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The complete RHIS curriculum is available here: <https://www.measureevaluation.org/our-work/routine-health-information-systems/rhis-curriculum>

**7.1.1**

**Health System Definitions**

**Health system:** (i) all the activities whose primary purpose is to promote, restore and/or maintain health; (ii) the people, institutions and resources, arranged together in accordance with established policies, to improve the health of the population they serve, while responding to people’s legitimate expectations and protecting them against the cost of ill-health through a variety of activities whose primary intent is to improve health

**Health system functions:** an analytical framework describing four key work packages health systems have to perform: providing services; generating the human and physical resources that make service delivery possible; raising and pooling the resources used to pay for healthcare; and, the function of stewardship setting and enforcing the rules of the game and providing strategic direction for all the different actors involved. These functions are performed in the pursuit of three goals: health, responsiveness, and fair financing.

**Health system building blocks:** an analytical framework used by the World Health Organization to describe health systems, disaggregating them into six core components: leadership and governance (stewardship), service delivery, health workforce, health information system, medical products, vaccines and technologies, and health system financing.

**Health system performance:** (i) the level of achievement of the health system relative to resources. (ii) the degree to which a health system carries out its functions (service provision, resource generation, financing and stewardship) to achieve its goals.

**Health services system:** as the portion of the health system where all health services functions are performed (see the figure below).

**Health policy:** (i) a set of decisions or commitments to pursue courses of action aimed at achieving defined goals for improving health, stating or inferring the values that underpin these decisions; the health policy may or may not specify the source of funding that can be applied to the action, the planning and management arrangements to be adopted for implementation of the policy, and the relevant institutions to be involved. (ii) a general statement of understanding to guide decision making that results from an agreement or consensus among relevant partners on the issues to be addressed and on the approaches or strategies to deal with them.

**Decentralization:** political reform designed to promote local autonomy, decentralization entails changes in authority and financial responsibility for health services. Hence, decentralization can have a large impact on health service performance. There are several forms of decentralization affecting the health sector in different ways:

1. Deconcentration, which transfers authority and responsibility from the central level of a health ministry to its field offices
2. Delegation, which transfers authority and responsibility from the central level of a health ministry to organizations not directly under its control
3. Devolution, which transfers authority and responsibility from the central level of a health ministry to lower level autonomous units of government
4. Privatization, which involves the transfer of ownership and government functions from public to private bodies, which may consist of voluntary organizations and for-profit and government regulation



