



THE JOURNEY TO RESILIENCE

A GLC4HSR Learning Series

Peer to Peer Learning: Strengthening Health Governance Through Robust Assessment and Monitoring Systems

**25th June, 2026
2:00 – 3:30 PM IST**



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The inaugural session of The Journey to Resilience, a new learning series convened by the Global Learning Collaborative for Health Systems Resilience (GLC4HSR), examined one of the most fundamental questions in health systems resilience: how can governments transform assessment, monitoring, and surveillance into stronger governance?

Bringing together perspectives from national policy, subnational governance, international health systems, and digital transformation, the webinar explored how resilient governance is built through continuous assessment, adaptive learning, decentralised decision-making, and effective use of health intelligence. While each presentation reflected a distinct context, the discussion converged around a shared proposition: resilience depends not simply on stronger information systems, but on institutions capable of using information to make better decisions.

Setting the Frame: Governance Begins with Assessment

Opening the webinar, Dr. N. Krishna Reddy, CEO of ACCESS Health International, situated assessment, monitoring, and surveillance as foundational governance functions rather than isolated technical activities. Framing governance as a continuous process of informed decision-making, he argued that every policy, strategy, and implementation decision begins with an understanding of the current health situation and the needs of the population.



The discussion challenged a common tendency to equate health system performance solely with service delivery. Instead, governance was presented as a broader function that requires understanding not only disease burden, but also health-seeking behaviour, social and environmental determinants of health, and the ability of systems to anticipate and respond to evolving needs. Health systems, therefore, should not simply react to the demand for healthcare services, but proactively address the underlying health needs of populations.

This framing also highlighted an important distinction between information and action. Most countries already possess extensive assessment mechanisms, monitoring systems, and surveillance platforms operating at national and subnational levels. The challenge is no longer the absence of information, but the institutional capacity to interpret that information and translate it into evidence-informed policymaking. Governance, in this sense, becomes the bridge between knowledge and action.

The webinar was positioned as the first in a broader series that seeks to unpack the operational dimensions of health systems resilience. Rather than treating governance as an abstract concept, the session focused on examining the practical systems, institutional arrangements, and technological capabilities that enable governments to continuously assess performance, monitor implementation, and respond effectively to changing health conditions.



Key Takeaways

- *Governance begins with a clear understanding of population health needs and health system performance.*
- *Assessment, monitoring, and surveillance are core governance functions that enable evidence-informed decision-making.*
- *Health systems must respond proactively to population health needs rather than react solely to healthcare demand.*
- *The greatest challenge is no longer collecting information, but translating it into timely policy and action.*

Building Health Intelligence Across Systems

Drawing on the Indian context, Maulik Chokshi, Global Director - Health Systems Research and Policy at ACCESS Health International, explored how health governance increasingly depends on the ability to integrate information across sectors rather than within healthcare alone.

He argued that health outcomes are shaped by a complex ecosystem extending well beyond ministries of health. Financing, education, social protection, pharmaceuticals, digital infrastructure, environmental management, and local governance all influence population health and collectively determine the resilience of health systems. Consequently, effective assessment requires governments to bring together information generated across multiple sectors to support coordinated policymaking.

The presentation highlighted that India already possesses a substantial architecture of health information through national surveys, routine health management information systems, disease surveillance programmes, financial datasets, and global reporting frameworks. These systems provide valuable insights into disease burden, service delivery, financing, workforce, and health outcomes. However, they often function independently, limiting their ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of system performance.

Several structural challenges continue to constrain the effective use of information. Data generated by different agencies frequently remain fragmented, reporting cycles often fail to support timely decision-making, interoperability between datasets remains limited, and private sector information is insufficiently captured despite the significant role private providers play in healthcare delivery. These gaps reduce the ability of policymakers to develop a complete picture of health system performance.

The discussion therefore shifted from data generation to health intelligence. Collecting additional information, while important, is unlikely to improve governance unless governments develop stronger mechanisms to integrate datasets, improve interoperability, and generate actionable insights. Information becomes valuable only when it enables decision-makers to allocate resources more effectively, anticipate emerging risks, and respond to changing health needs.



Key Takeaways

- *Health governance depends on integrating information across sectors, not just within healthcare.*
- *Existing health information systems provide valuable data but remain fragmented and insufficiently interoperable.*
- *Strengthening health intelligence requires improving data integration, quality, and interoperability.*
- *A whole-of-government approach is essential to understand and respond to the broader determinants of health.*

The presentation also highlighted the increasing importance of adopting a whole-of-government perspective. Decisions affecting health are frequently taken outside the health sector, requiring greater coordination between ministries responsible for finance, education, social welfare, environment, pharmaceuticals, and digital infrastructure. Building resilient health systems, therefore, depends not only on strengthening health information systems, but also on creating institutional mechanisms capable of bringing together diverse sources of information into coherent policy decisions.

Underlying this discussion was a broader shift in how health systems are assessed. Rather than measuring isolated programme outputs or service indicators, governance increasingly requires an integrated understanding of how multiple components of the health system interact to influence population health. Assessment, in this sense, becomes an ongoing process of understanding the health system as a whole rather than monitoring individual programmes in isolation.

Strengthening Governance Through Decentralisation

Moving from national policy to implementation, Arun Nair, State Director - Kerala, ACCESS Health International, demonstrated how governance becomes more responsive when decision-making is brought closer to communities. Using Kerala's decentralised governance model, he illustrated how local self-governments play an active role in planning, financing, supervising, and monitoring health services alongside the health department. This institutional arrangement extends governance beyond administrative structures by enabling local authorities to identify vulnerable populations, coordinate across sectors, and respond to community priorities using locally generated information.



Rather than relying exclusively on centrally generated datasets, Kerala's governance model combines routine health information with continuous community engagement. Information collected through frontline health workers, local institutions, community volunteers, and self-help groups contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of population health needs. This enables local governments to move beyond reactive service delivery towards proactive population health management.

The presentation illustrated this approach through examples such as non-communicable disease management, palliative care, and pandemic preparedness. In each case, governance relied not only on collecting information but on creating institutional arrangements capable of acting upon it. Local governments worked alongside multiple departments, including sanitation, education, water, and social welfare, to coordinate interventions and strengthen community resilience.

Kerala's experience demonstrated that decentralisation is not merely an administrative reform but an important governance mechanism. By placing responsibility for planning, monitoring, and implementation closer to the communities they serve, local institutions become better positioned to respond quickly to emerging challenges while maintaining continuity of essential health services.



Key Takeaways

- *Decentralised governance enables faster and more context-specific decision-making.*
- *Local institutions play a critical role in identifying vulnerable populations and coordinating multisectoral action.*
- *Community engagement strengthens both routine health service delivery and emergency preparedness.*
- *Resilient governance depends on empowering local actors with both information and decision-making authority.*

Adaptive Governance and Continuous Learning

Offering an international perspective, Dr. Rohini Omar Prasad, Regional Director - Southeast Asia, ACCESS Health International, examined Singapore's experience in building governance systems that have continuously evolved alongside the country's changing health needs. Rather than presenting governance as a fixed institutional model, she demonstrated how assessment and monitoring systems have adapted over decades in response to demographic shifts, epidemiological transitions, and changing expectations of healthcare.

Singapore's journey illustrated that resilient governance is characterised by its ability to learn and adapt. As the country moved from addressing communicable diseases to managing chronic conditions, ageing populations, and increasingly complex healthcare demands, its approaches to financing, service delivery, and performance measurement evolved accordingly. Assessment systems became more responsive to emerging health priorities, while governance structures shifted from focusing primarily on healthcare provision to promoting population health outcomes.

A significant transformation highlighted during the discussion was the country's move towards population-based accountability. Health system performance is no longer assessed solely through the services delivered by hospitals or healthcare providers. Instead, integrated health clusters have been assigned responsibility for the health outcomes of defined populations, encouraging providers to invest in prevention, primary care, and long-term health management rather than episodic treatment alone.

This evolution also demonstrated the importance of aligning governance with financing and accountability mechanisms. As expectations of the health system changed, performance indicators, funding arrangements, and institutional responsibilities evolved in parallel, reinforcing the principle that governance systems must remain dynamic rather than static.



Key Takeaways

- *Governance systems must evolve alongside changing demographic and epidemiological trends.*
- *Performance measurement should increasingly focus on population health outcomes rather than service delivery alone.*
- *Financing, accountability, and governance mechanisms should evolve together to support system-wide resilience.*
- *Continuous learning enables health systems to remain responsive to emerging health challenges.*

Dr. Prasad also underscored the importance of continuously strengthening population health intelligence. National surveys, disease registries, administrative datasets, and surveillance systems have expanded over time to provide a more comprehensive understanding of health trends. Yet, despite Singapore's highly developed digital ecosystem, challenges around interoperability and integrated electronic health records have reinforced an important lesson: technological advancement alone does not guarantee integrated governance. Institutional arrangements, legislative frameworks, and sustained policy commitment remain equally critical.

Singapore's experience demonstrated that resilience is not achieved through a single reform or technological innovation. Rather, it emerges through continuous institutional learning, where governance systems evolve alongside changing population needs while maintaining a long-term commitment to accountability, prevention, and equitable access to care.

Digital Transformation as a Governance Capability

Concluding the technical presentations, Supria C. Prabhakar, Technical Head - Digital Health Technology Applications and Services, ACCESS Health International, examined how digital technologies are reshaping assessment, monitoring, and surveillance while arguing that their greatest contribution lies not in generating more data, but in strengthening governance itself.

She observed that health systems have entered a new era in which data is no longer scarce. The challenge has shifted from collecting information to transforming it into actionable intelligence that reaches decision-makers in time to influence policy and implementation. This distinction between data and intelligence formed the central premise of her presentation.

Digital technologies have fundamentally altered the way health systems observe population health. Continuous data collection, near real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and integrated surveillance systems now enable governments to identify risks earlier and respond more rapidly than was previously possible. However, these capabilities create value only when supported by governance systems capable of interpreting information and acting upon it.

The presentation emphasised that digital transformation should not be understood primarily as a technology initiative. Instead, it represents an institutional transformation in which digital public infrastructure, trusted health data governance, interoperability, and analytical capacity together create the conditions for evidence-informed decision-making.

Health data governance emerged as a particularly important theme. As health systems become increasingly interconnected, ensuring data quality, representativeness, privacy, consent, and appropriate use becomes essential. Weak governance can undermine public trust and limit the usefulness of digital systems, regardless of technological sophistication. Conversely, trusted data enables stronger health intelligence, supports more equitable decision-making, and creates opportunities for research, innovation, and continuous system improvement.



Key Takeaways

- *Digital transformation should be viewed as a governance reform supported by technology.*
- *Trusted data governance and interoperability are fundamental to effective digital health systems.*
- *Health intelligence is created by transforming data into actionable insights for decision-makers.*
- *Strong institutions are essential to ensure digital investments translate into better health outcomes.*

Drawing on international examples, the discussion demonstrated that countries differ significantly in their digital maturity, yet the same principle applies across contexts. Technology creates visibility, but institutions determine whether that visibility results in better governance. Dashboards, integrated records, and digital platforms are valuable only when they support timely decisions, strengthen accountability, and improve health outcomes.

Using India's Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission as an example, the presentation illustrated both the opportunities and the remaining challenges of digital transformation. While foundational digital infrastructure has advanced considerably, translating this infrastructure into stronger governance will depend on improving data quality, strengthening institutional capacity, expanding analytical capabilities, and ensuring that digital systems are effectively integrated into public health decision-making.

The discussion ultimately positioned digital transformation not as an endpoint, but as an enabler of more responsive governance. Technology expands what health systems are able to observe, but governance determines how those observations are translated into action.

Overarching Insights

The inaugural webinar highlighted several principles that are central to strengthening health governance and building resilient health systems:

- Governance begins with informed decision-making. Robust assessment, monitoring, and surveillance are not standalone technical functions but essential governance mechanisms that enable timely and evidence-informed policy and implementation.
- Health systems must move from data collection to health intelligence. While information is increasingly abundant, the ability to integrate, interpret, and apply it effectively remains a defining challenge for resilient health systems.
- Resilience requires a whole-of-government approach. Health outcomes are shaped by multiple sectors, making cross-sectoral coordination and integrated governance critical for effective decision-making.
- Decentralised governance strengthens responsiveness. Empowering local institutions to assess community needs and act on local evidence enables more adaptive, accountable, and people-centred health systems.
- Governance systems must continuously evolve. Assessment frameworks, financing models, and performance measures should adapt alongside changing population health needs, demographic transitions, and emerging risks.
- Digital transformation is fundamentally a governance opportunity. Technology can enhance visibility and speed, but its value depends on trusted data, interoperability, institutional capacity, and the ability to convert information into action.