



# Creating resilient health systems worldwide

# Introducing the Institute for Resilient Health Systems

The Institute for Resilient Health Systems (IRHS) is committed to advancing health systems resilience research and capacity strengthening. Working with partners across the world, we strive to create health systems that are robust, equitable, and capable of delivering essential services under the most challenging circumstances.

**Our vision:** Resilient health systems worldwide.

**Our mission:** Establish and grow a cross-disciplinary network of researchers who, through partnerships with a special focus on underserved communities, contribute to health systems' abilities to prepare, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stressors and reduce avoidable and unfair differences in health worldwide.

IRHS is housed in Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) in the UK and in LSTM hubs:

- Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI),
- Malawi Liverpool Wellcome programme (MLW) and
- Centre for Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Research (CeSHHAR) in Zimbabwe.

Together we are a network of researchers from multiple disciplines, with a focus on health policy and system research.

## Background to IRHS

LSTM is committed to improving health outcomes for disadvantaged populations in low-resource settings across Africa, Asia and Liverpool. We achieve this through inclusive research and highly successful capacity strengthening.

Health systems research at LSTM focuses on influencing policy and practice. Staff collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders and integrate expertise in areas such as community health systems, gender and equity, disability inclusion, urban health, the health workforce, health economics and financing. Our research is increasingly investigating **how to enhance health systems' preparedness and response to sudden shocks or long-term stressors**, and it became clear that strategic funding, a unified agenda and committed research structures were needed to enable health systems research at LSTM to be more proactive and methodologically innovative. The Institute for Research in Health Systems was founded in 2024 to advance health systems resilience research and capacity strengthening globally.

### What is health system resilience?

The capacity of the health system – including health actors, institutions, and populations – to prepare for and respond to shocks while maintaining function.

# Why is IRHS needed?

Countries across the globe face increasing, multiple, intersecting shocks and stressors. These shocks include (re)emerging infectious diseases, climate change-induced weather events, economic and political crises, and conflict, all against the background of ongoing stressors like poverty, migration, rapid urbanisation and inequality. Local crises are becoming intertwined with global polycrisis and having a compound effect on health systems:

- substantially reducing financing for health systems,
- diverting resources from core services to crisis-related health needs,
- damaging facilities and dispersing the health workforce,
- disrupting service uptake, especially by vulnerable groups, and
- eroding efforts to build healthy, equitable, just, and prosperous societies.

This challenge calls for health systems that not only deliver responsive, effective, inclusive, equitable, quality, and sustainable people-centred health services in 'calm' times, but are also resilient in the face of shocks – able to maintain core functions and minimise disruptions by absorbing pressure, adapting to change and transforming through learning from its response.

## What are health system shocks and stressors?

Shocks are sudden and extreme changes which impact on a health system and require emergency preparation, response and recovery.

Stressors require everyday resilience.

# What will IRHS study?

## Topics IRHS will study

### Themes include:

- Community health systems
- Service delivery and quality of care at primary level
- Human resource management
- Health governance
- Equitable access to services
- Climate change and health
- Migration and health
- Polycrises
- Transnational crises

Our research is guided by four key questions:

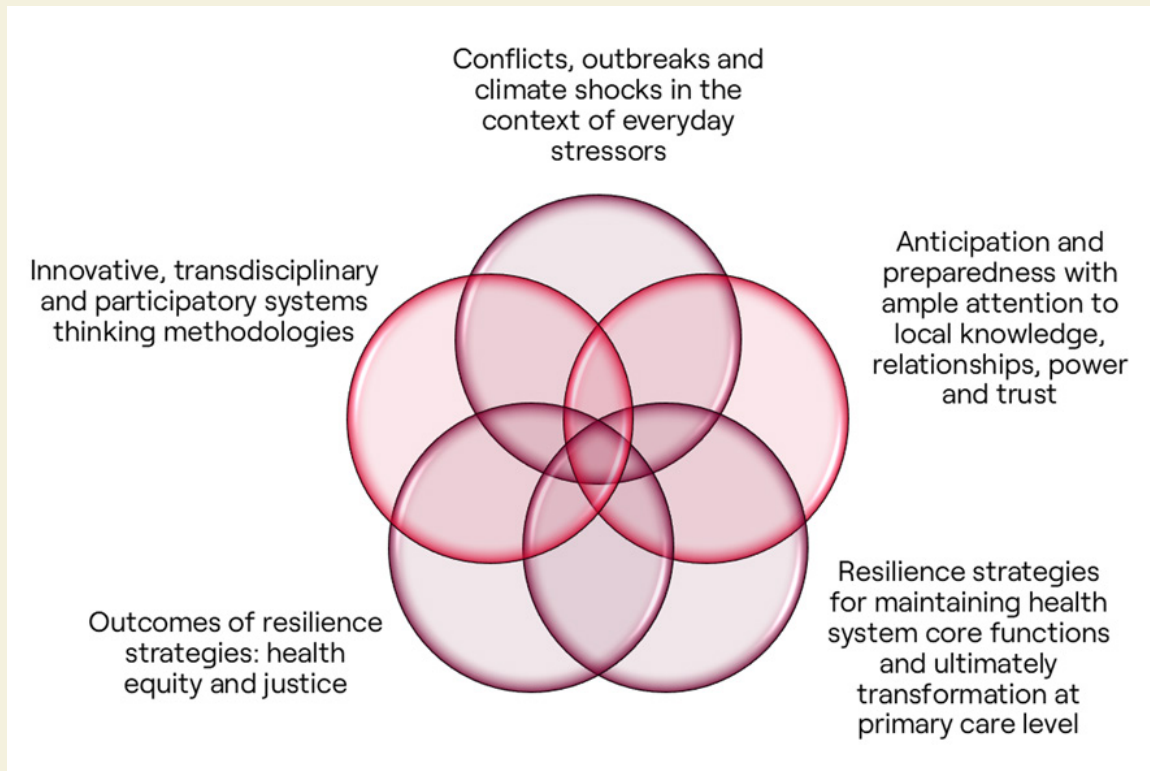
**Exploratory research on preparedness:** What enables a health system to maintain function during shocks?

**Explanatory research on decision making:** How are response strategies chosen, and whose interests do they serve?

**Evaluative research on outcomes:** Do resilience strategies align with ethical and equitable health goals?

**Cross-cutting research on measurement and implementation:** What tools and processes can effectively measure resilience, and how can they be applied in policy and practice?

IRHS's research aims to improve preparedness for shocks, emphasising situational knowledge, relationships, power and trust. We seek to evaluate and learn from resilience strategies to transform health care, particularly at the primary health care level, with a focus on health equity and justice. IRHS's research approach is participatory, multi-sectoral, and grounded in systems thinking, using adaptive, mixed-methods research and co-creation with stakeholders.



IRHS research focuses

# How will IRHS make an impact?

The IRHS strategy has three priority areas and two cross-cutting strategies which together will provide routes to impact:

**Health Systems Resilience Research:** IRHS is already home to several multi-country, multi-year research consortia, including ReBUILD for Resilience, Urban SHADE, the LIGHT Consortium and REACT Consortium (more on our affiliated projects on our website). We are establishing health systems resilience research agendas in Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, and subsequently developing sleeper research protocols which will allow us to rapidly respond to research opportunities when crises surge. Our responsive research fund will also support health systems research during shocks in the Global South.

**Capacity Strengthening:** IRHS enhances individual and organisational research capabilities of both academic and non-academic partners. Through training, mentorship, implementation research and quality improvement approaches the IRHS learning network facilitates collaborative learning, creating opportunities to share progress, challenges, opportunities and work towards shared goals. We also collate our academic and experiential learning in an open-source repository of health system resilience resources.

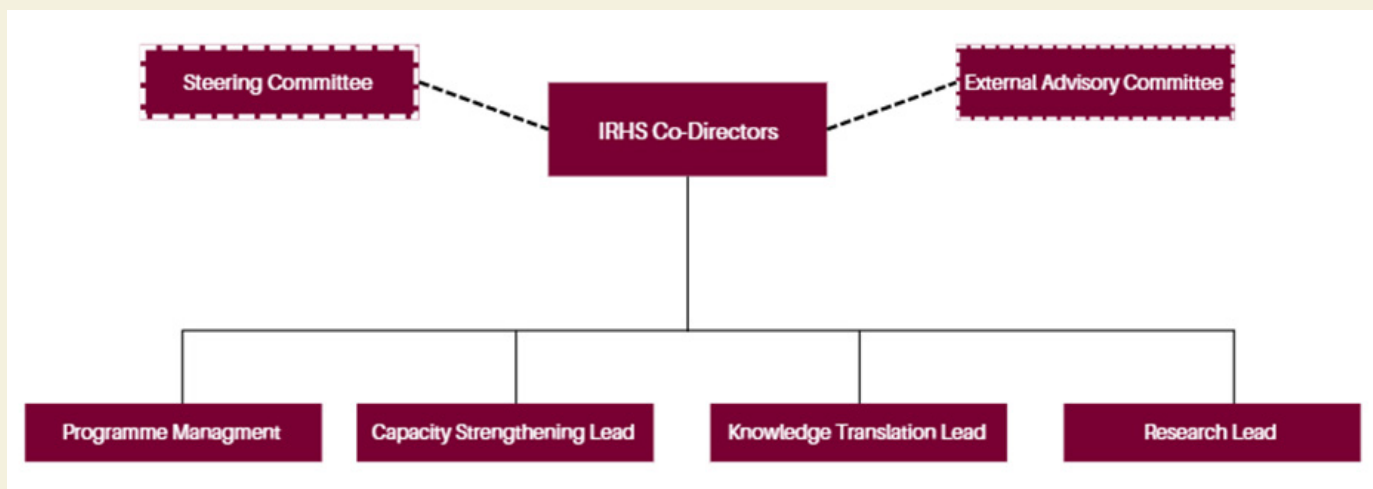
**Knowledge Translation:** The synthesis, communication, exchange and application of our health system resilience learning is essential to achieving impact on policy and practice. We reach out to diverse audiences to foster evidence-informed decision making during both calm and shocks (e.g. develop rapid evidence synthesis mechanisms) and demonstrate the impact of resilience strategies. Leveraging existing health systems knowledge platforms and policies enable us to build trust, endorse and model evidence use.

**Cross-Cutting Strategy 1:** Researcher-level, institutional and structural barriers have constrained Southern leadership in research. IRHS will expand health systems research leadership in the Global South, generating locally relevant research and ensuring evidence is translated into policy and practice.

**Cross-Cutting Strategy 2:** IRHS has developed a governance structure which will be evaluated after two years and is continuously working to secure sustainable funding for health systems resilience research and capacity strengthening.



# IRHS governance structure



IRHS governance structure (--- indicates external body)

IRHS is led by two co-directors, Professor Miriam Taegtmeier and Professor Joanna Raven. The rest of the IRHS core team comprises leads for the three IRHS priorities (capacity development, research and knowledge translation) and LSTM's programme management team. The internal steering committee comprises principal investigators of affiliated projects. The external advisory committee is responsible for providing strategic guidance to IRHS.

## Get involved with IRHS

### Engage with IRHS

- We are keen to engage with global health resilience stakeholders, including policymakers, health agencies, development partners, health care providers and the private sector.
- Register for information on our mini symposia.
- Follow us on social media and subscribe to our newsletter.

### Learn with IRHS

- We will soon offer support for master's and PhD studentships, with a focus on the Global South.

### Research with IRHS

- We are keen to work with other centres of health systems research excellence.

### Support IRHS

- Sustainable partnerships and funding models are essential for ensuring IRHS's long-term impact. Contact us to support our work.

Contact us at [irhs@lstmed.ac.uk](mailto:irhs@lstmed.ac.uk)

# Stay connected

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<https://bit.ly/LSTM-IRHS>



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