



High-level Meeting on Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies: Leaving No One Behind

2-3 December 2025, Berlin, Germany

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Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PHN	Public Health Network
RCCE	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
RKI	Robert Koch Institute
WHO	World Health Organization

Acknowledgements

This meeting was jointly organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Robert Koch Institute (RKI). The organisers are grateful to Amb. Shino Mitsuko, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Federal Republic of Germany, for her opening remarks, and to the keynote speakers at the Conference Dinner: Mr Thomas Wixler, Head of Division for Indo-Pacific Cooperation, Federal Foreign Office of Germany; Mr Kamimori Yuki, First Secretary and Health Attaché, Embassy of Japan to the Federal Republic of Germany; and Dr Iris E. Andernach, Special Advisor for International Health Security and Crisis Management, Federal Ministry of Health of Germany.

The organisers are deeply grateful to Dr Kai von Harbou of the World Health Organization (WHO) for his expert input on international RCCE frameworks, and to all storytellers who brought lived experience to the heart of the discussions: Dr Sovann Ly, Ms Johanna Leinonen, Dr Jurai Wongsawat, Dr Naomi Seki, Dr Cesare Buquicchio, Dr Ursula Probst, Assoc. Prof Soorej Jose Puthooppambal, Ms Wenyajing Zhang, Mr Thomas Abraham, and Dr Viviane Fluck.

The organisers are especially grateful to Mr Andreas Giesen and the Art of Hosting facilitation team for designing and guiding the participatory methodology that gave this meeting its distinctive character.

Sincere thanks are also extended to all participants whose engagement, openness, and willingness to share across professional and cultural boundaries gave this meeting its depth and energy. This outcome document would not have been possible without their input.

This outcome document was jointly prepared by Mr Andreas Giesen and Ms Nur A'in binte Abd Razak, Project Lead (Public Health Network), Asia-Europe Foundation.



**From
the People of Japan**

ASEF's contribution is made possible with the financial support of the Government of Japan. Views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Japan.

Executive Summary

The ASEF-RKI High-level Meeting on *Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies: Leaving No One Behind* convened senior officials, public health experts, communication practitioners, civil society representatives, and researchers from Asia and Europe to strengthen inclusive Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) capacities during public health emergencies. The meeting responded directly to lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted that inequities in access, trust, and communication disproportionately affect migrants, ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable populations.

Designed as a co-creative working meeting rather than a traditional conference, the programme combined expert inputs with participatory methodologies rooted in the Art of Hosting tradition, including Collective Story Harvests, Open Dialogue, and Design for Wiser Action. These methods enabled participants to surface lived experience, identify shared patterns across regions and sectors, and converge on concrete, forward-looking recommendations.

Key outcomes include five priority action areas: (i) responsible integration of Artificial Intelligence into RCCE; (ii) strengthened leadership support for community-based public health action; (iii) sustained and inclusive community engagement; (iv) development of self-assessment, audit, and competency frameworks for RCCE; and (v) the establishment of Infodemic Insight Reports as a strategic tool for early detection and response. Participants strongly endorsed the participatory approach, highlighted the value of trust-based exchange, and expressed a clear desire for continuity and follow-up beyond the meeting.



Introduction

Public health emergencies increasingly expose structural inequities within and across societies. Migrants, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, elderly populations, and other disadvantaged groups often face barriers to accessing health information and services, exacerbated by language, cultural, socio-economic, and legal constraints. Experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that information alone does not generate understanding or trust; rather, risk communication must be inclusive, participatory, and grounded in community realities.

Against this backdrop, the **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** and the **Robert Koch Institute (RKI)** jointly organised this High-level Meeting to advance bi-regional learning and collaboration on inclusive RCCE. Building on a long-standing series of ASEF Public Health Network (ASEF PHN) initiatives on risk communication, the meeting aimed to move beyond knowledge exchange towards co-creation of actionable insights for future public health emergencies.

To this end, the meeting was structured around the following objectives:

- To enhance countries' capacities for effective and inclusive RCCE during public health emergencies, with a particular focus on migrants and ethnic minorities
- To share lessons learned and best practices from COVID-19 and other health crises across Asia and Europe
- To explore innovative approaches, including the use of Artificial Intelligence, social media, and emerging technologies, to strengthen engagement and trust
- To experience and reflect on participatory methods for preparedness and response
- To facilitate networking and identify areas for sustained international and inter-sectoral collaboration



Meeting Design and Methodology

The meeting was intentionally designed as a co-creative process. In addition to high-level opening and expert inputs, participants engaged in a series of facilitated sessions based on the Art of Hosting principles of divergence, emergence, and convergence. Key methodologies included:

- **Collective Story Harvest:**
Participants listened to real-life experiences in RCCE through structured listening lenses (e.g. trust, inclusion, barriers, tools), enabling the identification of shared patterns and lessons.
- **Open Dialogue:**
Small-group dialogues created space for reflection, sense-making, and the emergence of collective priorities.
- **Design for Wiser Action:**
Participants worked in thematic groups to translate insights into concrete products, recommendations, and next steps.

This design emphasised deep listening, inclusion of diverse voices, and harvesting for learning rather than judgement, thereby aligning the process with the meeting's substantive focus on trust and equity.



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Meeting Outcomes

Cross-cutting Themes from the Collective Story Harvest

Across stories and listening lenses, several recurring themes emerged:

- **Trust as a relational process:**
Trust is built through sustained engagement, transparency, and respect for community knowledge, and can be easily undermined by inconsistent messaging or exclusion.
- **Importance of intermediaries:**
Community leaders, NGOs, media actors, and informal networks play a critical role in bridging institutions and communities.
- **Language and cultural competence:**
Multilingual, culturally sensitive communication, including non-written and minority languages, is essential for inclusivity.
- **Structural constraints:**
Legal frameworks, resource limitations, and institutional silos often hinder inclusive RCCE, even where goodwill exists.
- **Learning through practice:**
Stories highlighted that meaningful learning often occurs through adaptation, reflection, and iteration rather than predefined success models.

These insights provided the foundation for the subsequent Design for Wiser Action outcomes. The five priority action areas that emerged are presented below.

Priority Action Areas: Outcomes from Design for Wiser Action

1. Artificial Intelligence and RCCE

Discussions identified Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a significant strategic enabler for RCCE, with potential to improve multilingual communication, detect misinformation early, and accelerate content creation. At the same time, participants highlighted risks related to bias, data protection, legal compliance, sustainability, and over-reliance on automated systems.

Key recommendations include transparency about AI-generated content, triangulation and validation of outputs, strengthening AI literacy among RCCE practitioners, and ensuring that AI complements rather than replaces human judgement and local knowledge. Alignment with internationally recognised ethical standards, including those of the World Health Organization, was emphasised as essential.



2. Leadership Support for Community-Based Public Health Action

Strong and sustained leadership support was identified as a prerequisite for effective community-based public health action. Leadership can create enabling environments, mobilise resources, and elevate community engagement on political agendas. However, risks of tokenism and top-down approaches were also noted.

Participants recommended defining leadership competencies for community-based action, synthesising evidence on cost-effectiveness and impact, engaging leaders at multiple levels, and pursuing high-level advocacy through policy dialogues and international forums.

3. Community Engagement

Community engagement emerged as a foundational pillar for inclusive and resilient public health systems. Effective engagement requires continuous relationship-building, understanding community needs, using diverse communication channels, and maintaining contact in both peacetime and crises.

Recommendations emphasised the role of community and religious leaders, multilingual and multi-format materials, feedback mechanisms, and culturally sensitive approaches. While digital tools and AI offer opportunities, participants cautioned against reinforcing exclusion or stigma.

4. Self-Assessment, Audit, and Competency Frameworks

Participants underscored the value of structured self-assessment and competency frameworks to strengthen NGO engagement and support underserved communities. Such frameworks can enhance accountability, inform capacity-building, and guide context-specific RCCE implementation.

Key next steps include developing action plans with timelines, establishing RCCE working groups, engaging funders, and integrating social indicators and longitudinal data to measure impact.

5. Infodemic Insight Reports

Infodemic Insight Reports were identified as a critical tool for early detection of misinformation, rumours, and distortions. By combining qualitative and quantitative social listening, these reports can inform timely, evidence-based communication.

Challenges include high resource requirements and the risk that insights are not translated into action. Participants recommended standardisation, training-of-trainers approaches, and stronger integration of reports into decision-making and communication workflows.



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Reflections and Conclusion

During the final check-out session, participants expressed strong appreciation for the participatory and trust-based format of the meeting. Many described the experience as professionally and personally enriching, highlighting the value of storytelling, open exchange, and the creation of a safe learning space.

Participants reported concrete intentions to apply the methods and insights in their own national and organisational contexts and expressed a clear desire for continued exchange through follow-up activities, communities of practice, and future ASEF-RKI collaborations.

These reflections point to a broader conclusion about the value of the approach taken, more specifically, the value of participatory, co-creative approaches for advancing inclusive RCCE. By grounding discussions in lived experience and converging on concrete action areas, the meeting generated practical insights and strengthened bi-regional networks.

Next steps include disseminating the outcomes, exploring follow-up activities such as webinars and communities of practice, and integrating the recommendations into ongoing ASEF and RKI workstreams. In doing so, the meeting contributes to the shared goal of leaving no one behind in public health communication.



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List of Participants

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Participatory Methods – Conference Reader

This document brings together the participatory methods exactly as they were developed and described during the conference documentation process. All texts are reproduced verbatim and without editorial shortening or reinterpretation. The intention is to provide participants with a faithful methods reader that can be reused and applied in their own practice.

Spatial Check-in Mapping – “Who is in the Room?”

What it is:

A physical mapping method to visualise diversity in the room.

How it works:

- Participants move in the space according to questions (e.g. geography, language, organisation type, confidence)
- Short reflections are invited

Where to use it:

- International meetings
- Large multi-stakeholder workshops
- Project kick-offs
- Network gatherings



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Appreciative Trios (Speaker – Listener – Observer)

Appreciative Trios are a core conversational practice within the Art of Participatory Leadership, grounded in the principles of Appreciative Inquiry and deep listening. The method is based on the assumption that meaningful learning and change do not primarily emerge from analysing problems, but from understanding moments when a system has already functioned well.

Participants work in groups of three, each taking on one of three clearly defined roles: Speaker, Listener, and Observer. The Speaker responds to an appreciative guiding question by telling a real story from their own experience. The Listener offers full, undivided attention, listening without interruption, judgement, or premature interpretation. The Observer notices patterns, emotions, key moments, and contextual factors that contributed to the success described.

Roles rotate so that every participant experiences all three perspectives. This rotation deepens empathy, balances power, and supports collective awareness.

Setting and process:

Appreciative Trios work best in quiet breakout spaces where participants can speak without disturbance. Groups of three sit or stand close together. Each round lasts 10–15 minutes, followed by a brief pause before roles rotate. A full cycle consists of three rounds and one consistent, appreciative guiding question. Harvesting usually takes place after all rounds, with participants writing key insights or enabling conditions on cards that can later be clustered across groups.



Collective Story Harvest (including Listening Groups)

Collective Story Harvest is a participatory learning practice that enables groups to access and make sense of experiential knowledge at scale. Rather than analysing cases from a distance, the method invites participants to learn directly from lived experiences shared through stories.

A small number of contributors are invited to share concrete stories related to a guiding question. These are not presentations but lived narratives that include complexity and learning. The wider group listens attentively, often supported by predefined listening lenses such as target groups, tools, barriers, resources, or actors involved. These lenses help distribute attention and deepen insight.

After the storytelling phase, participants move into listening groups, each reflecting on what they heard through their specific lens. This step transforms individual impressions into shared learning and begins the process of collective sensemaking. Insights are written down and brought back into plenary space, where they are clustered and connected.

Setting and process:

Collective Story Harvest works well in plenary settings with 20–100 participants. Storytellers usually speak for 10–15 minutes each. Listening groups consist of 4–8 participants and meet for 20–30 minutes. Harvesting is visual and thematic, focusing on patterns across stories rather than individual conclusions.



Open Space (Open Dialogue Conference)

Open Space is a participatory method designed to address complex and meaningful questions where outcomes cannot be predefined and where the collective intelligence of the group is essential. Within the Art of Participatory Leadership, Open Space is used when engagement, ownership, and self-organisation are critical, and when diverse perspectives need to be brought into dialogue rather than aligned through instruction.

The practice is grounded in a small set of principles that create a clear yet flexible container for participation. These principles are intentionally simple and are introduced at the beginning of the process to establish shared understanding and trust:

Whoever comes are the right people

Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened

Whenever it starts is the right time

When it's over, it's over

Together, these principles help participants let go of expectations of control and perfection and invite them to fully engage with what emerges in the moment.

A central behavioural guideline in Open Space is the **Law of Mobility (sometimes called the Law of Two Feet)**. It invites participants to take responsibility for their own learning and contribution. If at any point they find themselves neither learning nor contributing, they are encouraged to move to another conversation where they can add more value. This principle supports energy flow, prevents stagnation, and reinforces personal responsibility.

The process begins with a clear guiding question that frames the overall purpose of the dialogue. Participants who feel called to a topic related to this question step forward and propose it to the group during the Marketplace. By doing so, they take on the role of Topic Host. Others then freely choose which conversation they want to join, forming parallel dialogue groups.

Open Space involves **several roles**, which are held lightly and often overlap:

Topic Hosts, who convene and care for a conversation around a specific question

Participants, who contribute their experience, questions, and perspectives

Bumblebees, who move between groups and cross-pollinate ideas

Butterflies, who remain on the margins, reflecting or having informal conversations that often generate unexpected insights

All roles are voluntary and fluid, reinforcing the self-organising nature of the method.

Setting and process:

Open Space works best with groups of 20 to 150 participants. A large central space is needed for the Marketplace, along with several breakout spaces for parallel conversations. Dialogue usually unfolds over two or more rounds of 45–60 minutes. Each group documents key insights, ideas, and next steps on a simple template. Harvesting is an integral part of Open Space. Topic Hosts or group members capture key insights and proposals, which are later shared through a gallery walk or plenary synthesis. This collective harvest ensures that learning and ideas move beyond individual conversations and inform subsequent sensemaking and action.



Gallery Walk

What it is:

A silent peer-learning and sharing method using visualised results.

How it works:

- All group results are displayed on walls
- Participants walk around freely, read, and comment

Where to use it:

- After parallel group work
- At conferences and large workshops
- In multi-topic learning settings



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Check-in

The Check-in is a simple yet powerful practice that supports presence, connection, and shared focus at the beginning of a meeting or process. Rather than starting immediately with content, the Check-in invites participants to arrive fully and acknowledge what they are bringing into the space.

Participants respond briefly to a guiding question, speaking from personal experience while others listen without interruption. Passing is always an option, reinforcing psychological safety. The practice emphasises listening and relationship over discussion or debate.

Setting and process:

Check-ins are usually held in a Circle or plenary setting. Group size can range from small teams to large conferences. Contributions typically last 30–60 seconds per person. Harvesting is light and focuses on recurring themes or shared energy rather than detailed documentation.

Check-out

The Check-out complements the Check-in and supports reflection, integration, and closure. Participants articulate what they are taking with them from the shared experience, helping to consolidate learning and acknowledge collective effort.

Like the Check-in, the Check-out is framed by a simple guiding question and emphasises voluntary participation and attentive listening. It creates a conscious transition out of the shared space.

Setting and process:

Check-outs are held in plenary or Circle format. Contributions are brief. Harvesting may include capturing key quotes, themes, or commitments that signal what resonated most strongly.

1-2-4-All (Liberating Structures)

1-2-4-All is a Liberating Structure designed to include every voice quickly and meaningfully. The method moves participants from individual reflection to collective insight through a simple, structured sequence.

Participants first reflect individually, then share in pairs, followed by groups of four, and finally in plenary. This gradual expansion supports confidence, clarity, and inclusion.

Setting and process:

1-2-4-All works in almost any setting and with any group size. The classic timing is 1 minute alone, 2 minutes in pairs, 4 minutes in groups of four, followed by plenary sharing. Harvesting focuses on emerging patterns and key ideas rather than individual contributions.

Designing for Wiser Action

Designing for Wiser Action is a participatory design practice that helps groups move from shared understanding to meaningful action in complex contexts. Rather than aiming for comprehensive plans, the method focuses on identifying wise next steps that are grounded, feasible, and open to learning.

Participants work in small, diverse groups around clearly defined topics. Over several short rounds, ideas are developed, tested, and refined through dialogue and movement between tables. Topic hosts often remain while others rotate, allowing ideas to evolve through multiple perspectives.

Setting and process:

Typically, 4–8 tables are set up with 4–6 participants each. Rounds last 20–30 minutes. Outputs are captured on one-page templates and shared in plenary or gallery walk formats.



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Sources:

<https://www.artofhosting.org/>
<https://www.liberatingstructures.com/>

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Collective Story Harvest Briefing

Learning from Experiences in Risk Communication

Purpose

To collectively learn from real-life experiences in risk communication within the Global Health context. Through storytelling and reflection, participants identify key principles, patterns, and lessons to strengthen trust, collaboration, and responsiveness in future health emergencies.

Total duration: 2.5–3 hours (adjustable depending on group size and number of stories)

Welcome & Framing (20–25 min)

Create a shared understanding of the session and its purpose. Includes a short check-in, introduction to the Collective Story Harvest method, and presentation of the guiding question:

“What have we learned about building and maintaining trust in risk communication across diverse communities?”

Introducing the Harvest Lenses (15 min)

Each listening team or individual focuses on one learning lens:

- **Specific Needs of groups being addressed**
- **Who was involved in the Chain of communication**
- **What tools have worked well?**
- **Barriers / Limitations**
- **Resources**

Other suggestions:

- **Trust and Relationships** – How was trust built, challenged, or lost?
- **Collaboration Across Sectors and Cultures** – What enabled or blocked cooperation?
- **Leadership and Decision-Making** – Which moments of courage or clarity made a difference?
- **Messages and Channels** – What worked (or didn't) in communicating uncertainty or risk?
- **Equity and Inclusion** – How were marginalized voices included or excluded?
- **Key Learnings for the Future** – What principles or patterns can guide us in future emergencies?

Storytelling (60 min)

3–5 storytellers share real experiences (8–10 minutes each), e.g., on vaccine hesitancy, cross-border communication, or engagement of local leaders. Harvesters listen through their lens, noting insights, emotions, and patterns.

Sharing the Harvest (40–50 min)

Harvest groups present key insights and patterns. The host facilitates dialogue around emerging principles of effective risk communication.

Integration & Closing (15–20 min)

Participants reflect on key takeaways and next steps. Closing circle and acknowledgement of storytellers and harvesters.

Materials

- Flipcharts
- Markers, sticky notes, or digital equivalents
- Optional: Graphic Recorder or note-taker
- Space arranged for storytelling

Facilitation Principles (Art of Hosting)

- **Divergence → Emergence → Convergence** – moving from many perspectives to shared meaning
- **Presence & deep listening** – stories are a source of wisdom, not data
- **Harvest for learning, not judgment**
- **Include all voices** – balancing expertise and lived experience



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Storyteller Briefing

Collective Story Harvest – Learning from Experiences in Risk Communication

Purpose of the Session

The Collective Story Harvest is a participatory method used to draw learning and insight from real-life experiences. In this session, we will listen to stories of practice in risk communication to uncover key lessons about trust, collaboration, and communication across sectors and cultures.

Role of the Storyteller

As a storyteller, you are invited to share a real experience related to risk communication in the context of public health. Your story should highlight moments of challenge, learning, or transformation—times when something important shifted or became clear.

What to Share

You are welcome to tell a story that reflects your personal or professional experience. The focus is not on success or failure, but on learning. Each story will help the group understand how communication, trust, and collaboration play out in complex health contexts.

You might consider stories that involve:

Listening Lenses

- **Specific Needs** of groups being addressed
- Who was involved in the **Chain of communication**
- **What tools** have worked well?
- **Barriers / Limitations**
- **Resources**
- **General**

Guidelines for Storytelling

- Keep your story between 8–10 minutes.
- Focus on a concrete example or experience rather than general statements.
- Speak from personal or direct professional experience (“I/we experienced...”).
- Include key moments, decisions, emotions, and what you learned.
- It is fine if your story does not have a perfect ending – the learning lies in the journey.

What Will Happen During the Session

Each storyteller will share their experience while participants listen through different 'harvest lenses' (e.g., trust, collaboration, leadership, inclusion). After the storytelling round, listeners will share what they heard and learned. The goal is not to evaluate stories but to harvest insights for collective learning.

Support and Preparation

The facilitation team is available to help you prepare your story if you wish. You do not need a PowerPoint presentation—just your story, told in your own words. If you prefer, you may bring short notes or a visual aid.

Thank you for contributing your experience.
Your story is a vital part of our shared learning journey.

We will offer a short briefing for the storytellers if required.

See you in Berlin.
The Hosting Team of ASEF and RKI



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