

LASER PULSE

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Partners for University -Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

Participatory Process for Developing Locally Sensitive Commitment Measures

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About LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term SERVICES for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a five-year, \$70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID interest countries.

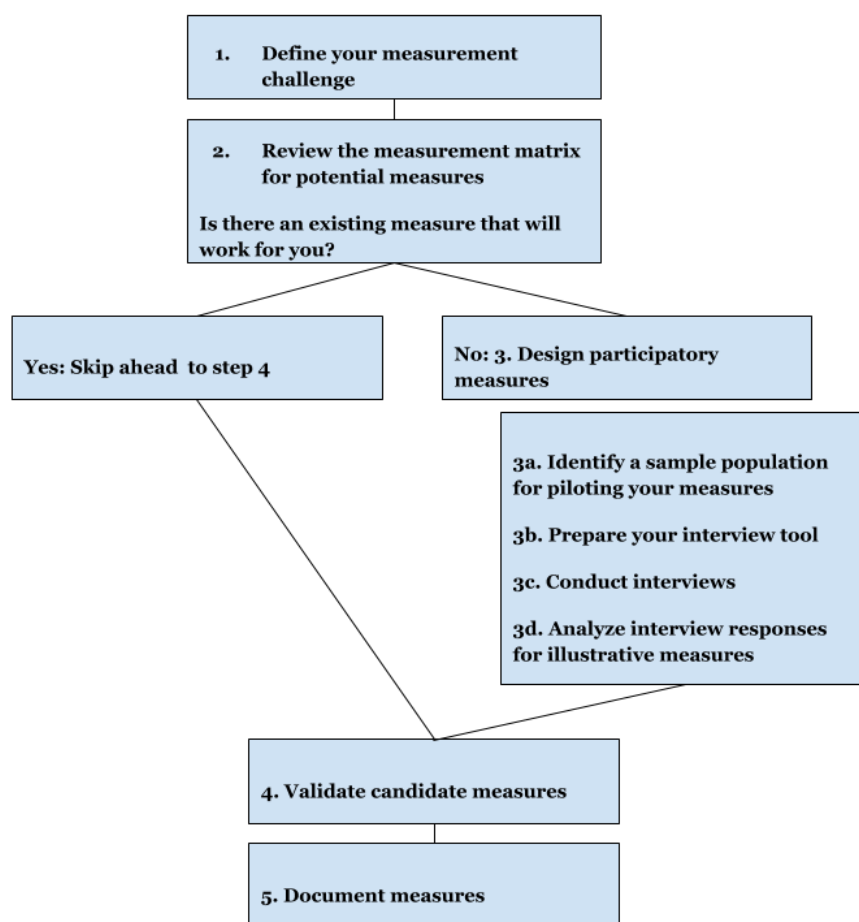
A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Indiana University, the University of Notre Dame, Makerere University, and Catholic Relief Services, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 2,300+ researchers and development practitioners in 56 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice. For more information, please visit laserpulse.org.

Participatory Process for Developing Locally Sensitive Commitment Measures

This step-by-step guide will help you identify commitment indicators at the local level. As the indicators for local level commitment are context specific, we don't expect that a generalizable set of indicators can be used across all countries or contexts. Thus, it is necessary to develop localized sets of commitment indicators. Any interested person can use these instructions to capture and develop local level and locally-relevant commitment indicators.

Steps:



1. Define your measurement challenge: During program development and implementation, you may come across different measurement challenges. One of those challenges could be how to understand local level commitment in the area where the program is being implemented and how to discern if it is changing over the course of program implementation. First, try to understand what the program expects from local people in terms of their commitment to the program. Equally important, but often overlooked, is *what local people would like themselves, their community members and leaders, and donors and implementers to commit to*. This guide is meant

to help you focus on that second perspective of commitment, so that you can best align your program with local priorities and have a better chance of making that commitment “stick”. Second, this is also an opportunity to develop research questions you want to address with a special focus on *whose commitment matters* and their commitment *to what, specifically?* Who is the intended user of the indicators you will develop (yourself, your implementing partner, local government officials, or program participants)? How do you want them to use the indicators? What is the change in behavior you’d like to see as a result of their use?

2. Review the Measurement Matrix: After identifying your measurement challenge, review the [Measurement Matrix](#) to see if there are any indicators that suit your needs. This will help you to understand what already exists and will help you determine what you need to do in order to refine existing indicators or design locally-relevant indicators. Based on the sector(s) for which you choose to develop locally sensitive commitment indicators, you can do exploratory research and document all the major commitment indicators you come across, which can be used for coding the original inputs from interviews or focus groups with local people later, once you have data collected from the field.

-OR-

3. Design participatory indicators: You can look at the methodology employed in [Everyday Peace Indicators](#) (EPI) and adapt it to come up with the locally sensitive commitment indicators and follow a qualitative case study methodology. EPI is a good approach for developing indicators for difficult-to-measure concepts like commitment as it assumes that local communities are best placed to conduct research to understand local level context using their own intuition and everyday decision-making frameworks, which can then be extrapolated and analyzed using qualitative methods. Your participatory measurement design should include interviewing community members or program participants to understand how they understand commitment and if there is any pre-existing method for measuring commitment (or a pre-existing intuitive marker of commitment, which you can then help to convert into an indicator). Furthermore, you can also conduct interviews with community leaders to understand how they perceive commitment and measure it; these groups may have very different perspectives and it will be important to understand their similarities and differences in order to know which dimensions of commitment your program should target as outcomes.

3a. Identify a sample population for gathering data about local perceptions of commitment: For the collection of primary data, you need to identify the data source. Your data source depends on the type of question(s) you are asking. If you are interested in knowing how community leaders understand and measure commitments, you could select 15-20 community leaders, e.g., teachers, health workers, volunteers, and elected officials to interview. By including 15-20 community leaders, you can get diverse perspectives and responses. This number is also easy to handle in terms of data collection and analysis. If you want to understand how the community members view and understand commitment, you can select around 20-30 community members for your interviews. Your sample can be a purposive sample depending on who is available. Try

to diversify the respondents by gender, age, income, education, and ethnic groups so that you will have variations in responses. Intentionally seeking out the perspectives of people from vulnerable, marginalized, or underrepresented groups is also instructive and essential.

3b. Prepare an interview tool: Prepare a short interview tool, containing less than 10 questions, for the interview so that you can complete the interview in about 30 minutes. Train and deploy local people, who are familiar with place, language, and culture, for data collection. Although there is a possibility of social desirability bias, employing local people in data collection helps to identify and interview community people in a short period of time. Contact the intended respondent prior to the interview and find an appropriate time that works best for them for the interview. Do not take more than 30-45 minutes for the interview.

3c. Conduct your interviews: Take notes or record the conversation after participants give their consent so that you can refer back to the interviews for analysis later. The questions for community leaders should be different from the questions for community members because the engagement and contribution of community leaders and community members is often different. Where possible, train and employ local people or partners to conduct the interviews. Be sure to budget for interview translations or focus group transcripts, if required.

3d. Analyze the interview responses for illustrative commitment indicators: There are two ways to analyze your qualitative data: open coding and structured coding. Open coding helps to discover new patterns in the data without preconceived ideas. On the other hand, structured coding is based on preconceived ideas of commitment indicators, mainly using the same codes that you found during your desk review, and looking for a particular response in the text that fits into already identified codes. One of the advantages of open coding is it can capture new indicators which are missed by structured coding.

Codes generated from two methods should be cross-walked, refined, and used for developing measurable commitment indicators. Given the nature of identified codes, you can decide if they can be translated into measurable indicators. For example, if *participation* is coded as a possible commitment indicator, you can convert it into a measurable indicator, such as, the number/percentage of women participating in self-help groups.

4. Validate the candidate indicators: The next step is to validate key indicators with local people, which entails going back to the same communities and testing the indicators with the community leaders and community members. Following the procedure from EPI, it is important to validate your new indicators by presenting them to stakeholders and ask for confirmation. Key indicator findings should be conveyed through a presentation or poster so that everybody sees the indicators and provides their approval/disapproval. Based on feedback from the validation process, you can finalize the indicators.

5. Document the indicator: Documentation of locally-relevant commitment indicators should be short and consistent with the Mission's other records on measurement and monitoring. For

instance, you may choose to include information about locally-relevant indicators in relevant sections of your PMP and other Mission-wide systems for managing monitoring data. Locally-relevant commitment indicators could also be integrated into activity MEL plans. Remember, the expectation is that these candidate indicators will provide rich descriptions of the context from the perspective of local stakeholders, including community-level characteristics, events, and other variables contributing to local perceptions of commitment.

In addition, you might also consider developing personas to characterize the different perceptions and expectations of commitment held by different stakeholder groups (see example personas).