MEASURE Evaluation's Health Information System Learning Agenda

What are the factors and conditions of HIS performance progress?

Health information system (HIS) performance is the ability of low- and middle-income countries' national HIS to capture, store, manage, share, and use data to monitor and measure their progress toward sustainable health-related development goals and to meet health sector decision-making needs at all levels. **The following factors are associated with HIS performance progress:**

- Solutions are local and aligned with health ministry information system and national priorities.
- Leaders are engaged and serve as change agents and there is general political will to change.
- Interventions are integrated and mutually reinforcing.
- Processes are standardized and institutionalized.
- Approaches are flexible and adaptable, and improvement is iterative.
- Feedback systems are regular and routine.
- Assessments, review, and stakeholder collaboration occur regularly and inform interventions.
- Good teamwork and positive attitudes are in place.
- Human resources and capacity are sufficient.
- System improvements support subsequent improvements in system capabilities.

Contextual factors must also be considered. (See the HIS Strengthening Model on page 2.)

What are the stages of progression to a strong HIS and how are they measured?

Progression to a strong HIS can be **measured across five stages:**

1. **Emerging:** Formal knowledge and processes around HIS are limited; functional capabilities may be in place for specific projects but not nationally.

2. **Repeatable:** Efforts are being made to standardize processes; existing processes are based on previous activities.

3. **Defined:** Approved, documented processes and guidelines exist. Stakeholders share knowledge and collaborate, using innovative methods and tools.

4. **Managed:** Activities are regularly implemented using standard processes; HIS requirements and goals are detailed and achieved.

5. **Optimized:** Best practices are applied and the system is capable of adapting. Experiences and feedback are used for continuous improvement.

The **HIS Stages of Continuous Improvement Assessment Tool** measures the stages across five core domains, and is available here: https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/fs-17-246

What are the characteristics of a strong HIS?

A strong HIS has the following characteristics:

Well-defined: It has a strategy with standards and principles; defined health indicators and data sources that are used consistently; a user-friendly structure; and standard operating procedures for data collection, analysis, and use.

Comprehensive: It captures and monitors all health services and functions (e.g., medicines, human resources, technology); includes all levels of the health system; and encompasses all data sources (e.g., routine records, population surveys, and civil registration and vital statistics).

Functional: It uses appropriate technology (including paper records) for the context; has a plan for data quality checks and strategies for using and sharing data; and has appropriate training for health workers.

Adaptable and scalable: It has the in-country capacity to redesign, reform, expand, or roll out the HIS at national and subnational levels.

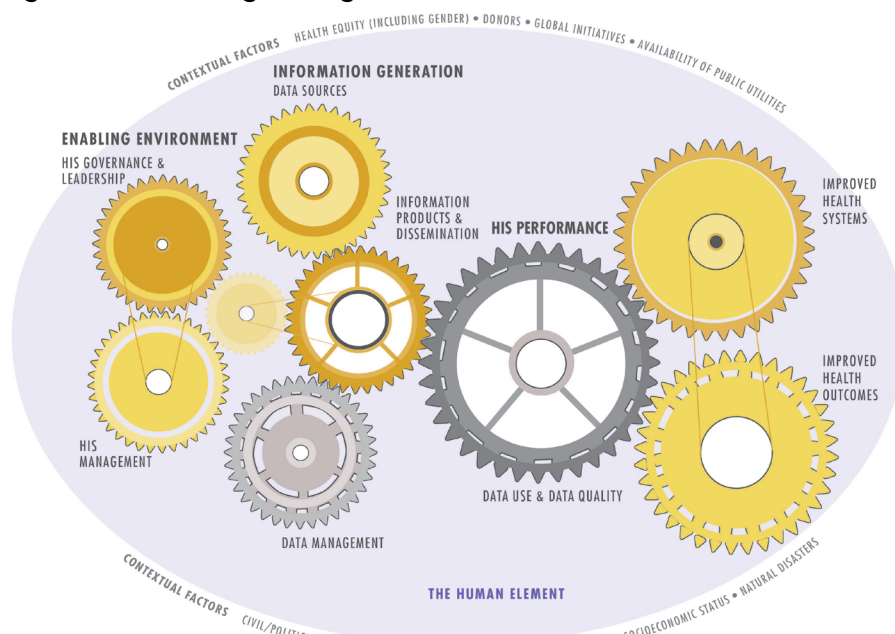**Resilient:** It must be able to withstand social, political, and biological crises.

More about the Health Information Systems (HIS) Learning Agenda

MEASURE Evaluation works with more than 20 countries to improve HIS management, governance, and performance. In July 2014, the United States Agency for International Development asked MEASURE Evaluation to build an evidence base for which investments in HIS are effective and useful. The result has been MEASURE Evaluation's HIS Learning Agenda, a collaborative and adaptive approach to documenting and applying results for HIS strengthening. The Learning Agenda frames its work by seeking to answer three questions:

- What are the factors and conditions of HIS performance progress?
- What are the stages of HIS progression to a strong HIS and how are they measured?
- What are the characteristics of a strong HIS?

To answer the questions, we have drawn on materials captured in the HIS Strengthening Resource Center, input from HIS experts, and published and gray literature from the field. Our answers are anchored by the HIS Strengthening Model (see Figure 1), which illustrates the relationship among HIS components. The model shows that a systems approach to strengthening activities can lead to improvements in performance, management, data, data use, and, therefore, health outcomes.

Figure 1. HIS Strengthening Model

The HIS Strengthening Resource Center

For more information on the model, detailed answers to and methods used in answering each of the three questions, and additional HIS strengthening resources, please visit MEASURE Evaluation's HIS Strengthening Resource Center:

https://www.measureevaluation.org/his-strengthening-resource-center

The following HIS strengthening resources have informed the answers to the learning agenda questions and can be found on the Resource Center:

- An HIS Assessment Tools Database
- The Stages of Continuous Improvement Toolkit
- HIS Interoperability Maturity Toolkit
- HIS Country Profiles Page
- HIS Interventions Pages
- HIS Standards and Best Practices for Data Sources
- Conceptualizing and Measuring Data Use: A Review of Assessments and Tools