

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE GAP MAP

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING MEASUREMENT

INTRODUCTION

Health system strengthening (HSS) interventions are most effective in supporting health system capacity, performance, and sustainability when they apply approaches that are evidence based. To promote such approaches, there is a global need to systematically capture the full spectrum of emerging evidence on the effects of HSS in improving health system outcomes. USAID’s HSS Learning Agenda frames efforts to continuously gather evidence, learn, and adapt by articulating six Learning Questions that reflect current HSS priorities across the programming cycle.

In support of that Learning Agenda, the USAID Local Health System Sustainability Project (LHSS) conducted a comprehensive mapping exercise to curate existing evidence for each of the six Learning Questions and identify opportunity areas for strengthening the evidence base. The project accessed the PubMed database and other targeted gray literature websites to identify, screen, review, and catalog relevant evidence from peer-reviewed and gray articles from the past five years. The curated evidence is presented in an interactive [Evidence Gap Map](#).

This two-pager is the second in a series of six that will summarize the LHSS Project’s findings from the evidence mapping exercise for USAID’s six Learning Agenda questions. While the series does not aim to answer the Learning Questions, the goal is to provide a high-level characterization of the identified evidence for each question. This two-pager focuses on USAID’s Learning Question 3, “*What measurement tools, approaches, and data sources, from HSS or other fields, are most helpful in understanding interrelationships and interactions, and estimating impact of HSS interventions on health system outcomes¹ and priority health outcomes?*”.

Health System Strengthening Evidence Gap Map

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The Evidence Gap Map identifies existing literature examining the impact of health system strengthening on health outcomes. Evidence is organized around USAID’s Health System Strengthening Learning Agenda.

What conditions or factors successfully facilitate the institutionalization and/or implementation at scale of good practices that improve health system outcomes, and why? What are lessons learned regarding planning for sustainability and achieving results at scale?

	Multisectoral Approaches	Community Engagement/ Participation	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	Other
Equity	17	15	23	3
Quality	36	35	65	13
Resource Optimization	19	16	36	8
Resilience	10	6	12	6

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a snapshot of the type, range, and extent of identified evidence related to HSS Measurement.
2. Provide a high-level summary of themes from the curated evidence as a starting point for users of the Evidence Gap Map.
3. Highlight gaps in the curated evidence to inform targeted HSS programming by governments, funders, and HSS practitioners.

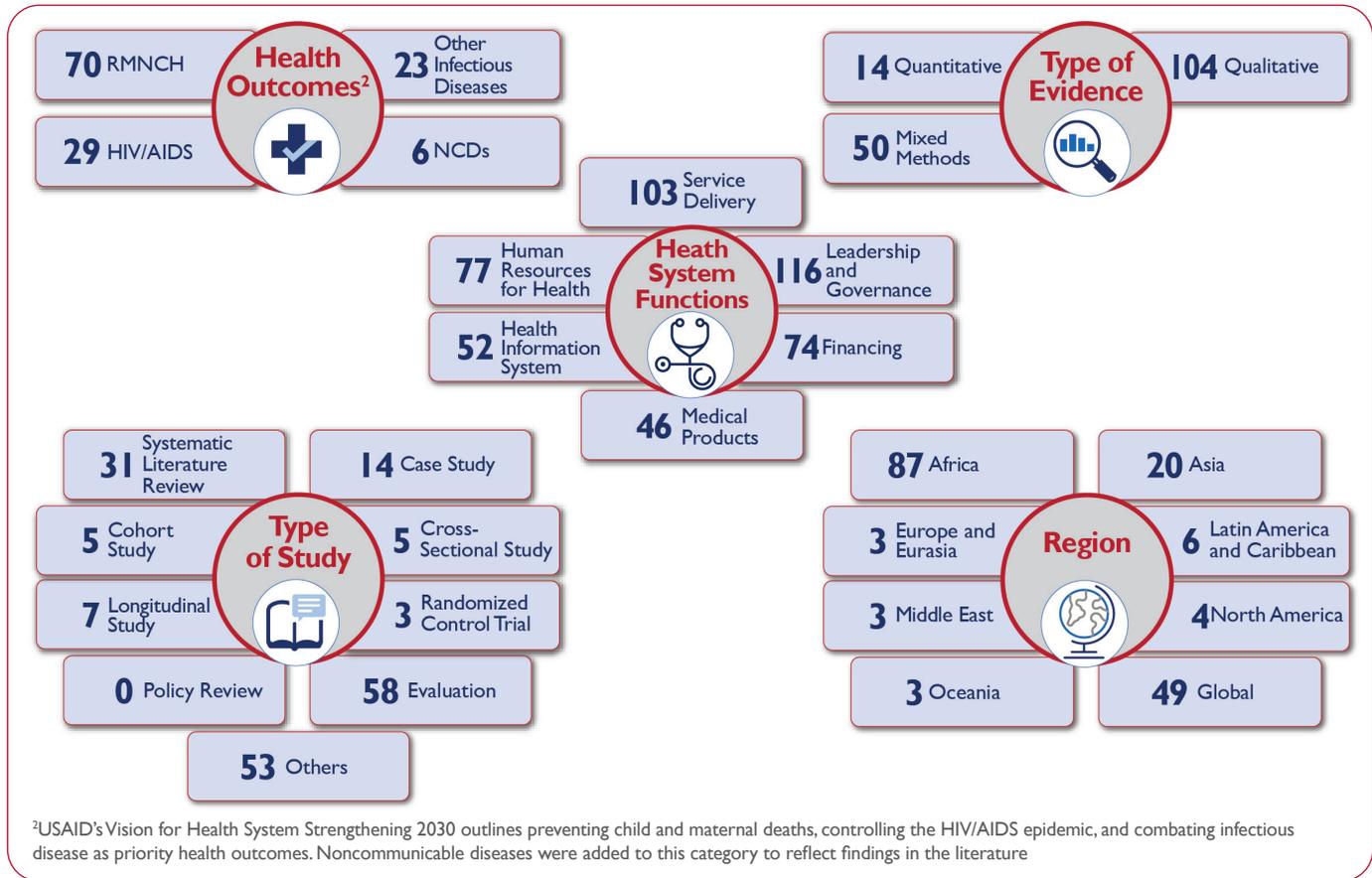
KEY FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

LHSS’s Evidence Gap Map is organized around seven categories that serve as filters: Health Outcomes, Health System Functions, Region, Country, Type of Evidence, Type of Study, and Date Range. The mapping for the HSS Measurement Learning Question identified **163** relevant peer reviewed and gray literature items published from 2017 to 2022. The figures below show the extent of findings in five of the categories.

¹USAID’s Vision for Health System Strengthening 2030 defines equity, quality and resource optimization as health systems strengthening intermediate outcomes that lead to better health outcomes.

Figure 1: Articles related to HSS Measurement disaggregated by number and type for Health Outcomes, Health System Functions, Type of Evidence, Type of Study, and Region categories of the Evidence Gap Map



Key Themes

- There is strong interest in using complexity-aware approaches to capture the interlinked nature of HSS, with over 100 complexity-aware monitoring and management frameworks and approaches being used globally by funders and other development partners. Illustrative examples of such methods discussed in the literature include social network analysis, causal link monitoring, outcomes mapping, outcomes harvesting, contribution analysis, ripple effects mapping, most significant change, functional resonance analysis, among others.
- There is an increasing trend of using methods such as developmental evaluation that engage diverse stakeholders and generate real-time evidence to evaluate, adapt, and continuously learn from complex health and social programs.
- Theory-based approaches, such as the use of theory of change and process theories, have also been applied to better understand the implementation of complex HSS programs and evaluate their contribution.
- Most tools and approaches are highly context specific. It is important for practitioners to adapt these tools to their local context to be able to leverage existing data and traditional monitoring and evaluation systems.
- When applying measurement approaches to better understand HSS interrelationships and interactions, all relevant stakeholders should be included throughout implementation and findings should be shared to inform decision-making to demonstrate value-add and engender support for continued use.

Gap in the Literature

- Literature with practical guidance on how to apply (and institutionalize) the complexity-aware tools and approaches discussed above in various contexts — including required resources, expertise, skill level, and time — is limited.
- Evidence is limited around when nontraditional monitoring and evaluation approaches for HSS interventions are best utilized, and what is needed to foster a shift in practice for applying these nontraditional approaches, including identifying incentives, securing buy-ins, and developing essential capacities.
- Relatedly, evidence is limited around strategies for implementing adaptive management approaches that do not increase overall management burdens.
- There is global recognition of the need for more consistent and standardized approaches to evaluate the estimated impact of HSS interventions.
- While most HSS interventions have theories of change relating to specific functions, there is a gap in tools and approaches that capture their spillover effects on the broader health system, as well as on other non-health sectors such as education.

Explore the Evidence Further

Click [here](#) to directly access the curated evidence around the topic of HSS Measurement and learn more.

The LHSS Project wants to hear from you! If you are aware of relevant material that should be included in the Evidence Gap Map, please send it by filling out this [form](#).