



Putting the WHO Global Guidance
Framework Into Action:

Case Studies Across the World

International Biosecurity Symposium

Wednesday, 14 May 2025

Dr Maria Espona

Since the publication of the WHO Global Guidance Framework for the Responsible Use of the Life Sciences (WHO GGF) in September 2022, Health Security Partners (HSP) have been using it to guide discussions and activities on different bio-related topics across their programs.

This framework has served as a valuable tool for structuring conversations and initiatives, ensuring a responsible approach to addressing challenges in the life sciences.

Designing workshops and activities in diverse countries and contexts can be challenging. However, using the WHO GGF as guidance provided a clear structure for framing the content. It also enabled the adaptation of its concepts to create interactive sessions that effectively engaged the participants.

These sessions helped the participants understand the concepts more thoroughly and allowed them to identify gaps and strengths in their current systems and develop actionable strategies to address those gaps.

Georgia – BACAC Conference 2022

A 1-day pre-conference workshop used the Global Guidance Framework as a tool to frame and trigger the discussion with the participants.

First, a series of presentations from the participating countries were made to induce them to think about the risks that they might be facing in their institutions.

Then, a structured brainstorming took place, and it focused on considering the following risks, to identify specific situations in their institutions and write them in post its:

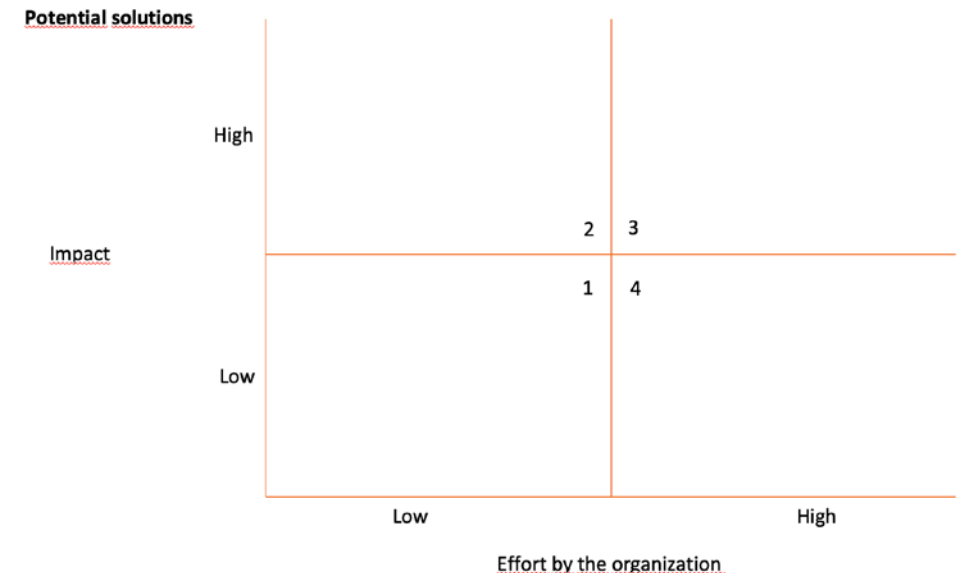
- Unintentional actions (accidents, issues when sampling or storage);
- Unexpected findings during research, experiments, product development, that are potentially harmful;
- Unintended applications (potentially harmful or unethical) unanticipated by the researcher or developer; and
- Deliberate misuse

Later, using the Mind-Mapping technique, each challenge identified was paired with a potential solutions.

Finally, the potential solutions were prioritised, and the winning ones were identified.

There are several interesting outcomes from the workshop:

- They realized that it is a top priority to have a common understanding, and even the need for a **glossary** to improve the communication between stakeholders was mentioned. Once this step is fulfilled, it will be possible to progress.
- They highlighted the importance of having not only trainings, but **formal education at the universities** to cover topics related to due diligence practice and its implementation.
- Along with gaining knowledge about good practices, the participants stressed the importance of having **good quality information** for their daily job. They also consider it is a key not only for the communication process but also to achieving organizational and research results.



- They consider that common understanding, education/training and having accurate and reliable information are the building blocks to setting up a governance framework, which should include:
 - Be proactive and include threat identification, including new topics, such as cyberbiosecurity;
 - Data protection and the protection of the procedures and knowledge;
 - A comprehensive monitoring system; and
 - High interaction with the human resources sector to work on confidentiality principles and in a thorough personal selection (and follow-up) process.

- Parallel to setting up the framework, the importance of engaging the different stakeholders and stimulating their interaction, commitment, and coordinated actions was mentioned.
- Having guidelines or a legal framework that facilitates the implementation of due diligence practices was considered complicated to design but needed, and it could be elaborated in parallel with other activities.

In summary, all the workshop participants contributed to developing a roadmap to implement due diligence practices, paying attention to their mental models and cultural backgrounds.

Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic

The two three-day workshops started with presentations from local experts who presented the situation in their countries regarding biosafety, biosecurity, and responsible science.

Then, in groups, they did a gap analysis with the objective of identifying which was the situation in their workplaces regarding the organisation, the people involved as well as the data.

| | Organization (areas involved) | People (what the people must do) | Data (which data/information are involved) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Lab accidents | | | |
| Lab incidents | | | |
| Accidents/incidents early detection | | | |
| Rapid response | | | |
| Malignant misuse | | | |
| Information exchange and learning | | | |
| Others | | | |

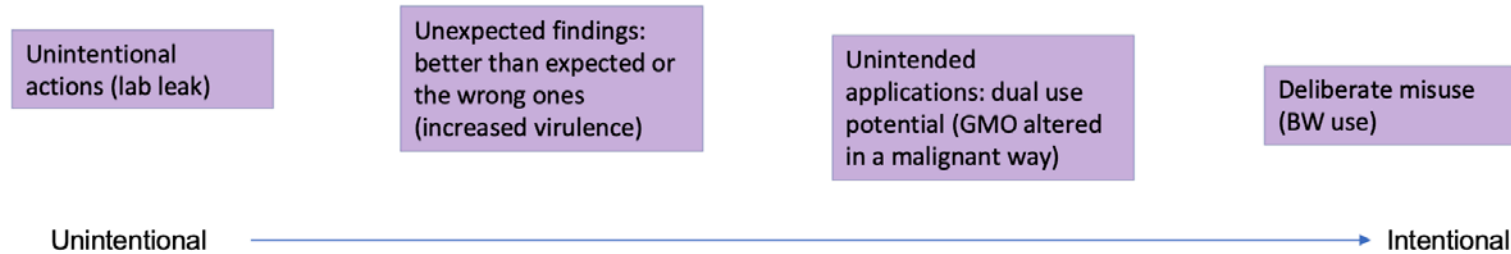
With the information collected in this table, they later identified their vulnerabilities and discussed potential solutions.

- Finally, they prioritised the different solutions.
- The participants selected some of the solutions and submitted them for a “**grant challenge**” to make the changes part of the new reality.
- Also, a report with all the information collected during the workshop was produced and distributed to the participants.
- The execution of the project, with a series of steps prepared according to the needs of each country and using the WHO Global Guidance Framework for the Responsible Use of the Life Sciences to provide the theoretical support, showed the importance of having a structured approach to address the problems of the countries in a sustainable way.



Brazil

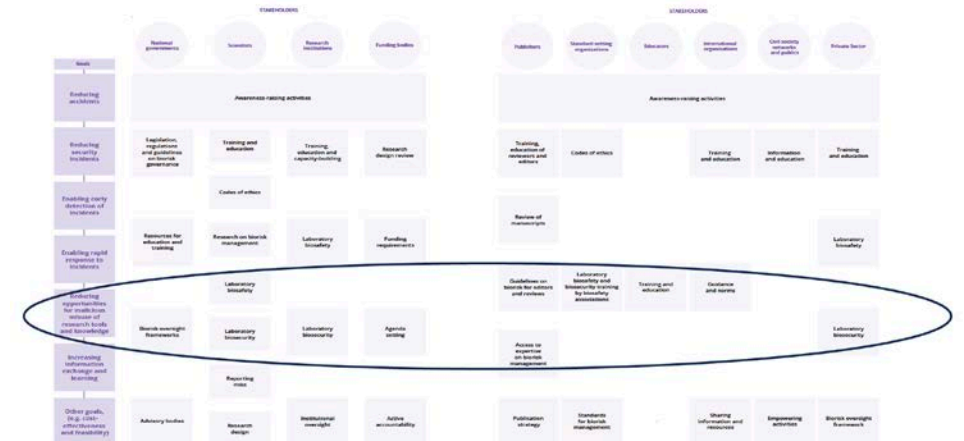
In this workshop we starting framing the problem of cyberbiosecurity with:



WHY?

In the context of collaborative work, it is critical to **know who are our partners in any research or academic activity**

Later, we selected the goal (reducing opportunities for malicious misuse of research tools and knowledge and identified the different stakeholders and activities to perform



Scenario 7.

International collaboration on high-consequence pathogens research

This scenario underscores issues associated with research on high-consequence pathogens and international collaboration among countries that do not have the same policies on biorisk management.

To discuss the scenario, we grouped the participants and asked them to discuss and answer some questions.

But to present and discuss the results we used a Menti, to have a highly dynamic session where all can learn from the others.

It worked really well!

Conclusions

The Global Guidance Framework for the Responsible Use of Sciences is a valuable tool to use in workshops.

It helps to provide a context for discussing some topics that can be difficult. At the same time, it is culturally neutral, allowing honest and productive discussions.

So far, my experience using it has been interesting as a professional. Also, since it remains available for the participants for further consultations and work, it has become an amazing source of inspiration.

Thank you!

Any questions?