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# The Demographic and Health Surveys: *Data, Gaps, and Some Thoughts*

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# What is The DHS Program?

DHS is a USAID-funded 'full-service' global project that provides technical assistance to low- and middle-income countries to

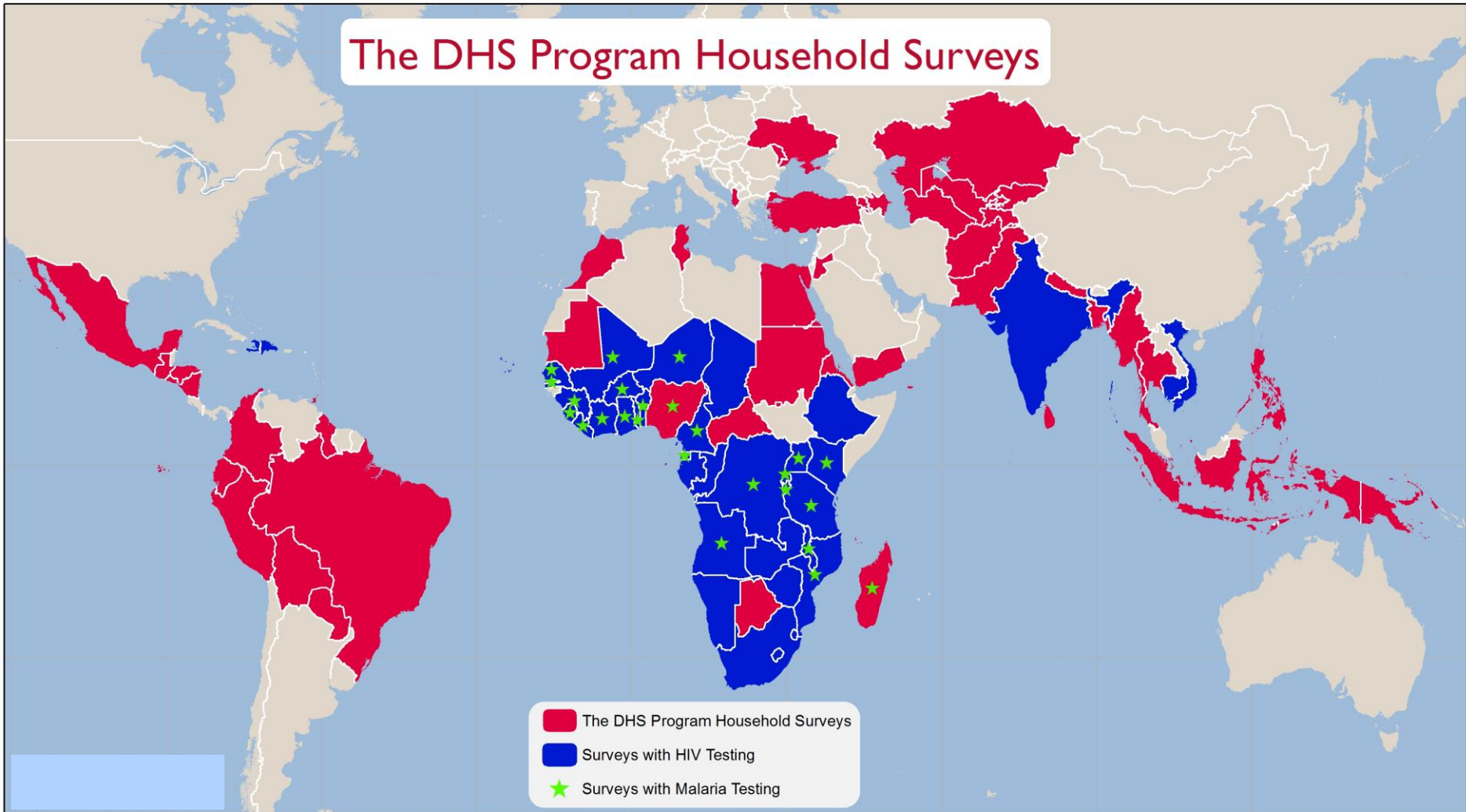
## ***Collect and Use data***

to monitor and evaluate population, health, and nutrition programs, SDGs and other international goals



# Since 1984: 400+ surveys in 90 countries

## The DHS Program Household Surveys



## Specific DHS objectives

- **High-quality data**
- **Data comparable** across countries and time
- **Representative samples:** 10K-40K households
- **Host-country ownership**
- **Building Capacity**
- **Research**



# DHS questionnaires

DHS surveys generally include a:

- Household questionnaire
- Woman's questionnaire
- Man's questionnaire
- Biomarker questionnaire
- Fieldworker questionnaire



# Examples of data in woman's and man's questionnaires:

- Socio-demographic characteristics
- Number of children
- Contraception
- Marriage and sexual behavior
- Fertility preferences
- STIs and HIV/AIDS, knowledge, attitudes & behavior
- Lifestyle behaviors
- Gender and women's empowerment



# Examples of data in women's questionnaires

- Birth/pregnancy history
- 5-year calendar
- Infant and child mortality
- Maternal health: ANC, delivery, postpartum care
- Child nutrition, including breastfeeding
- Immunization and childhood illness



# Empowerment data in The DHS Program: a timeline

Fertility, fertility preferences, contraceptive use data collected in all DHS phases

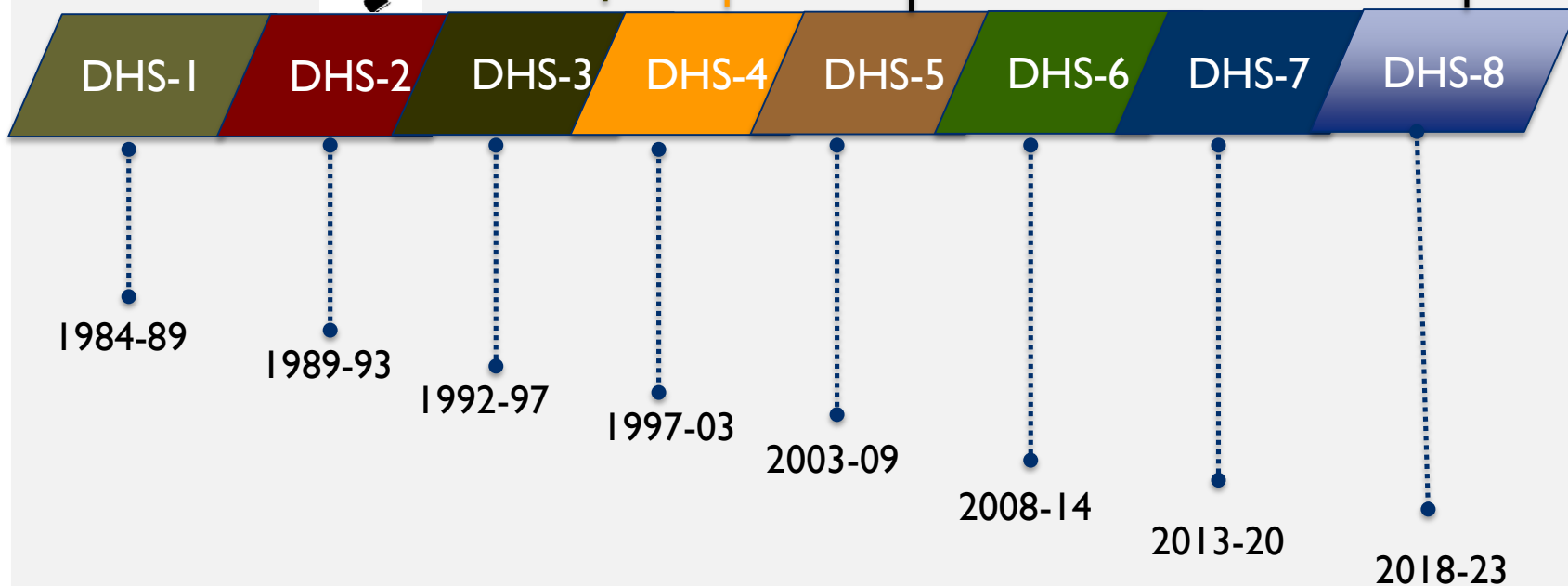
Women's employment



1995 Women's Status Module developed and piloted in Egypt

Many empowerment variables included in the core ques; WS +DV modules adopted

Continued adding new questions to capture additional dimensions of women's empowerment and gender

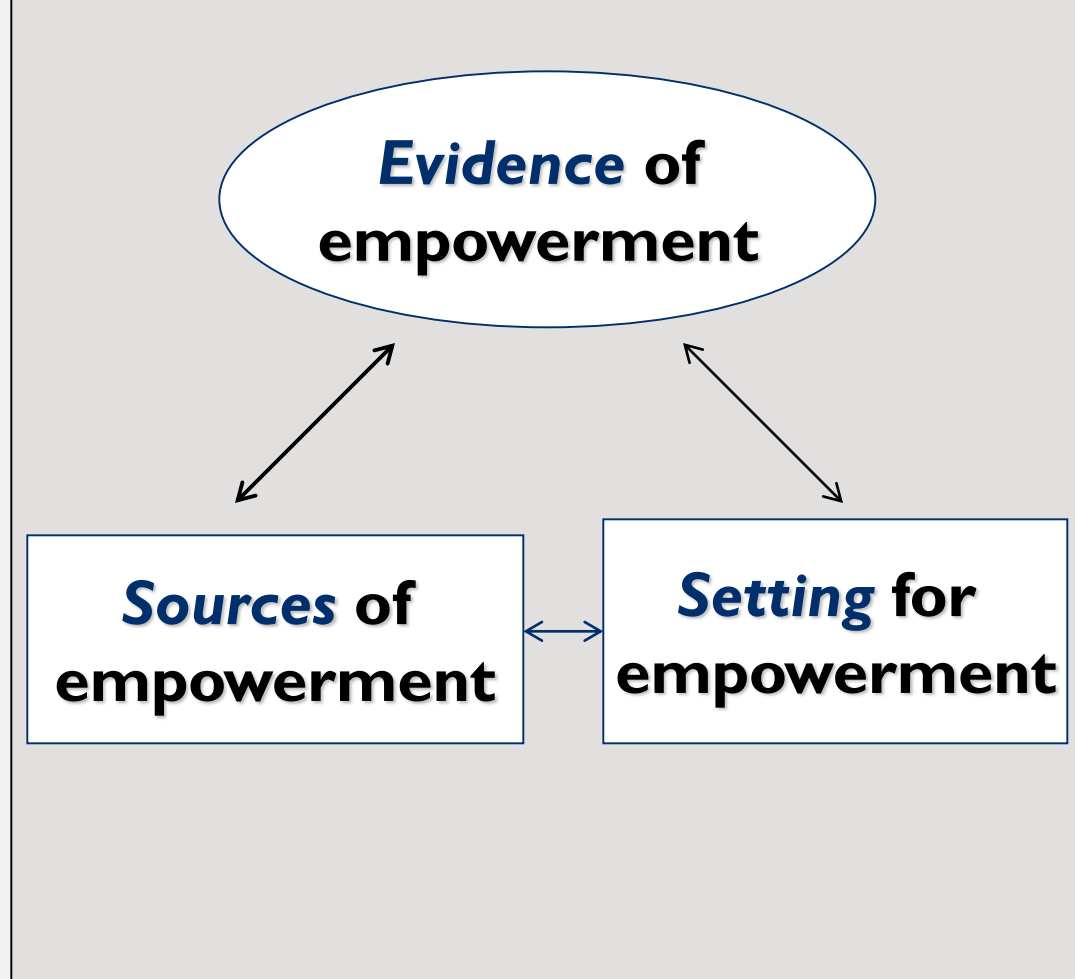


# Conceptualizing empowerment

Empowerment is a **process**

- **Evidence** is the end product
- **Sources/resources** provide the building blocks
- **Context/Setting** refers to the environments that empower

## Process of empowerment





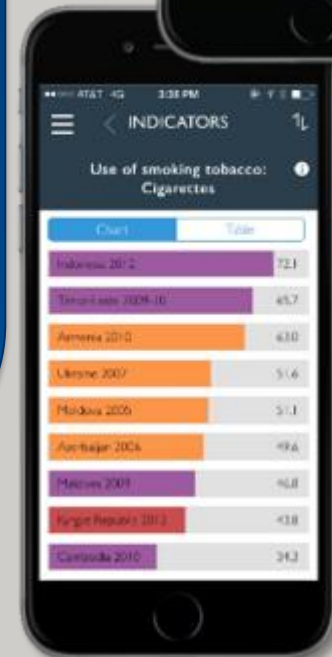
# DHS data on 'Evidence' of empowerment

- Control over own and husband's earnings
- Participation in household decision making
- Contraceptive decision making
- Attitudes towards and control over sex with husband
- Attitudes towards spousal violence
- House and land ownership; name on deed
- Bank account ownership and use
- Cell phone ownership and use
- Internet use
- In some countries: freedom of movement; consanguinity



So, DHS is already providing an inordinate amount of data on fertility, family planning, and empowerment for women, men, and couples

*Do we need more data?  
What do we need?  
Are there other gaps?*



# Gaps

- Data not collected
  - *Empowerment by definition is a **process**: from disempowerment to empowerment: Need longitudinal studies*
  - *Data on empowerment needed for different stages of the life course*
- Interpreting the data we do collect: **Need more qualitative data**
  - *For measuring empowerment, is it important that women make **decisions 'alone'**?*
  - *How do we code **'joint' decision making**?*



# Gaps in understanding

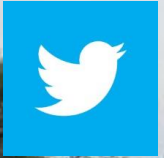
- What are the inter-relationships between different measures of empowerment?
  - *Acceptance of gender inequalities vs. making decisions?*
  - *Between education or employment and 'evidence' variables?*
- Contraception and empowerment
  - *Can they be studied together?*
- 'Outside the box' measures of empowerment
  - *Leisure*
  - *Hours of sleep*
  - *Hunger*
  - *Empowerment in settings outside the household*



# Some questions of continuing interest...

- *'Choice' is key to empowerment, but does it matter for empowerment what choice is made?*
  - *Not using contraception even when a child is not desired?*
  - *Having a sex-selective abortion?*
- *Evidence variables will differ by domain of study, location, and life stage*
  - *How many sets of indicators of empowerment do we need?*
- *What does success look like? Given multidimensionality, how many 'dimensions' are needed for empowerment?*
  - *Will we know an empowered woman when we see one?*





**THANK YOU**

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