MOMENTUM

MOMENTUM THEORY OF CHANGE
Guiding coordinated action for mothers and children

The critical measure of success for MOMENTUM is sustained access to and equitable use of evidence-based, quality maternal, newborn, and child health, nutrition, voluntary family planning, and reproductive health (MNCHN/FP/RH) information, services or care, and interventions (increased effective coverage).[1]

The MOMENTUM theory of change describes how the actions of the six MOMENTUM projects will achieve MOMENTUM's overarching goal and intended results. The theory of change aligns with the theories underpinning the priorities of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as described in Acting on the Call,[2] the USAID Policy Framework,[3] the Journey to Self-Reliance,[4] and the Private Sector Engagement strategy.[5] This brief provides an overview of the MOMENTUM theory of change and how it supports project design, implementation, and learning.

WHAT IS THE MOMENTUM THEORY OF CHANGE?

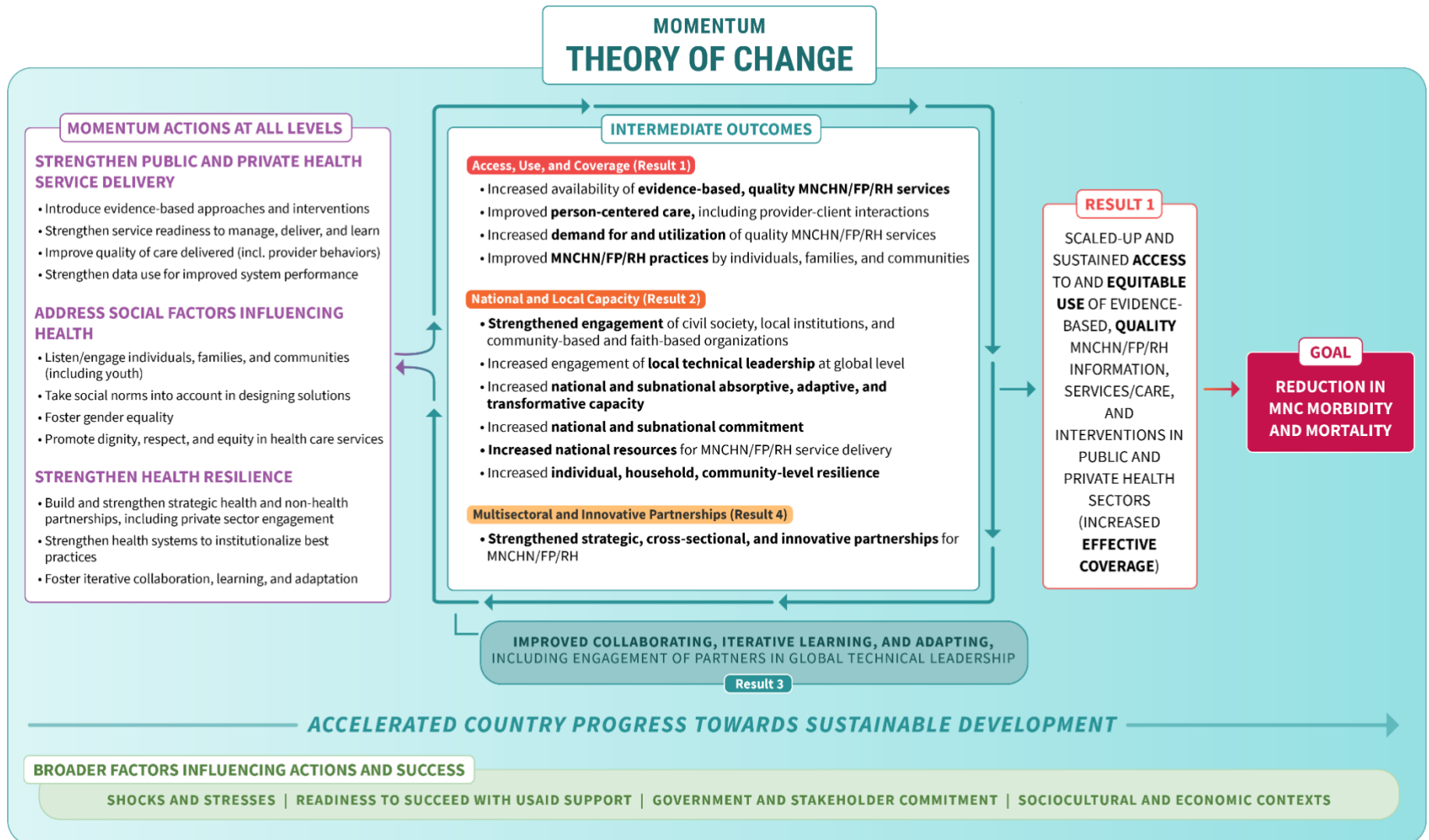The MOMENTUM theory of change is a conceptual framework that:

- Describes how the MOMENTUM suite will achieve its results, capturing how awards' activities will contribute and lead to intermediate outcomes and MOMENTUM's goal.
- Outlines broad, contextual factors that may influence MOMENTUM's success and should be assessed and monitored.
- Helps identify possible pathways to success requiring data and documentation to capture learning and tell MOMENTUM's stories.

What is a Theory of Change?

Theories of change provide road maps describing how and why a given set of interventions are anticipated to lead to a specific change, generally following "if/then" logic. Theories of change help clarify underlying assumptions about processes and define the information needed to monitor progress during a project's lifetime.

As depicted in Figure 1, the MOMENTUM theory of change identifies **actions at all levels** to strengthen service delivery, address social factors influencing health, and strengthen health resilience while contributing to sustainable development. These actions may occur on several levels; for example, projects may support actions to foster gender equality at the policy, facility, and community levels. The action types listed incorporate cross-cutting MOMENTUM principles and key strategies. Specific actions will be identified and defined by the awards implementing activities in MOMENTUM countries. The theory of change also aligns with the MOMENTUM results framework (see Figure 2 on page 7 in the Cross-MOMENTUM Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework for MOMENTUM'S overarching goal and results).

FIGURE 1. MOMENTUM THEORY OF CHANGE

MOMENTUM THEORY OF CHANGE

MOMENTUM ACTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

- Introduce evidence-based approaches and interventions
- Strengthen service readiness to manage, deliver, and learn
- Improve quality of care delivered (incl. provider behaviors)
- Strengthen data use for improved system performance

ADDRESS SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING HEALTH

- Listen/engage individuals, families, and communities (including youth)
- Take social norms into account in designing solutions
- Foster gender equality
- Promote dignity, respect, and equity in health care services

STRENGTHEN HEALTH RESILIENCE

- Build and strengthen strategic health and non-health partnerships, including private sector engagement
- Strengthen health systems to institutionalize best practices
- Foster iterative collaboration, learning, and adaptation

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Access, Use, and Coverage (Result 1)

- Increased availability of **evidence-based, quality MNCHN/FP/RH services**
- Improved **person-centered care,** including provider-client interactions
- Increased **demand for and utilization** of quality MNCHN/FP/RH services
- Improved **MNCHN/FP/RH practices** by individuals, families, and communities

National and Local Capacity (Result 2)

- **Strengthened engagement** of civil society, local institutions, and community-based and faith-based organizations
- Increased engagement of **local technical leadership** at global level
- Increased **national and subnational absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacity**
- Increased **national and subnational commitment**
- **Increased national resources** for MNCHN/FP/RH service delivery
- Increased **individual, household, community-level resilience**

Multisectoral and Innovative Partnerships (Result 4)

- **Strengthened strategic, cross-sectional, and innovative partnerships** for MNCHN/FP/RH

RESULT 1

SCALED-UP AND SUSTAINED **ACCESS TO AND EQUITABLE USE** OF EVIDENCE-BASED, **QUALITY** MNCHN/FP/RH INFORMATION, SERVICES/CARE, AND INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH SECTORS (INCREASED **EFFECTIVE COVERAGE**)

GOAL

REDUCTION IN MNC MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

IMPROVED COLLABORATING, ITERATIVE LEARNING, AND ADAPTING, INCLUDING ENGAGEMENT OF PARTNERS IN GLOBAL TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP

Result 3

ACCELERATED COUNTRY PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BROADER FACTORS INFLUENCING ACTIONS AND SUCCESS

SHOCKS AND STRESSES | READINESS TO SUCCEED WITH USAID SUPPORT | GOVERNMENT AND STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT | SOCIOCULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS

Actions implemented and supported by MOMENTUM awards are assumed to work together to generate a set of **intermediate outcomes**. Actions may contribute to several outcomes related to improved access, use, and coverage of MNCHN/FP/RH services, increased national and local capacity, and strengthened multisectoral and innovated partnerships. However, an action may have effects across more than one area; for example, actions to strengthen health service delivery could also contribute to strengthening health resilience. **Iterative, continuous learning and adapting** and implementing partners' inputs to **global technical leadership** influence actions and intermediate outcomes. Learning and adaption allow for changes to action area strategies and approaches as progress is assessed and new evidence emerges.

The theory of change describes how we anticipate improvements in coverage, equity, and quality of services **(Result 1)** will lead to reduced morbidity and mortality among women and children **(Goal)**. Intermediate outcomes, which contribute to scaling up and sustaining access to and equitable use of information, services, and care, will also contribute to countries' progress towards sustainable development.

MOMENTUM's actions occur within a context of **broader factors influencing actions and success**. These include sociocultural and economic factors; government and other stakeholder commitment; varying levels of readiness to succeed with USAID support; and both predictable and unforeseen shocks and stresses, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Contextual factors may influence the MOMENTUM projects' strategies and approaches and affect underlying assumptions if they change over MOMENTUM's lifespan.

HOW MOMENTUM USES ITS THEORY OF CHANGE

Each MOMENTUM award has a project-specific theory of change to achieve its particular goals that aligns with the overarching MOMENTUM theory of change. The MOMENTUM theory of change is not intended to replace or supersede the project theories of change. Rather, it is complementary, providing an overarching framework to reflect how the MOMENTUM suite assists countries towards sustainable development and progress towards decreased maternal and child morbidity and mortality and increased use of voluntary family planning.

MOMENTUM awards and USAID Missions should use the MOMENTUM theory of change when designing country field awards to ensure program alignment to the context specificities. Program design should clarify the actions to be undertaken, the levels in which they are taken, and the assumptions of how they lead to achieving MOMENTUM objectives.

All MOMENTUM awards, including country-specific field awards, should use the MOMENTUM theory of change to inform their theories of change. Award-specific theories of change may focus on particular elements of the MOMENTUM theory of change, providing greater detail on the approaches they will adopt to achieve intermediate outcomes and, ultimately, results. The link between the award-specific theory of change and the MOMENTUM theory of change should be clear. For example, a proposed MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience field award

Suggested Uses of the MOMEMTUM Theory of Change

- Communicate how MOMENTUM works to diverse audiences.
- Inform award-specific program descriptions.
- Consider pathways to desired outcomes.
- Spell out assumptions to inform award-specific learning agenda questions.
- Inform adaptive learning and management.
- Help to tell the MOMENTUM story.

aims to improve health services in the north of Mali. Its focus will be on building health systems resilience to expand access to and increase demand for and use of quality health services; thus, it may focus on actions and intermediate outcomes related to Result 1 in the MOMENTUM theory of change.

The MOMENTUM awards have a strong focus on using action-oriented monitoring, adaptive management, and adaptive learning to ensure programs use ongoing, iterative learning to achieve the best results. Learning questions should explore the validity of assumptions being made as well as fill in gaps in knowledge around context, innovations needed, and adaptations required. Developing the MOMENTUM theory of change served as operational guidance for identifying learning questions to test assumptions made and helped to prioritize data and information awards will need to capture to answer the MOMENTUM learning agenda.

The MOMENTUM theory of change therefore also guides adaptive management and adaptive learning within the suite of awards. There will be regular pauses and reviews of information tied to the learning questions. These moments will allow MOMENTUM to assess and adapt strategies and activities in order to best achieve its objectives. In addition, we will gain a better understanding of the role contextual factors are playing in progress through the use of complexity-aware monitoring, and make further adaptations.

WILL THE MOMENTUM THEORY OF CHANGE BE UPDATED?

Like all theories of change, the connections between actions, outcomes, results, and impact are assumptions regarding the conditions, behaviors, or critical events within which the project operates; monitoring these assumptions is critical to supporting adaptive management of projects. The theory of change and its assumptions will be reviewed annually through a review of information emerging from MOMENTUM activities and lessons emerging from across the suite of awards. This review will occur with engagement and participation of the project teams, organization leadership, and key stakeholders. The MOMENTUM theory will subsequently be revised as necessary, in alignment with principles of adaptive learning and management.

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