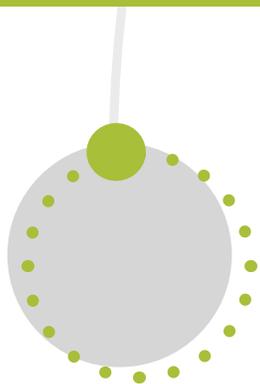


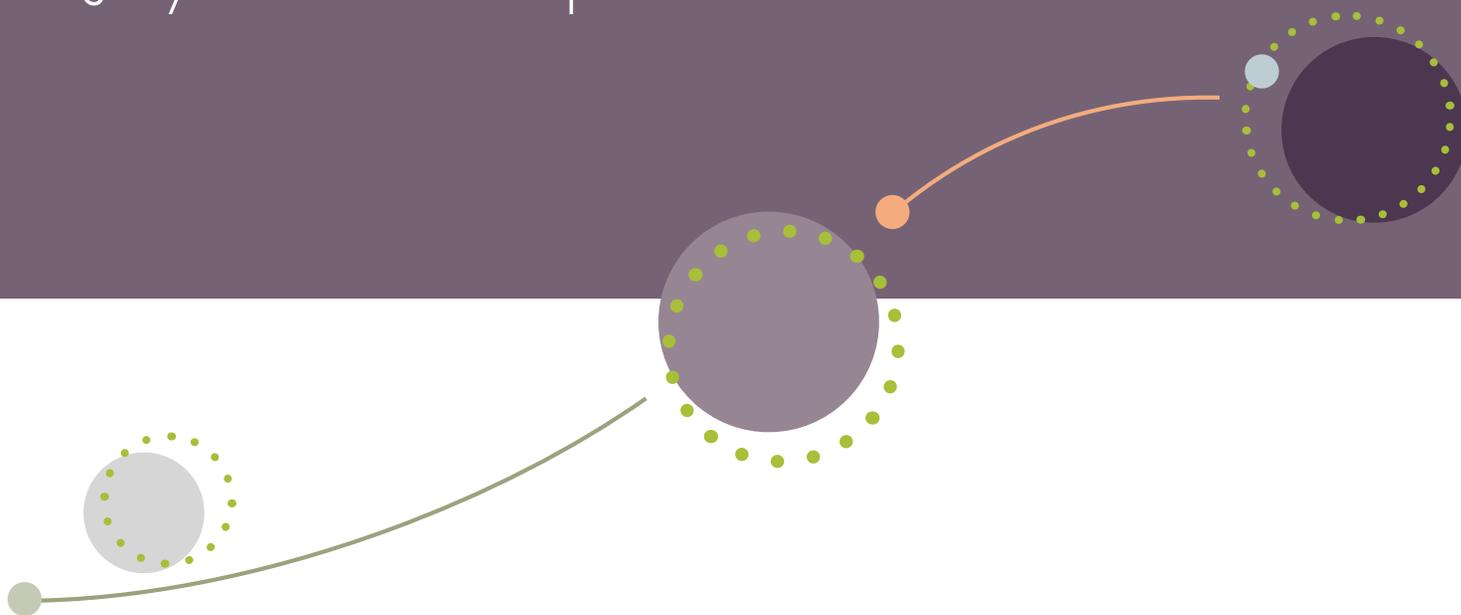
Working for Stronger Health Information Systems



MEASURE Evaluation

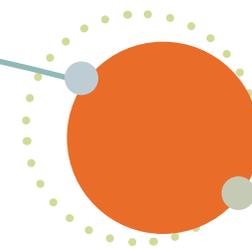
Overview of Phase IV, Year 1

July 2014 – September 2016



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USAID created MEASURE Evaluation to strengthen health information systems (HIS) to harness the power of high-quality data for decision making for better health outcomes around the world. To that end, we create tools and approaches for rigorous evaluations, develop the expertise of institutions and individuals, share information, spark collaboration, and expand the evidence base so countries can make better decisions today and develop the capacity to sustain good health outcomes over time.

As USAID has envisioned the project in Phase IV, it articulated the mission with four result areas:

- **Result 1. Strengthen the collection, analysis, and use of routine health data:**

The project responds to gaps in routine health information systems (RHIS): inadequate collaboration among stakeholders; limited country use of RHIS tools; fragmentation of subsystems; persistent lack of integration among disease information systems; inadequate data use; and limited research on RHIS performance.

- **Result 2. Improve country-level capacity to manage health information system resources and staff:**

Priority challenges in HIS management are inadequate collaboration and partnership among stakeholders on best practices; inadequate country resources to manage the operation and ongoing development of HIS; and fragmentation and lack of linkages among information systems.

- **Result 3. Improve and apply methods, tools, and approaches:**

Recent adjustments in the U.S. government's priorities and approaches to improving global health have led to the need for new or adapted tools. Examples include the shift in PEPFAR strategy to an antiretroviral-centered approach; the creation of large electronic data systems; and USAID's ending preventable child and maternal deaths (EPCMD) initiative, all of which stress evidence-based program planning and an increasing reliance on evidence to guide allocation of scarce resources.

- **Result 4. Increase capacity for rigorous evaluation:**

USAID health policies universally emphasize the importance of evaluation to understand what works and why; to validate intervention models; and to demonstrate program impact. Yet evaluation capacity is weak in most countries. The President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) strategy for 2015–2020, for example, emphasizes the need to build country capacity to collect, analyze, and use data to target interventions and track progress.



LEARNING AGENDA

As we go about achieving these results, a larger picture emerges about how to strengthen health information systems effectively. Our overarching effort to capture these lessons is called the project's Learning Agenda, and addresses three important questions:

- What are the factors and conditions of HIS performance progress and how should we measure this?
- What are the stages of progression to a strong HIS and is there a typical pattern?
- What are the characteristics of a strong HIS, what drives its improvement, and what strategies do the drivers suggest?



In Year 1, the following approaches were employed to address the Learning Agenda questions:

- Defining a model of HIS strengthening encompassing the drivers and the relationships among the components
- Designing a web-based, external-facing repository of information about HIS strengthening across countries
- Developing guidance on outcome-level HIS performance indicators
- Developing protocol-driven research in select countries to build the evidence base on HIS strengthening

Our Learning Agenda has international implications, particularly for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, improving strategies and activities, and also build evidence on what works to strengthen HIS.

Defining a model of HIS strengthening encompassing the drivers and the relationships among the components. In Year 1, MEASURE Evaluation launched the development of a model of HIS strengthening that will provide a common understanding of HIS components, the relationships among the components, and the drivers that strengthen them. The emerging Health Information Systems Strengthening Model (HISSM)—see Figure 1—is based on the components and standards of the HIS Framework developed by the Health Metrics Network (HMN). The HMN HIS Framework—published in 2008 and still regarded as a fundamental HIS resource—sets out desired components and standards necessary for a functional HIS. The contribution of the HISSM is to describe the relationships among HIS components, explaining how together they create a functional system to move a country's entire HIS forward through successive stages of development and performance. The HISSM also describes how a strong HIS works to improve health systems and health outcomes. Finally, it describes how an HIS can continue to be refined to reflect issues most relevant to HIS strengthening.



Figure 1: A Model of Health Information System Strengthening

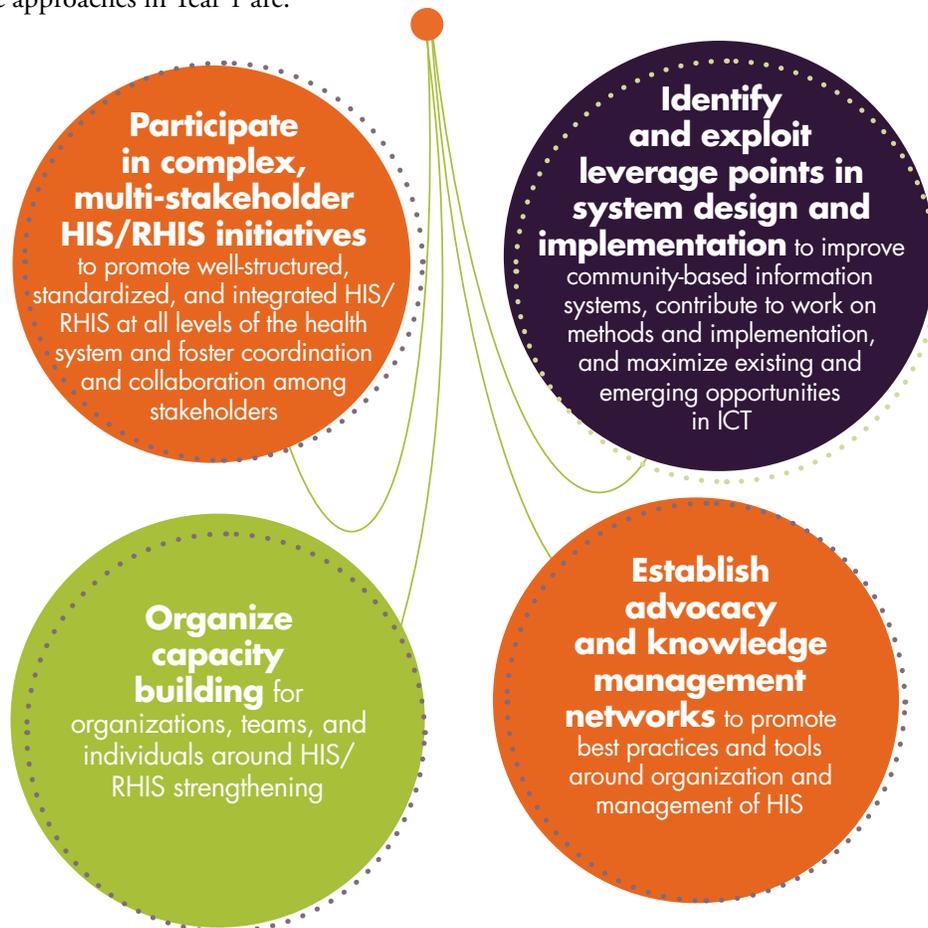


Designing a web-based, external-facing repository of information about HIS strengthening across countries. During the first year, the online HIS Strengthening Resource Center was formatted, designed, and will be a one-stop shop for information about HIS strengthening worldwide—the first of its kind. The site will host external and MEASURE Evaluation-developed documents and resources about HIS strengthening, HIS performance indicators, and a classification of those indicators aligned with the model. The resource center website—will initially contain profiles of 30 countries having priority in USAID’s EPCMD program and/or PEPFAR’s AIDS-free generation (AFG) program. It will be continually updated and enhanced throughout the life of the project.

PROGRESS ON RESULT 1

In the past decade, global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, EPCMD, and AFG have emphasized the importance of measuring progress. To do this, governments and donors are committing to investing in strengthening health information systems. MEASURE Evaluation Phase IV supports this commitment, by strengthening health information systems through the theory of change. This theory of change identifies leverage points for the project. Based on the leverage points, we identified four strategic approaches to guide the development and implementation of project activities related to Result 1: strengthened collection, analysis, and use of routine health data.

The four strategic approaches in Year 1 are:

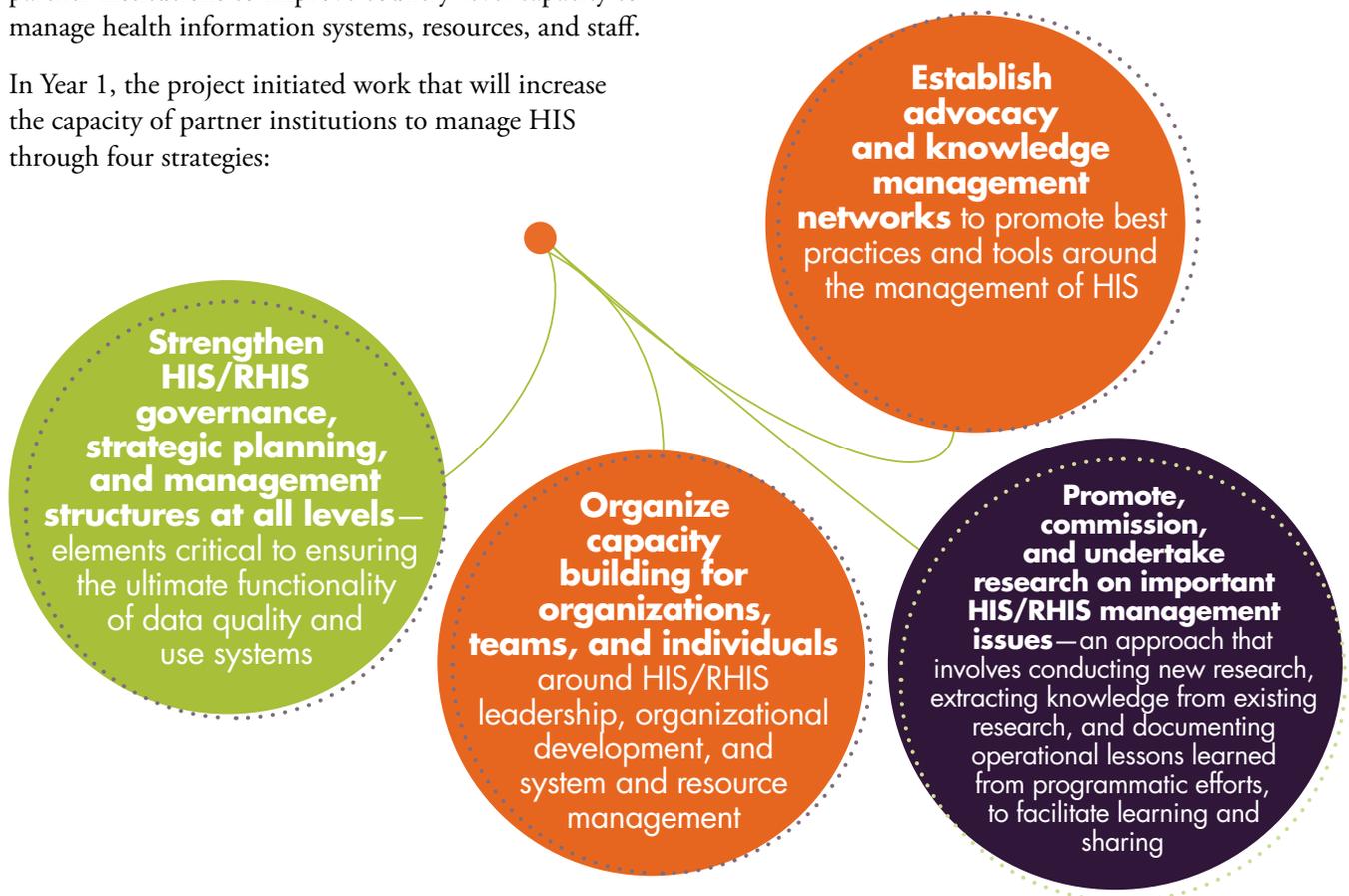


PROGRESS ON RESULT 2

Within the health information function, the priority objectives are to increase the uptake of major tools and systems and to support strategic improvement in integrated HIS. MEASURE Evaluation seeks to meet these objectives through our efforts to strengthen the management of national health information systems. We aim to improve the management of the resources associated with an HIS, and improve the management of systems that produce the information needed to prevent, detect, and mitigate disease outbreaks or that monitor progress toward a global or national health goal. Our approach focuses on the management practices of planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating system performance. Management is only one of four pillars of successful information system management; the other three are leadership, organizational development, and governance. All four are needed for success.

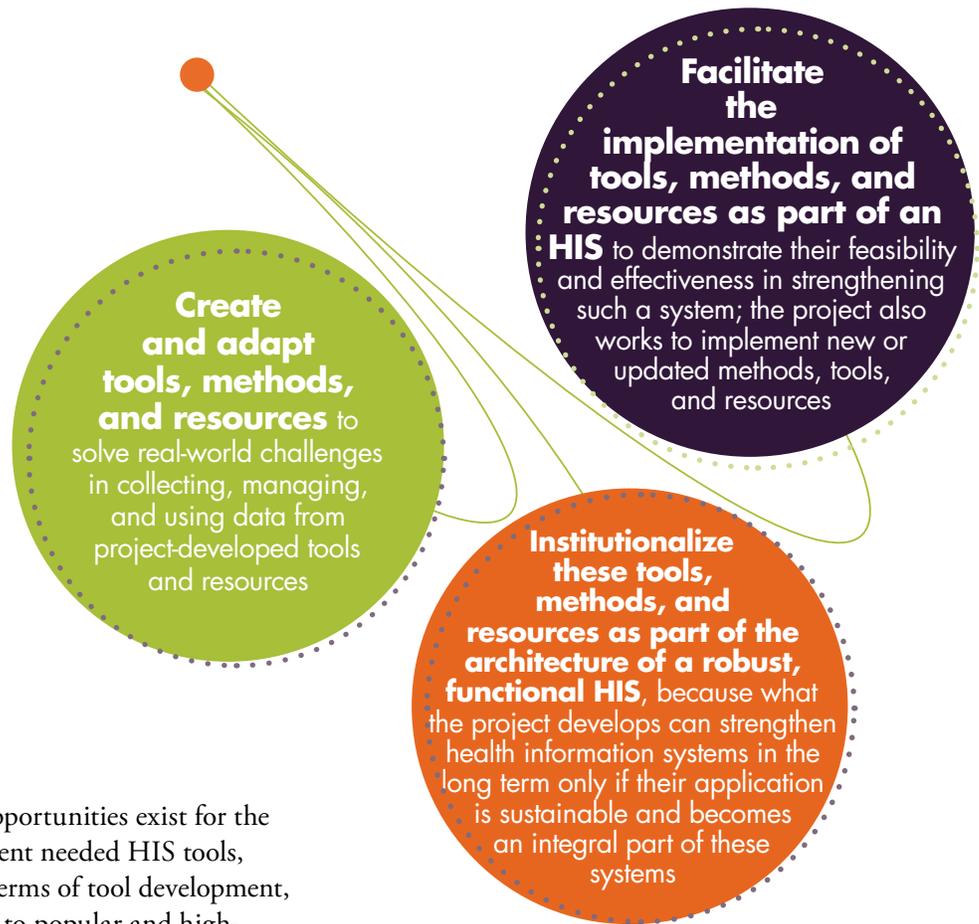
In Result 2, MEASURE Evaluation collaborates with partner institutions to improve country-level capacity to manage health information systems, resources, and staff.

In Year 1, the project initiated work that will increase the capacity of partner institutions to manage HIS through four strategies:



PROGRESS ON RESULT 3

PEPFAR 3.0 and USAID's EPCMD initiative stress evidence-based program planning, demonstrating a growing emphasis on using strong, reliable data for decision making in health and an increasing reliance on evidence to guide allocation of scarce resources. To address gaps and challenges in health information and to facilitate data-driven decision making, MEASURE Evaluation seeks to adapt and create new methods, tools, and resources, which ultimately can be used as part of efforts to evaluate and strengthen the functionality, management, and capacity of health information systems. The project also seeks to facilitate and support the adoption of these methods, tools, and resources by our partners and to see those solutions institutionalized to strengthen M&E systems. Three approaches are outlined below:

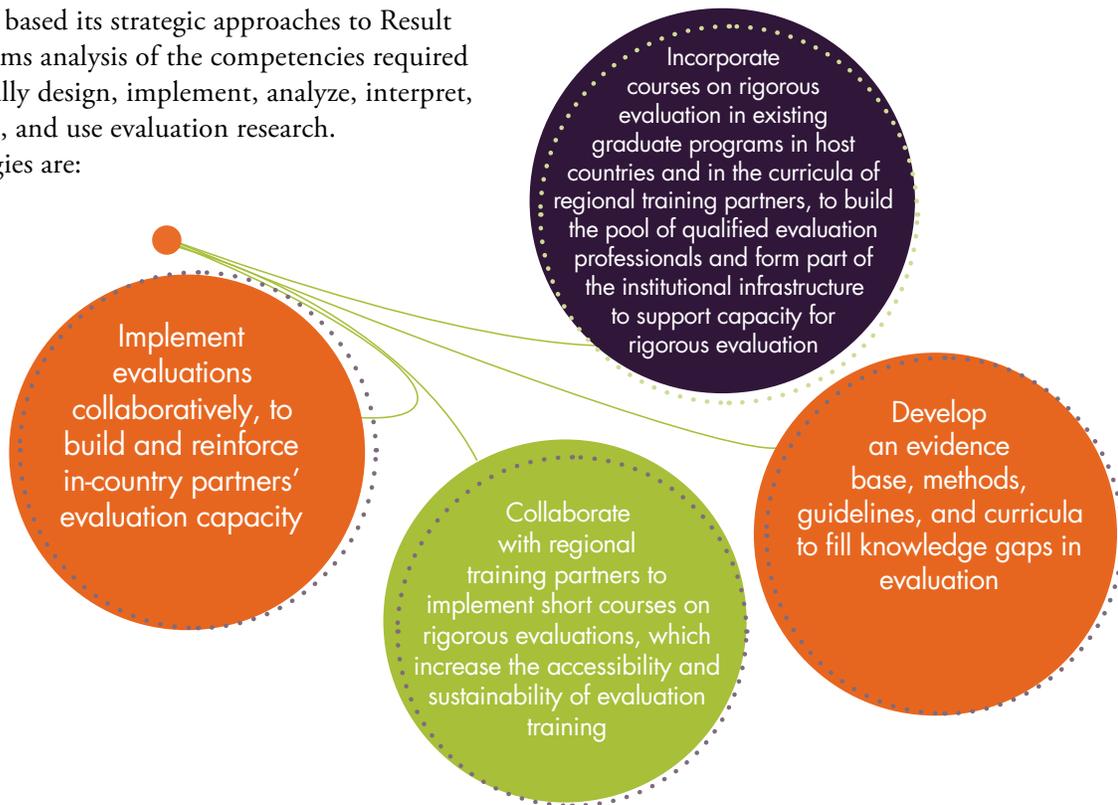


In the coming years, several opportunities exist for the project to develop and implement needed HIS tools, methods, and approaches. In terms of tool development, work will continue on updates to popular and high-quality MEASURE Evaluation tools, including PRISM and PLACE.

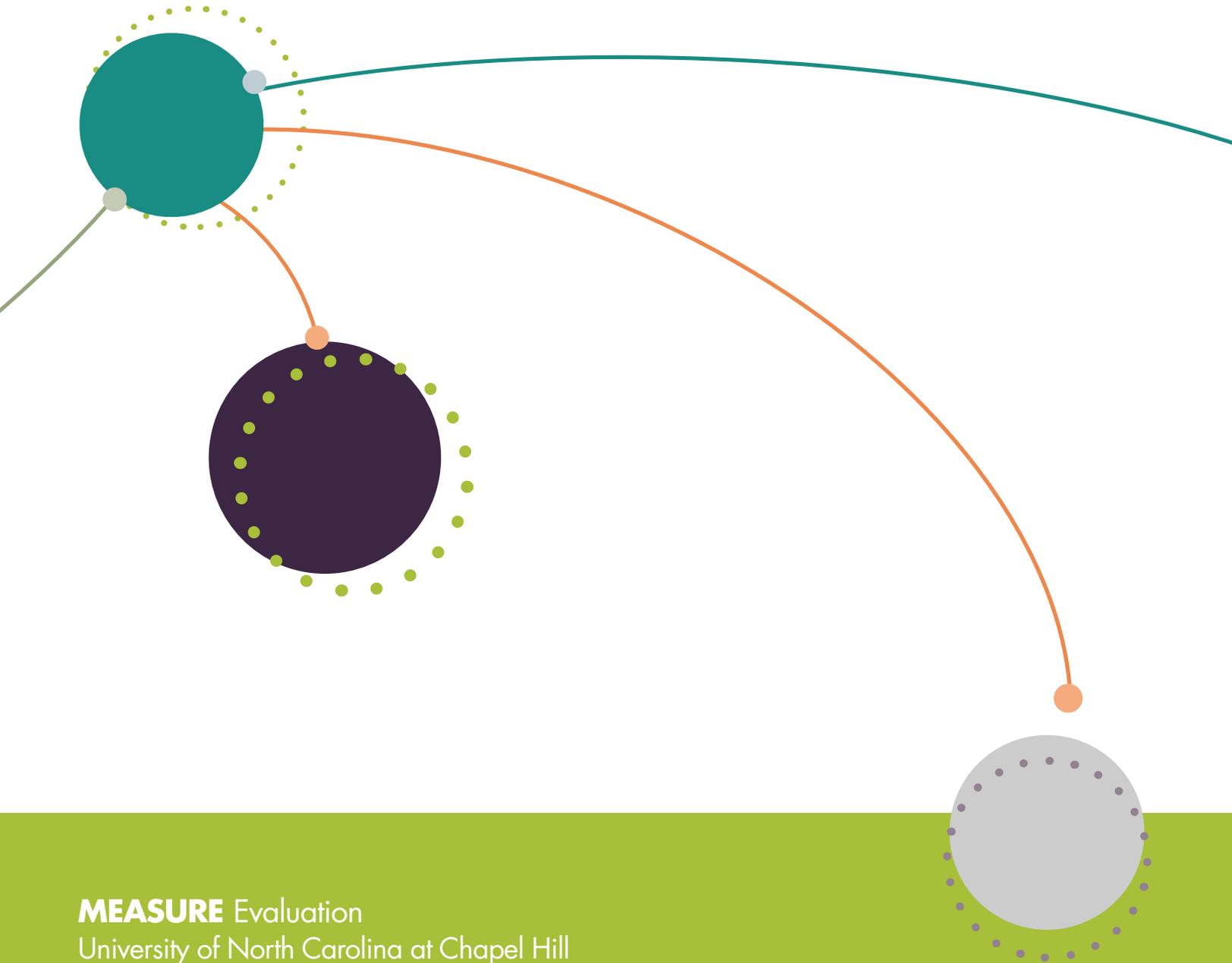
PROGRESS ON RESULT 4

USAID health policies universally emphasize the importance of evaluation to understand better what works, why, and under what circumstances; to validate core intervention models; and to demonstrate program impact; and important evidence to inform scale-up of high-impact interventions and programs. Yet, evaluation capacity is weak in most countries where USAID works. MEASURE Evaluation's Result 4, which aims to increase capacity for rigorous evaluation, directly addresses these stated goals and needs.

The project based its strategic approaches to Result 4 on a systems analysis of the competencies required to successfully design, implement, analyze, interpret, disseminate, and use evaluation research. Four strategies are:



Another objective is to expand the range of courses related to rigorous evaluation. We will develop and offer a short course on qualitative methods for evaluation to meet this objective. MEASURE Evaluation will follow the progress of the GEMNet-Health Capacity Building Committee in harmonizing its postgraduate-level evaluation course curriculum and identifying common competencies for a postgraduate-level evaluation course/concentration. Work under this strategic approach in future years of the project will depend on the outcome of these GEMNet-Health efforts.



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