Maintains is an operational research programme that will develop a stronger evidence base on how health, education, nutrition, and social protection systems can adapt and expand to respond to changing needs during and after shocks, whilst also maintaining existing services.

Maintains is a five-year programme, launched in 2018, and funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The programme will provide new insights on how to improve the ability of social services to respond more quickly, reliably and effectively to shocks such as floods, droughts, disease outbreaks and population displacement.

Enhanced evidence and practice from six focal countries — Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda — will inform policy and practice globally.

Maintains will seek solutions that promote equitable responses and support inclusion; and explore disaster risk financing options to enable a swift and efficient scale-up. Ultimately, the programme seeks to improve health, education and nutrition outcomes for affected populations, especially the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Maintains has three components that work closely together. Maintains will deliver research that responds to user demand, fills evidence gaps and is accessible and engaging for public and private sector stakeholders. It will also provide technical assistance to support practical implementation.

Research to build a robust evidence base

Targeted technical assistance support in six countries

Promotion of research findings to inform policy and practice globally
Maintains in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is prone to a range of shocks, and despite the learnings from Ebola, the health system still lacks the capacity to respond.

Floods and landslides are a major problem due to a large number of rivers, a tropical monsoon climate, unplanned urbanisation and poor waste management. Informal settlements and poor communities are particularly vulnerable.

In addition, high levels of poverty, poor education and sanitation, a weak health system, and other structural problems means that the population is exposed to frequent disease outbreaks, such as cholera and measles.

Maintains in Sierra Leone will look at the technical and financial aspects of how to ensure that existing health services are maintained during regular flooding and disease outbreaks, whilst also responding to the new health needs from these shocks.

Sierra Leone Research Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health System</th>
<th>Health Finance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can the health system manage new demands from shocks, whilst maintaining service delivery?</td>
<td>What are the economic and financial costs of health shocks, how are they being financed, and how can financing arrangements be improved?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case studies of recent flooding and disease outbreaks, and a review of emergency preparedness levels, will provide empirical evidence of how the health sector currently responds to health shocks. This will be used to identify and research specific approaches or interventions that can build shock responsiveness, and define crisis levels of care to be provided during a health shock.

The current state of health financing will be explored in depth through case studies on the economic and financial costs of health shocks, alongside a health shock financing diagnostic. This will provide recommendations for financing donor health programmes and improvements to public financial management of health shock funding.

For more information on Maintains please see the project website: [https://tinyurl.com/project-maintains](https://tinyurl.com/project-maintains) or contact Carole Green at carolergreen@gmail.com

In conducting these studies, Maintains will work directly with the Government of Sierra Leone, DFID and other development partners. The research will build on and enhance existing evidence and address knowledge gaps.