

LSTM receives grant to help improve health of people living in informal settlements

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The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) has been awarded £11.8 million by the UK government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) for a grant to help improve the health of people living in informal settlements in low and middle-income countries. The UKRI GCRF Accountability for Informal Urban Equity Hub, or ARISE, will support precarious and marginalised people claim their rights to health and build accountability and capacity to provide them with security and services.

LSTM's Professor Sally Theobald is Principle Investigator for the ARISE Hub, she said: "More than half of the world's people live in cities, with one in three of those living in low and middle-income countries doing so in informal settlements, sometimes known colloquially as slums, with inadequate access to services and opportunities to shape decisions about their environment. Our research will support the people in our focal communities to claim their rights to health and well-being. We are delighted to have been selected to lead this multidisciplinary team, with social science at its heart that can positively impact the lives of marginalised people, ensuring that their priorities are central for future urban development."

The ARISE Hub will run for a 5-year period from 2019 to 2024 and comprises of ten partners from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines who will work initially in Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Kenya and India. Working with informal settlement dwellers, the team will carry out research to understand their experiences of daily life, health and well-being, and efforts to access services and influence policies, working with them to identify their priorities for action. At the same time, they will develop better ways of

measuring health and well-being for people living in informal settlements which can make their experiences more visible to governments and NGOs.

ARISE will bring citizens together with people leading government bodies and other relevant organisations to develop ways to address their priorities and assess what impact these have. Through a £1 million 'Responsive Fund' ARISE will provide small grants to organisations working to test innovative approaches to improving health and well-being.

The hub has established a partnership based on the values of equity and ethical interactions between and within partner organisations and with all the people we conduct research with. We will work to build skills and capacities of researchers at all levels in all partner institutions to use a range of methods and participatory approaches to promote accountability, health and well-being.

Working with communities themselves is key to the research. Sheela Patel, Chair, Shack Dwellers International said: "As a global network of slum dwellers, one of SDI's key roles in ARISE will be to ensure the perspectives, experiences, and priorities of the urban poor living in informal settlements, are central to conceptualization of problems, solutions and interventions within India and the broader partnership."

The interdisciplinary partnership includes 2 universities from the UK in addition to LSTM: The Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow, along with input from Pamoja Communications (UK) on research uptake and communication. ARISE also comprises of seven partners in Low and Middle-income countries, including, along with SDI, the James P Grant School of Public Health at BRAC University in Bangladesh, the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) and LVCT Health in Kenya, the George Institute in India, the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre and the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (CoMAHS), also in Sierra Leone.

ARISE Research Director is LSTM's Rachel Tolhurst. She said: "ARISE offers a precious chance to 'do research differently' by learning from and with each other across countries, and between the global south and north. It is a privilege to work with such a

dedicated group of partners, including organisations of informal settlement dwellers. Together we are committed to conducting research that will make a real difference to the underlying influences on health and well-being for disadvantaged and marginalised people."