seeking formal approval to conduct a qualitative assessment from an ethics review board is not advised. However, some countries may require a specific directive from a relevant government or line ministry to proceed without a formal ethical review. Furthermore, some healthcare settings and organisations may require institutional or managerial permission to be given before staff are able to participate and answer questions. This should be explored on a case-by-case basis.

This being noted, there are still clear ethical responsibilities which must be considered as a key component of any qualitative assessment. These responsibilities should be upheld by any person collecting information from human subjects. Key ethical considerations include informed consent and data protection.

Informed consent

Participants should be:

- given full details of the assessment (background, objectives, methods and use of data) in the appropriate local language.
- informed that they can withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty.
- informed that involvement is voluntary.
- Informed that their answers will not be shared with their employer.
- informed that participation or non-participation will not affect access to any future services needed or provided.

Verbal informed consent can be obtained or, alternately, a written signature can be provided; the choice should be determined according to country context.

Data protection

Strict confidentiality of all collected data must be maintained through stringent guidelines on data storage and access, and by protecting participant identity in data presentations. In addition to protecting the confidentiality of participants, ensure that all data collected during the study are managed respectfully and used exclusively for the operational purpose of informing emergency response interventions.

Further information on ethical considerations can be found in the Humanitarian Health Ethics Analysis Tool here.

1. ROLE AND TYPE OF SETTING OR FACILITY

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
1.1	Role	All	What is your job or role in this outbreak? Follow-up question: Have you had to change from your normal role to respond to this outbreak? From what and why?
1.2	Outbreak activities	All	Please briefly describe your daily tasks and responsibilities since the [X] outbreak began. Follow-up question: Has your daily work changed over the course of the outbreak? If so, how?
1.3	Routine services	TU RHF	Does this facility provide routine health services, and, if so, what services are usually available here?
1.4	Outbreak services	TU RHF	What [X] outbreak services are available in this health facility?

1.5	Referrals	RHF	Before the [X] outbreak, did you receive referrals from other health facilities? For what and from where? Follow-up question: Have referrals been affected by the current outbreak? If yes, how?
1.6	Training	All	Have you had any specialised training to provide services for [X]? Probe: • If yes, please describe when and what this was. • If no, do you think you need to have additional training to provide these services?

2. OUTBREAK DYNAMICS AND HEALTH SYSTEM IMPACT

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
2.1	Clinical management	All	Are there standard operating procedures or clear processes in place for managing [X] cases in this facility or in your work? Follow-up question: Are these procedures or processes followed consistently? If not, why not?
2.2	Clinical management – routine care	RHF	How has the [X] outbreak impacted the ability of your facility to provide routine health services (not related to [X])? Probe: • Ability to manage workload not related to [X]? • Ability to care for patients not affected by [X]? • Supply of resources and consumables, such as drugs or protective equipment? • Ability to maintain infection prevention and control procedures?
2.3	Healthcare seeking	RHF	How, if at all, do you think the [X] outbreak has affected care seeking for routine health services offered at this health facility? Probe: If so, what do you think are the reasons for this?

2.4	Clinical management – safety	RHF	Do you believe it is safe for patients without confirmed or suspected [X] to receive routine services and treatment at your health facility? Probe: Why or why not?
2.5	Healthcare seeking	All	If a family member fell sick tomorrow with something which was not related to [X], what would you do? Where would you take your family member?
2.6	Healthcare seeking	All	If you or someone in your family fell sick with [X]-like symptoms tomorrow, what would you do? Follow-up question: Where would you go or take your family member and why?
2.7	Motivation	All	How, if at all, has the [X] outbreak affected your motivation and capacity to work?
2.8	Motivation	RHF	How, if at all, has the [X] outbreak affected the motivation and capacity to work of other healthcare staff in this facility? Probe: On issues related to exhaustion, fear, pay, insurance and stigma.
2.9	Well-being	All	How has working on the [X] outbreak affected your own well-being and mental health?
2.10	Support	All	What kinds of social or psychosocial support do you receive for dealing with the impacts of working during the [X] outbreak, and who provides this to you? Probe: For example, stress, work or personal challenges.
2.11	Support	All	Are you experiencing any challenges or issues in your work for which you would like to receive greater support? What are these? Follow-up question: Are these a result of your role working on the [X] outbreak, or have they been increased by this role? What kind of social or psychosocial support do you think would help you to deal with these issues, and who do you think should provide this support to you?

| 2.12 | Management | All | How do you think the response to [X] could be improved in your place of work?
Follow-up question:
Are there ways it could be improved more generally? |

3. TRANSMISSION RISKS, INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
3.1	Knowledge of disease	All	Before the current outbreak, had you ever heard of [X]? What had you heard?
3.2	Role	All	Are you involved in providing health or other care or support services directly to patients with [X]? How?
3.3	Perception of risk	All	In your role providing these services, do you believe you are at risk of contracting [X]? Probe: Why or why not?
3.4	Perception of risk	All	Has your employer given you training or information about how to protect yourself from contracting [X]? Please provide details.
3.5	Perception of risk	All	Do you know how to protect yourself and others from contracting [X]? Follow-up question: How do you protect yourself? What actions do you take? How do you protect your family and friends, or others around you? What actions do you take?
3.6	Knowledge of disease	All	Has your employer given you training or information about how to recognise cases of [X], for example a case definition?
3.7	Support	All	What kinds of social or psychosocial support do you receive for dealing with the impacts of working during the [X] outbreak, and who provides this to you? Probe: For example, stress, work or personal challenges.

3.8	Knowledge of disease	All	What are the symptoms of [X]? ADD A FULL LIST OF THE RELEVANT DISEASE HERE AND PROBE ON THESE SYMPTOMS. Follow-up question: Do you feel you understand these symptoms well enough? Could you recognise the symptoms in a patient?
3.9	Knowledge of disease	All	How long is someone with [X] contagious? Probe: • In what ways is someone infected with [X] a risk to other people during this time? • What can be done to manage the risk of infection and stop the spread of [X]? ADD INCUBATION AND INFECTIOUS PERIOD OF THE RELEVANT DISEASE HERE AND PROBE ON THE TRANSMISSION POTENTIAL
3.10	Knowledge of disease	All	What are the ways that [X] can be transmitted? ADD A FULL LIST OF TRANSMISSION ROUTES FOR THE RELEVANT DISEASE HERE AND PROBE ON THESE ROUTES. Follow-up question: How do these transmission routes pose a risk to you in your work? What actions can you take to mitigate these risks? Have you or your employers taken these actions?
3.11	Risk perception	All	Do you think anyone can get [X]? Probe: If yes, why? If not, why not? Follow-up question: Do you think everyone is equally at risk of getting infected with [X]? Probe: • If yes, why? • If not, who do you think is more at risk than others? Why? [Prompt about different population groups (e.g., older people, babies and infants, children under 15 years, mothers), occupations, refugee or migrant status, those who are immunosuppressed, for example]
3.12	Risk perception	All	Do you think your role puts you at greater risk of contracting [X] than other professions or the public? Why or why not?

3.13	Diagnostic capacity	TU RHF	Are you able to access diagnostic tools and facilities to identify and manage (or exclude) cases of [X]?
3.14	Trust in diagnostics	TU RHF	Do you think these diagnostic tools are reliable? Why or why not?
3.15	Clinical management	TU RHF	What happens if you cannot get a definitive diagnosis (either through symptoms or a test)? Follow-up question: What happens to borderline cases?
3.16	Treatment supply	TU RHF	If there are effective treatments available for managing cases of [X]: Are you able to access treatments for [X]? Follow-up question: Does this facility have good supplies of the necessary treatments?
3.17	Treatment	TU RHF	Do you think these treatments are safe and effective? Probe: Why or why not?
3.18	Infection prevention and control	All	Can you tell us about the specific infection prevention and control measures you are implementing in your daily work to prevent the spread of [X]? Follow-up question: How easy is it to always conduct these measures? Probe: • Are the relevant supplies adequate and always available? • Is the workload too high to keep changing protective personal equipment?
3.19	Infection prevention and control	All	Do you have the proper protective personal equipment (PPE) to work safely and provide care and services related to [X]? Probe: • What PPE is available? • Is the PPE of good quality? • Does the PPE fit you and the other staff here properly? • If no to these, what additional equipment or PPE do you require?

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
3.13	Infection prevention and control	All	Have you had any training on infection prevention? Probe: When was this and who gave it to you? Follow-up question: Do you think the training you received is adequate?
3.14	Infection prevention and control	TU RHF	Have you been trained in using personal protective equipment (PPE) properly? Probe: • Have you been trained in donning (putting on) and doffing (removing) PPE? • Have you been trained in disposing of PPE?

4. INFORMATION AND INFLUENCE

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
4.1	Information sources	All	Where do you normally get information concerning your health and the health of your family? Probe: • Has this changed since the [X] outbreak was declared?
4.2	Information sources	All	Where do you normally get information concerning the health of your patients or the people you care for in your role? Probe: • Has this changed since the [X] outbreak was declared or since there were cases of [X] in your health facility?
4.3	Information sources	All	Where do you normally get information concerning disease outbreaks? Probe: • Has this changed since the [X] outbreak was declared or since there were cases of [X] in your health facility?
4.4	Outbreak information	All	When did you first hear about [X]? Follow-up question: What have you heard about [X]? Probe: • Is there anything that worries you? • Who told you this? • Do you think it is true? Why? Why not? Follow-up question: From whom or from where have you heard about the [X] outbreak?

4.5	Outbreak information	All	Have there been any health promotional or awareness activities about [X] in your workplace(s)? Probe: • Who conducted these activities? • What kind of information was shared? Follow-up question: Who normally participates in these activities? Probe: Different age and gender groups, or levels of seniority, for example
4.6	Outbreak information	All	How useful do you find the information you have received about [X], for example information about causes, prevention, treatment, or response? Probe: • Why is the information about [X] useful? • Why is the information about [X] not useful? Follow-up question: What other information do you need to know?
4.7	Outbreak information sources	All	Which sources or which channels do you use to get information about [X]? Why?
4.8	Trust	All	Which sources or channels do you trust highly to share information about [X]? Why? Follow-up question: What person, group, app, website, news organisation or agency do you not trust to give you accurate information about [X]? Probe: Why do you not trust this source?
4.9	Information needs	All	Do you have any questions or things you would like to know more about [X] prevention and management?
4.10	Trusted sources of information	All	Who do you think your patients or people in the community trust to give them accurate information about the [X] outbreak? Follow-up question: Do you think that your patients or people in the community trust you to give them accurate information about the [X] outbreak? Probe: If yes, why? If no, why not?
4.11	Information needs	All	Have your patients or people in the community been asking you questions about [X]? Probe: What have they asked?

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
4.12	Relationships	All	Has the outbreak of [X] affected your interactions and relationships with patients or people in the community? How?

5. VACCINATION

This subset of questions is for outbreaks where there is a vaccine available or where a vaccine will soon be available.

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
5.1	Prevention – vaccination	All	Have you heard about the vaccine for [X]? Probe: • Have you heard anything that makes you feel positive about the vaccine for [X]? What have you heard, and from whom did you hear this? • Have you heard anything that worries you? What have you heard, and from whom did you hear this? • Do you think it is true? Why?
5.2	Prevention – vaccination	All	Have you thought about getting the vaccine for [X] if it is offered to you? What is your decision? Probe: • Why do you want to get the vaccine? • Why do you not want to get the vaccine?
5.3	Prevention – vaccination	All	How important do you think getting the vaccine for [X] will be for your health? Probe: • Why do you feel that way?
5.4	Prevention – vaccination	All	How safe do you think the vaccine for [X] will be for you? Probe: • Why do you feel that way? • Do you think that your body will react to the vaccine? Is this something which worries you? • Do you think there is still a risk of getting infected with [X] after you have had the vaccine?

5.5	Prevention – vaccination	All	Is there anyone else involved in your decision about whether to get the vaccine for [X]? Probe: • Your family? Your colleagues? • Do your employers recommend you get the vaccine? • Do your employers require you to get the vaccine? • Who else do you discuss the decision with? • Who is the final decision-maker for whether you get the vaccine?
5.6	Prevention – vaccination	All	Overall, do you believe the vaccine for [X] will reduce the spread of [X] in your area? Probe: • Why do you think this? • Do you think that maintaining protective measures, for example IPC, will still be necessary after you have been vaccinated?
5.7	Prevention – vaccination	All	Have you been consulted on any matters in relation to the vaccine for [X]? Probe: • Could you please specify on which matters you have been consulted? • How have you been consulted? Follow-up question: Have others in your profession or workplace been consulted about the vaccine for [X]? Probe: • Could you please specify on which matters they have been consulted? • How have they been consulted?

6. STIGMA

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
6.1	Stigma	All	Have you heard of any negative attitudes or stigmatisation towards patients with [X] in your community? Please provide examples and explain why you think they are stigmatised Stigma and negative attitudes include associating some people or groups with having or spreading the disease more than others, and blaming, avoiding or ostracising these people or groups a result. Follow-up question Have you heard of any negative attitudes or stigmatisation towards family members of patients with [X] in your community? Please provide examples and explain why you think they are stigmatised Follow-up question: Have you heard of any negative attitudes or stigmatisation towards certain population groups in relation to [X]? Probe: • Which population groups are affected by negative attitudes in the wider community? • Why are these population groups affected by negative attitudes related to [X]? • Can you provide an example? • What are consequences for these population groups?
6.2	Stigma	All	Do stigma and negative attitudes about [X] mean that people are unwilling to talk about their experiences with [X] or seek help?
6.3	Stigma	All	Are there any symptoms of [X], or modes of transmission of [X], which are linked to negative attitudes or feelings of shame? Follow-up question: If there are negative attitudes or feelings of shame linked to specific symptoms or modes of transmission of [X], does this mean that people do not want to seek help for those symptoms or for [X]?
6.3	Stigma	TU Other cadres if performing high-risk community-based roles (e.g., burial)	Are there any symptoms of [X], or modes of transmission of [X], which are linked to negative attitudes or feelings of shame? Follow-up question: If there are negative attitudes or feelings of shame linked to specific symptoms or modes of transmission of [X], does this mean that people do not want to seek help for those symptoms or for [X]?

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
6.5	Stigma	TU Other cadres if performing high-risk community-based roles (e.g., burial)	How do your neighbours or people in your community feel about you working on [X]? Follow-up question: Are they worried about catching [X]? Do your neighbours or people in your community treat you or your household members differently since you started working on [X]? Probe: Avoid close contact with you, eating together, using the same utensils, shaking hands, visiting, calling you names, discriminating against you or your family in any other way?
6.6	Stigma	All	What can be done to avoid stigmatising views and behaviour related to [X]? Probe: • Probe if there are different ways of addressing stigma towards people infected with [X], their families, the healthcare workers looking after them and groups who have been associated with and blamed for the disease • What can be done to prevent stigma when talking or providing information about the disease? • What can response actors do? Follow-up question: What can the community do? Who in the community should be responsible for ensuring patients with [X] are not discriminated against?

7. OUTBREAK OPERATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
7.1	Perception of [X] response teams	All	Have any [X] outbreak response teams visited your facility since the [X] outbreak was declared in your community/province/district? Probe: • How often did or does the response team visit? • What did they do or what will they do? • What do you think about these activities? • When was the last time the response teams visited? Follow-up question: What do you think about the response team(s)? Probe: The attitude of members of the response team, the ability of the response team to respond to your questions and concerns, the presence of the response team in your community, etc.?

7.2	Satisfaction with [X] response teams	All	How satisfied are you with the outbreak response team(s)? Probe: • Why are you satisfied? • Why are you not satisfied?
7.3	Community engagement (consultation and feedback)	All	Have the [X] response teams asked for your opinion and suggestions? Probe: • Did the response teams ask for your opinion about the way interventions for [X] are implemented? • Did the response teams ask about solutions to prevent or reduce [X] infection risks? • If not, why do you think the response teams did not ask for your opinion? • Do you know if other people were asked for their opinion? If so, who? • Do these people represent your opinion? If not, why not? Follow-up question: [If the response teams asked for suggestions from you or other people] Did you see any changes after you or others made suggestions? Probe: • If yes, what changed? • If not, why do you think the response teams did not change anything about the response and/or response teams?
7.4	Reporting abuse and exploitation	All	Would you report or complain about any inappropriate behaviours (e.g. harassment, discrimination, sexual exploitation and abuse) from health workers, community volunteers or any person who is working as part of the [X] response? Probe: • If yes, where would you report this? How would you report this? • If no, why not? What challenges do you think you would face in reporting such behaviours?

7.5	Satisfaction with the current response to [X]	All	How satisfied are you with the response to [X]? Probe: Why do you think this way? Follow-up question: Could the government take any specific actions to reduce the risk of [X] infection in your district or province, or across the country? Probe: • What are the specific actions the government could take? • Why do you think that these actions will help reduce the risk of infection?
7.6	Satisfaction with the current response to [X]	All	Do you think anything should change about the way interventions to prevent or treat [X] are implemented? Probe: If yes, what should change? Optional question Is there anything else the response teams should do differently? Probe: If yes, what should they do differently?
7.7	Satisfaction with the current response to [X]	All	Do you know how to provide feedback or make complaints about any aspect of the outbreak response operations? Probe: • How do you provide feedback or make complaints? • How useful are these mechanisms to provide feedback and make complaints? • How do you prefer to provide feedback and make complaints? • Is there anything that could be improved?

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Dimension	Cadre	Question
8.1	Support services	All	Aside from equipment or personal protective equipment needs, would you recommend any other services for healthcare workers, such as psychosocial services or outreach or engagement with families or communities of healthcare workers?

8.2	Lessons for the future	All	In a future outbreak, what, if anything, do you think should be done differently? Follow-up question: What would help healthcare workers to maintain normal services as well as services related to [X]? Probe: Policies or emergency protocols on how to manage essential services.
8.3	Enhancing trust	All	How can healthcare workers contribute to enhancing trust and use of the health system for routine services as well as services related to [X]? Probe: • Health promotion and community engagement? How? • Linkages to other support organisations? Which organisations? How?
8.4	Positive impacts	All	Has the [X] outbreak had any positive impacts on your work from which we can learn? Follow-up question: Do you think any of the interventions implemented during this outbreak have strengthened the health services and systems? Which interventions and how? How do you think these positive impacts could be sustained in the long term?

CONTACTS:

If you have a direct request concerning a brief, tools, additional technical expertise or remote analysis, or should you like to be considered for the network of advisers, please contact the Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform by emailing:

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🗎 **SSHAP newsletter**

The RCCE Collective Service enables collaboration between a wide range of organisations engaged in policy, practice, and research to strengthen coordination and increase the scale and quality of RCCE approaches, while also supporting a coordinated community-centered approach that is embedded across public health and humanitarian response efforts. This partnership between the WHO, UNICEF and IFRC, which leverages active support from the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), and key stakeholders from the public health and humanitarian sectors.

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Collective service

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