Our Mission

Driving change for comprehensive and equitable health systems through research and capacity development. Established in April 1992 on the brink of democracy in South Africa, HST has played a significant role in the evolution of the national health system. Today our strength lies in the knowledge, insight and experience we harness through synergising our research and implementation outputs towards a healthy life for all.

Our Vision

Improved health equity in a healthier Africa

Our Values

• committed to excellence
• honest and transparent
• responsive
• collaborative

Our Mission

Driving change for comprehensive and equitable health systems through research and capacity development

Our Approach is Based On

• the primary health care philosophy
• generating evidence-based interventions, good practice and innovations
• providing management, implementation and research support at all levels of the health system
• providing guidance, mentoring and training
• taking action to address the influence of the social determinants of health on the burden of disease
• tailoring our work to local contexts
• creating, sharing, storing and curating new knowledge

We generally focus on addressing health challenges within the South African context.

Directorates

The Health Systems Trust (HST) operates through its Programmes, Programmes Directorates and Corporate Services. The wide variety of projects are cross-cutting and involve inter-disciplinary collaboration across five core business areas:

• providing management and implementation support in health districts
• supporting implementation of priority health programmes
• conducting essential national health research
• generating information for planning, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making
• offering guidance, mentoring and training on good practice development

Some Key HST Programmes and Projects:

HST’s flagship project entitled ‘South Africa’s Sustainable Response to HIV/AIDS and TB’ (SA SURE PRO) was awarded a third grant for the period 2021 to 2026 under the U.S. President’s Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) programme. The SA SURE PRO project focuses on the provincial, district, facility and community levels of the South African health system to support Department of Health (DoH) facilities in four PEPFAR focus districts in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province – eThekwini, uMgungundlovu, uThukela, and Zululand.

A randomised controlled trial on delivery optimisation for antiretroviral therapy (DO ART) was conducted from 2016 to 2019 by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and partners to provide community-based ART initiation, monitoring and resupply to HIV-positive people in South Africa and Uganda. Funded through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, HST set out to test the HSRC results in a real-world setting to improve the numbers of ART-eligible clients being initiated on treatment and their continuity of care towards viral suppression within six months.

Funded by ELMA Philanthropies and led by a partner consortium with the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) as National Co-ordinating Partner, the Unfinished Business Project seeks to achieve objectives in the supported districts (eThekwini, Zululand and uMgungundlovu), in line with UNAIDS global 95-95-95 targets, building on the ‘Getting to Zero’ strategy to end the HIV epidemic by 2030. The project has been active since May 2019, and following a successful bid for the extension of its second phase, has been extended for an 18-month period from 1 May 2022 to 31 October 2023.

The goal of the ADAPT initiative is to improve access to vaccines, promote equity, and increase uptake through community-based vaccination while strengthening facility-based vaccination by integrating the immunisation into primary health care services. The aim is to vaccinate 70% of the eligible population in the HST ADAPT-supported districts, including eThekwini south and four sub-districts in Zululand.

Funded by the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, HST is conducting a three-year Cervical Cancer Prevention, Access and Control (CCPAC) Project in Zululand District under the auspices of a consortium comprising HST, the Zululand Department of Health (ZDoH), the Cancer & Infectious Diseases Epidemiology Research Unit (CIDERU) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), and Genius Quality (GQ). The project is designed to address the challenge of high cervical cancer incidence and mortality by employing a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) framework for improving access to early screening, diagnostic treatment and palliative services in the district. Service delivery is directed at HIV-positive women.

The KZN Pregnancy Exposure Registry project, otherwise known as ‘Ubomi Buhle’ (Understanding Birth Outcomes from Mothers and Infants Building Healthcare by Linking Exposures), is a national project aimed at improving our under-
In order to achieve the vision of providing equitable access to cost-effective, quality healthcare services, the Zambian government, through its MoH, adopted SmartCare Plus Technical Assistance as a national acceptable standard for an Electronic Health Records (EHR) System. SmartCare has in recent years evolved and has become a fully-fledged EHR system covering nearly all service delivery areas for a typical healthcare facility in Zambia.

**South African Health Review**

HST produces the flagship publication the *South African Health Review (SAHR)* an accredited peer-reviewed journal of critical analysis and commentary by specialists on key issues relating to health systems policy and practice. Containing South African perspectives on health policy developments and their implementation, as well as monitored changes and challenges in the provision of equitable and accessible health care in the country, the Review has gained increasing prestige as an authoritative and comprehensive resource.

**District Health Barometer**

The aim of the *District Health Barometer (DHB)*, funded by the Public Health Enhancement Fund, is to develop an annual publication and an online interactive platform that will contain the analysis and interpretation of aggregated and disaggregated data that monitors trends for key health system indicators. The DHB assists district health and other managers to monitor and evaluate trends in the delivery of health services in their respective districts.

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**Health Systems Trust**

HST has been responsible for the development and implementation of the *Synchronised National Communication in Health (SyNCH)* electronic prescribing system for the NDoH, which is currently utilised in the Central Chronic Medicines Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) Programme. The objectives of SyNCH are to automate certain CCMDD processes and improve programme efficiencies, while ensuring end-to-end visibility of the CCMDD process and transparency between stakeholders, minimising medication errors and prescription rejections, and promoting the rational use of medicines in South Africa.

Health Systems Trust (HST) is a sub-grantee to *Health Information Systems (HISP)* for the continuation of the *Health Patient Registration System (HPRS)* support function to the National Department of Health (NDoH). This multi-year project commenced in June 2015 and has been implemented in 46 districts across eight provinces in collaboration with the NDoH.

Funded through Right to Care and mandated by the National Department of Health (NDoH), the *National Digital Health Information Systems (HIS) support project* commenced in October 2022 to assist the NDoH in building digital health systems. This transformative strategy entails strengthening governance structures, creating robust integrated platforms for the development of information systems, the use of a common unique identifier for patients interfacing with the health system at various levels, and enhancing access for healthcare users through mobile platforms.