

IPhsa

BREAKOUT SESSION AT
IPMHE 2025

*Strengthening the Protective Canopy:
Civil-Military Integration in the Indo-Pacific*



December 5, 2025

Yokohama, Japan

IPhsa Artist Attribute

‘STRONGER TOGETHER’

by Amy Allerton

Our future is determined by the strength of our foundations. When we are firmly planted in rich soils of sustainability, equity and cooperation, deep roots grow into a strong and enduring tree that flourishes with a vast network of interconnected branches - symbols of partnerships, unity, of knowledge sharing, respect and amplified voices. Each branch reaches outwards, continually creating new connections to add to its protective canopy - a living, fortified shield that shelters the world, its people, communities, animals and environment.

The tree is strongest when its branches thrive, when many nations, cultures and peoples work side-by-side to form a powerful network of communication, coordination and care - a collective blueprint for action in times of both peace and crisis.

Although we face many threats across the world, both natural and unnatural, we are not alone. Our strength and capacity multiplies when we unite on a common path - building a healthy and resilient future together, for all.

CIVIL-MILITARY COLLABORATION

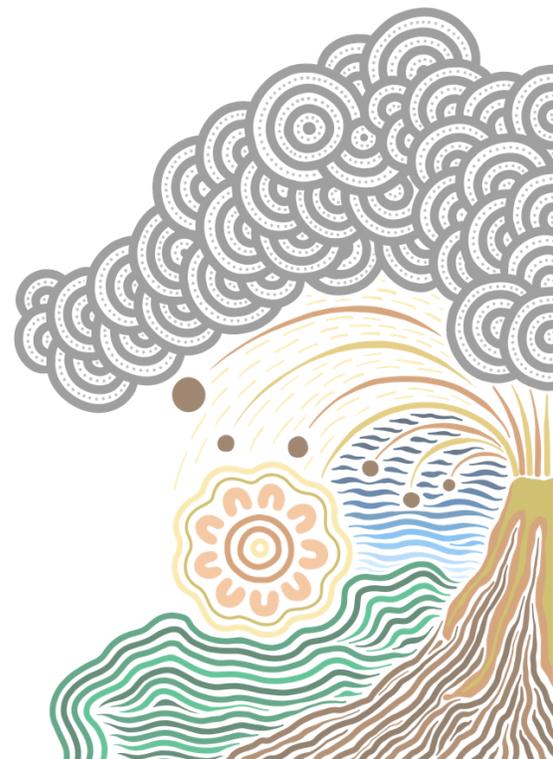
Gold lines creating connections that journey outside of the tree represent the civil-military joint forces going out into communities impacted by health security threats to provide direct, on-the-ground crisis support through healthcare, communications and operations.

CIVILIANS

Orange branches in the foreground represent civilians taking the lead in global health security.

MILITARY

Purple branches behind the orange branches represent military units supporting civilians with global health security.





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PREPARED BY THE UNIFORMED SERVICES UNIVERSITY
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NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE HEALTH COOPERATION,
USINDOPACOM AND THE ADF



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil-Military Collaboration as a Regional Health Security Asset

For the first time, the alliance presented its "Stronger Together" framework—symbolized by a protective canopy—at the Indo-Pacific Military Health Exchange (IPMHE), the region's premier military-to-military medical forum. The narrative of the session centered on a shift from theoretical partnership to tangible regional security.

A highlight was the demonstration of the positive health security activities implemented in Papua New Guinea since the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) joined the Indo-Pacific health alliance for security (IPhsa) as the alliance's third formal signatory in May 2025. This transition validates the IPhsa's mission: ensuring that health security is not a standalone medical concern but a fundamental component of defense and foreign policy. Leadership emphasized that in a region prone to natural disasters and infectious disease, military readiness and civilian health infrastructure are intertwined and must function together in a well coordinated whole of government approach. This connection was further reinforced by a civilian, nongovernmental perspective which emphasized the need for better cross-sectoral understanding and civil-military cooperation to achieve a shared future for all. In keeping with that goal, IPhsa's next event will be held in advance of the civilian-led Global Health Security Conference (GHSC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 7-8 June, 2026. GHSC has incorporated a track focused on civil-military cooperation in their agenda, and a panel which will highlight the role of IPhsa to the civilian audience, supporting dialogue across the military-civilian divide and creating opportunities for collaboration.



IPhsa Vision

To integrate civil-military cooperation and sustained health security partnerships contributing to a prepared and resilient Indo-Pacific region.

IPhsa Mission

To counter global health security threats, strengthen regional resilience, and expand civil-military collaboration with like-minded partners to enhance shared capabilities to safeguard the health security of the Indo-Pacific region.

IPhsa's STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen Health and Medical Interoperability for crisis response:

- Collate, validate, and if necessary, develop common standards for civil-military health collaboration.
- Conduct joint training and simulation exercises to enhance coordination across like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Identify existing, and enhance the development of new networks for shared protocols on crisis communication and response operations.

2. Enhance Civil-Military Coordination:

- Create mechanisms for sustained dialogue between civilian, military, and security sectors.

- Collaborate with regional frameworks for coordinated responses to health crises, ensuring alignment with national and international priorities.
- Improve resilience of partners through robust multisectoral crisis response readiness.

3. Build National and Regional Capacities:

- Provide technical support for health security projects tailored to the needs of like-minded partners across the Indo-Pacific region member states' needs.
- Support collective action by enhancing and facilitating the development of national plans and standard operating procedures aligned with national priorities and regional frameworks.

4. Mobilize Multisectoral Partners:

- Expand partnerships, including private sector, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions.
- Advocate for "whole-of-society" approaches to address health security challenges.
- Engagement with interagency partners by each IPhsa focal point to promote the alliance and build civil-military coalitions in each country.

5. Develop Professional Networks:

- Maintain and expand the IPhsa website as an online platform for information exchange, best practices, and success stories.
- Amplify messaging in public fora through social media, publications, news articles et al.
- Facilitate annual forums and webinars to foster peer-to-peer learning.

6. Expand Participation:

- Encourage non-member nations and regional organizations to join IPhsa activities.
- Engage a variety of stakeholders from multiple sectors within the Indo-Pacific region.
- Engage like-minded multi-sectoral partners beyond the Indo-Pacific.

LOOKING AHEAD:

IPhsa MALAYSIA 2026

EVENT: IPhsa June Session **LOCATION:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

DATE: 7-8 June, 2026 **HOST:** Co-hosted by ADF, USINDOPACOM, and the Malaysian Armed Forces

Held in advance of the Global Health Security Conference to synchronize military health leadership with civilian and nongovernmental global health security experts and policymakers.

OPENING & STRATEGIC VISION:

THE "PROTECTIVE CANOPY"

AIRDCRE Nicole dos Santos, Director General Operational Health - ADF's Joint Health Command - opened the session by acknowledging the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' hospitality and noting that the Indo-Pacific is a region of "great beauty and diversity" but also one of "profound vulnerability" to health threats. She highlighted the IPhsa artwork, Stronger Together, which features a central tree representing the critical connections, communication, and cooperation that form a powerful shield against conflict, pollution, and disease. She traced the alliance's evolution from its 2022 founding to the 2024 signing of the Terms of Reference in Sydney and the 2025 signing of the Terms of Reference in PNG, emphasizing that health security is inextricably linked to defense and foreign policy.

AIRCDRE dos Santos said that the May 2025 IPhsa event, co-hosted with the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), resulted in PNGDF becoming the third official signatory of the IPhsa Terms of Reference, and becoming a formal member of the alliance. She said that this partnership strengthens regional health security and aligns with PNG's National Health Plan goal of collective responsibility. In AIRCDRE dos Santos view, the IPhsa now serves as a primary platform for integrating civil-military health security into broader defense and foreign policy, recognizing that health security is a prerequisite for regional stability. She added that practical cooperation is already active, utilizing military medical expertise to maintain the alliance's momentum and ensure that health security remains a core component of Indo-Pacific defense strategy.

"The expertise, dedication, and commitment of the military medicine community are a key part of the protective canopy symbolized in the IPhsa artwork."

AIRDCRE DOS SANTOS

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PNG SUCCESS STORY

Lt Col Peter Kaminiel, PNGDF Director of Health Services, highlighted the May 2025 IPhsa event in PNG, held under the theme "Health security is national security," noting that it marked the first regional use of the WHO Civil-Military Health Security Mapping Tool (CMAP). He explained that the process enabled a frank assessment of national capabilities, identifying key gaps in human resources and equipment, and helped move stakeholders from working in silos toward coordinated action. Since the event, the PNGDF has reviewed its MOUs, conducted joint exercises with civilian provincial authorities, increased dialogue with civilian partners on shared health threats, joined the One Health Committee, and engaged in key steering committees.



“The meeting provided a crucial platform for regional partners to share best practices, build mutual understanding, and create a robust network for communication and coordination to address health threats.”

**LT COL PETER KAMINIEL, PNGDF
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES**

Lt Col Kaminiel emphasized that the event strengthened understanding of the link between health and national security, improved civil-military collaboration, and formally announced PNG’s alliance membership. Post-event surveys showed strong engagement, including new collaboration opportunities identified by 80% of respondents and new potential partners by 79%. Kaminiel summarized four main outcomes: formalizing PNG’s regional health security role through

signing Terms of Reference with Australia and the United States; reinforcing shared civil-military understanding at senior levels; improving preparedness through a functional exercise that identified coordination gaps and set joint action goals; and driving multisectoral action through CMAP-informed assessments. He concluded by highlighting the IPHsa artwork presented at the opening, noting that it reflected the many health threats facing the region and the need to work together to prepare.

ADVANCING THE CIVIL–MILITARY DIALOGUE

Next, Dr. Saskia Popescu, Chief Executive Officer of the Global Health Security Network (GHSN), provided a nongovernmental perspective on Forging a Shared Future for Civilian and Military Health. GHSN is a multidisciplinary nongovernmental organization that connects experts, practitioners, and policymakers to advance evidence-based approaches to disease prevention, detection, resilience, and response. Drawing on her field experience, Dr. Popescu emphasized that lessons from frontline practitioners must inform policy and strategy. She highlighted the importance of clear policy and guidance that balance stakeholder priorities and ensure messaging is targeted to the appropriate audience.

Dr. Popescu discussed persistent challenges in civil and nongovernmental engagement with the defense sector, including institutional norms and concerns

around the securitization of health. She noted that fears of losing influence or limited funding can contribute to mistrust and limited engagement outside of crisis settings. She stressed that sustained, routine communication is essential to address these challenges and to reinforce that force readiness and resilience are integral components of health infrastructure.

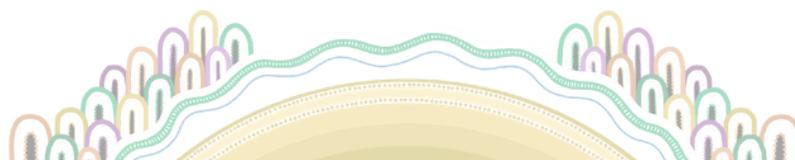
She identified several key elements for effective collaboration:

- **Clear roles and responsibilities:** Improving understanding of the capabilities and limits of government agencies, including the military, during crises.
- **Shared definitions and scope:** Establishing common terminology to support coordination, problem definition, and impact measurement.
- **Use of existing tools and international frameworks:** Leveraging established mechanisms to clarify roles while reinforcing national sovereignty and ownership.

Dr. Popescu concluded by underscoring IPhsa’s role in facilitating alignment across civilian, military, and nongovernmental stakeholders. She noted that the alliance helps demonstrate the shared objectives of these groups and supports collaboration through common frameworks, sustained dialogue, and mutual understanding. She encouraged military leadership to actively engage with civil society, emphasizing that civil society organizations bring technical expertise and operational experience that can support communication and shared responsibility. As she noted, continuity of communication enables continuity of collaboration.

“Civil-military collaboration is required for effective bioresilience efforts including biosurveillance, biosafety, and biosecurity.”

DR. SASKIA POPESCU, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY NETWORK



EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRESS

Dr. Stephanie Petzing, Senior Advisor for Health Security at the National Institute for Defense Health Cooperation, presented an overview of efforts to assess and communicate IPhsa's impact on collaboration and health security planning. She described a six-month follow-up conducted with participants from the IPhsa event in PNG to assess: (1) how participants were applying knowledge gained from the event; (2) progress toward goals identified during the functional exercise; and (3) current barriers to implementation. Dr. Petzing reported that more than 80% of respondents had applied knowledge from the exercise, and 64% had advocated for increased military-civilian coordination.

Reported activities included cross-sector training, development of documents such as MOUs, consultation with leadership on future objectives, and the establishment of coordination committees. As an example of IPhsa's impact, Dr. Petzing noted that following the event, the University of Newcastle received a grant from the Australia Department of Defence's Strategic Policy Grants Program to lead a new civil-military training initiative in PNG, supporting collaboration between civilian stakeholders and the PNGDF. The project focuses on cross-training and strengthening rapid response team capacity by integrating civilian expertise with military requirements.

Dr. Petzing also shared key challenges identified by participants in a post-event survey, including staffing and funding constraints, as well as gaps in legal frameworks and institutional support. She offered that IPhsa provides a platform to surface shared challenges, improve cross-sector communication, and facilitate the exchange of best practices and potential solutions. In closing, she directed participants to the [IPhsa website](#) for additional resources and continued engagement.



CLOSING CALL TO ACTION:

THE ROAD TO MALAYSIA

In his closing remarks, CAPT Peter Roberts, USINDOPACOM Command Surgeon, thanked the Japanese hosts for their hospitality and for creating a productive environment. He also recognized the ADF and the PNGDF for their co-leadership of both the event and IPhsa, noting that their partnership has been central to the alliance's growth and success. CAPT Roberts highlighted the inaugural IPhsa session at IPMHE as a key milestone and emphasized the importance of civil-military integration for regional health security. He reflected on IPMHE's nearly 30-year history, noting that while the forum's name has evolved, its core mission of military-to-military medical collaboration has remained consistent. He said IPhsa complements the IPMHE mission by formally recognizing the role of civilian partners in military medicine. While IPhsa remains a military-military alliance, member nations have committed to coordination with civilian counterparts. He noted that IPhsa strengthens IPMHE by enabling civilian engagement and reinforcing the value of collective action. CAPT Roberts also acknowledged Lt Col Kaminie's leadership and

"Our mission—to strengthen civil-military partnerships—remains critical. Military-to-military cooperation alone is not sufficient. IPhsa helps bridge military and civilian sectors through trust, shared expertise, and common purpose."

**CAPT PETER ROBERTS,
USINDOPACOM COMMAND SURGEON**

cited the open and candid discussions in PNG as examples of the alliance's collaborative approach and a foundation for future work. In closing, he encouraged participants to act as ambassadors for IPhsa and help expand its reach. He underscored the importance of defense sector engagement with civilian-led health initiatives to support regional preparedness, noting that IPhsa

facilitates these partnerships. He confirmed that the next IPhsa event will take place from 7-8 June, 2026 in Malaysia in advance of the GHSC, and thanked Dr. Popescu, conference convener, for her contributions. He concluded by thanking participants for their continued commitment to international collaboration and expressed his hope to reconvene in Malaysia in 2026.

