

LASER PULSE

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY MONITORING, EVALUATION, & LEARNING

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About LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a 10-year, \$70M program funded by USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,700+ researchers and development practitioners in 86 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 the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

Disclaimer

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ACRONYMS

AC&V	Armed Conflict and Violence Prevention
AfP	Alliance for Peacebuilding
AIR	American Institutes for Research
CPS	Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Stabilization
CS	Conflict Sensitivity
CVP LAIT	Conflict and Violence Prevention Learning Agenda Implementation Team
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
HDP	Humanitarian, Development, and Peacebuilding
LASER PULSE	Long-term Assistance and Services for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine
PI	Principal Investigator
QED	Quasi-Experimental Design
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
ToC/s	Theory/ies of Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

RESEARCH SUMMARY

This research aims to better understand the current state of measurement with regards to conflict sensitivity (CS). The research addresses the learning agenda question: *What are evidence-based approaches for measuring the impact of armed conflict and violence prevention, mitigation, and reduction programming (across different levels individual-community-national-system)?* Given the poor state of current CS measurement and a lack of consistently applied evidence-based approaches, the following report explores the general characteristics of relevant resources to date—including explicit indicators, common measurement trends, and indicator examples. This report analyzed 50 resources, of which 16 (32%) contained explicit indicators; the characteristics of the 50 analyzed resources are synthesized within this report.

In total, 72 indicators were extracted for analysis. Collectively, these indicators capture a variety of effects from CS or conflict-related work along categories related to conflict awareness, prevention, and management; changes in beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and norms; engagement and cooperation; inclusion and participation along with exclusion, stigma, and intolerance; security or insecurity; and skills. The findings in this report showcase existing indicators and measures as examples of the current state of measurement. Additionally, the report outlines relevant recent publications, including guidance documents, that provide insights into measuring CS. While experience with and insights into effective CS remain limited to date, the resources captured in this report provide an important starting place from which to develop and test conflict sensitive approaches and measures.

To advance the field of CS measurement, researchers and implementers need to establish more explicit indicators of conflict sensitive actions and how those actions contribute to both desired and unintended effects. Doing so requires clear differentiation between peacebuilding or conflict management-related objectives and conflict sensitive approaches. Once these approaches have been delineated, clear measures of CS can be used to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of those approaches. Practitioners can make use of emerging and innovative data collection approaches, sharing learnings more broadly to improve the wider field.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Conflict and Violence Prevention Learning Agenda Implementation Team (CVP-LAIT) led by CVP, the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) carried out a scoping and synthesis of indicators and relevant forms of measurement for CS programming to complement other research as part of the CVP-LAIT portfolio. The CVP-LAIT was tasked with co-creating and implementing a Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) learning agenda that:

- Establishes the evidence base for effective approaches to armed conflict and violence prevention (AC&V);
- Identifies opportunities for Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention (CVP) investments that would produce new knowledge to fill gaps in the existing literature;
- Provides USAID staff with events, tools, resources, and/or guidance to incorporate learning agenda findings into their work; and
- Conducts original research into AC&V.

Through an intensive, multi-stakeholder consultation process with USAID Washington and mission staff, CS and associated Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) was identified as an effort that, if backed by sound evidence and guidance, could benefit program design, outcomes, policy, and knowledge generation.

CS is an approach to ensure that interventions do not unintentionally contribute to conflict, but rather, strengthen opportunities for peace and inclusion. It is understood as an important practice point in peacebuilding interventions; however, CS practice remains uneven.¹ Despite the wealth of practice materials and policy statements, gaps in practice remain. These gaps are further exacerbated by a failure to evaluate CS practice based on minimum practice standards and a lack of research on CS process and effectiveness. A lack of evaluation studies based on common minimum practice standards results in a weak evidence base for research. Thus, the state of CS practice is not yet mature and requires additional research and evaluation support to become a consistently implemented pillar of peacebuilding.

Contributing to the development of CS research and evaluation support, this research aims to better understand the current state of measurement with regards to CS implemented across multiple sectors. By exploring the characteristics of related resources that include theories of change (ToCs) and explicit indicators, and reviewing emerging resources that provide additional ideas on and direction for measuring CS, this report addresses the following Learning Agenda Question: *What are evidence-based approaches for measuring the impact of armed conflict and violence prevention, mitigation, and reduction programming (across different levels individual-community-national-system)?*

MEL REPORT METHODOLOGY

This research conducts a scoping and synthesis of indicators and their relevant measurement information of CS approaches across multiple sectors including the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding (HDP) sectors. The approach to this research involved: (1) resource scraping and determining eligibility of collected resources; (2) indicator scraping; and (3) conducting thematic coding analysis and synthesis.

1. **Resource Scraping and Eligibility:** This report is meant to supplement research conducted by the CVP-LAIT. As such, the research parameters were defined by the included resources finalized for two different research efforts:

¹ See Baumgardner-Zuzik, Jessica, Shaziya DeYoung, Allyson Bachtta, and Jeannie Shroads. 2023. Literature Review on Conflict Sensitivity in Peacebuilding. West Lafayette, IN: Long-term Assistance and Services for Research – Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER Pulse Consortium).

- **Evidence Review on the Integration of Conflict Sensitive Practice Within Human Serving Sectors** conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR); and
- **Literature Review on Conflict Sensitivity in Peacebuilding** conducted by AfP.

Any other resources from additional research efforts as part of the CVP-LAIT research portfolio that were deemed relevant for this report were also included. Each of the above mentioned research efforts included an extensive scraping process. Of the 176 resources that were scraped for this research, a total of 50 resources were included for full-text coding.

2. **Resource Scraping Indicator Scraping:** Using a finalized catalogue of 50 resources, the research team manually scraped each to collect indicators and related MEL information, including the associated measure² and measure options³ (where available). A total of 72 indicators were identified and included from 16 resources that contained explicit indicators. AfP used Microsoft Excel to track references and code key characteristics documented for each resource. This method allowed researchers to quickly access information in one place, check each other's work to avoid duplication, and efficiently evaluate characteristics of each resource against the eligibility criteria.
3. **Thematic Analysis and Synthesis:** Following full-text coding of all 72 indicators, researchers employed a thematic analysis approach, paired with computerized theme and descriptive analyses of the included resources to synthesize findings across relevant resource characteristics. These characteristics include research results, goals, and methodologies, as well as indicator types, categories, and examples.

INCLUDED RESOURCES

The finalized catalogue contained 50 resources, of which 16 (32%) contained explicit indicators. In total, 72 indicators were extracted for further analysis.

Understanding the context and methodological approach of resources is crucial for assessing the current measurement landscape. A study's context impacts the indicators' applicability and universality, and a study's methodology speaks to the indicators' reliability and validity. By examining these, one gains insights into the strength of the evidence behind the indicators and their adaptability in the ever-evolving CS landscape. However, it is important to acknowledge that while these are best practices in theory, in practice, one often sees less consistency and encounters numerous methodological limitations. These challenges can significantly affect the interpretation and applicability of the findings. Ultimately, a deep dive into these study characteristics provides a clearer picture of current limited CS measurements and paves the way for future advancements, helping to refine shared definitions of success. This section provides information related to the types of resources, research methodology, and publication timelines of the 50 resources, irrespective of whether they provided explicit indicators or not.⁴

Geographic Reach

The body of resources covered 58 countries, with two resources being global in nature and another two having no geographic area identified. Colombia (N=4), Uganda (N=4), Bangladesh (N=3), and Somalia (N=3) were the primary locations representing at least 5% of the sample each. The total number of countries may not match the number of projects

² Indicator Measure is the exact question (either quantitatively or qualitatively administered) that collects data to evaluate a specific indicator.

³ Indicator Measure Options are the exact options provided to answer an indicator measure, such as a Likert scale or specific coded answers. Close-ended questions typically have explicitly stated measure options.

⁴ Given the nascent state of information on CS, this section provides information on all included CS resources from the catalogue, irrespective of whether they provided explicit indicators.

or resource areas, as some focus on multiple countries. On a broader regional scale, Africa and Southeast Asia led in frequency, followed by South America and the Middle East (see Figure 1⁵).

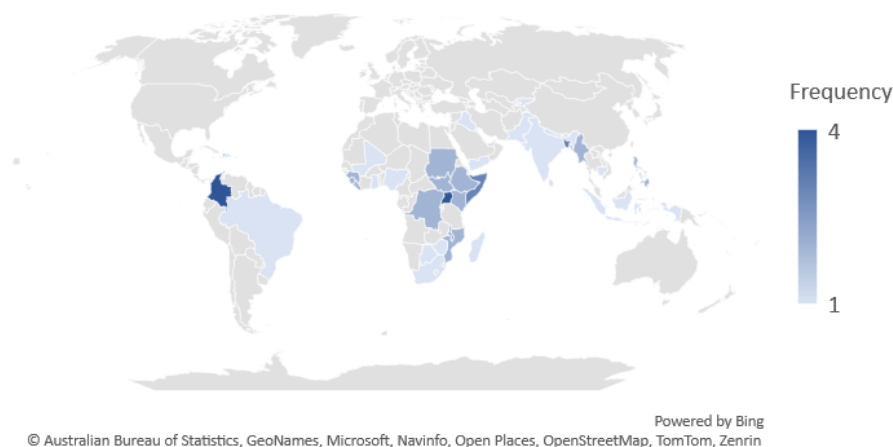


Figure 1: Geographic spread of resources

Resource Objectives, Sectors, and Target Groups

Of the 50 resources, 19 (38%) have explicit ToCs relevant to CS. Many of these mirror common peacebuilding-focused ToCs, such as fostering social cohesion and changing norms (N=8), establishing conflict management or peacebuilding mechanisms (N=6), addressing basic needs (N=6), the development of trust in institutions and government (N=4), addressing the root causes of conflict (N=3), reducing inequity (N=3), and undertaking activities in a conflict sensitive manner (N=3). Eighty-four percent (N=16) of resources with a ToC included more than one.

Result Type	N	%
Conflict Sensitivity	26	52%
Conflict Management	12	24%
Effects of Conflict	12	24%
Gender	11	22%
Skills Development	8	16%
Social Cohesion	7	14%
None/Unknown	6	12%
Changes in Attitudes, Behaviors, and Beliefs	4	8%

Table 1: Resource results

to conflict management and peacebuilding were assessed by 16% of the resources. The outcomes of interventions in terms of the effect on the development of social cohesion or changes in attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, knowledge, or skills were reported in 14% and 8% of the resources, respectively. Six resources did not have CS-related results.⁷

The results of the interventions covered by the resources were also coded (see Table 1).⁶ Fifty-two percent (N=26) of resources assessed the degree of CS of an intervention, evaluated the results of an intervention aimed at integrating CS, and/or provided recommendations on increasing CS. About a quarter of resources (24%) assessed the effectiveness of interventions focused on conflict management or peacebuilding activities. An additional 24% of resources discussed the (often negative) effects of conflict on an intervention. Twenty-two percent of the resources addressed gender or gender sensitivity in terms of their importance to an intervention approach or the results of an intervention on women, for example. The development of skills related

⁵ This map was created on XXX

⁶ Note that in some cases resources reported multiple results and were therefore coded with more than one result type.

⁷ In one of these cases, the result was unclear and could not be coded.

**CS Recommendation:**

Ensure sufficient definitional boundaries between peacebuilding and CS.

As illustrated in various resources, the line between conflict management and peacebuilding work, on the one hand, and conflict sensitive interventions on the other has been and continues to be blurred. Conflict sensitive approaches, however, are distinct from peacebuilding and conflict management. Any intervention, from those focused on sanitation and hygiene to environmental conservation and climate adaptation, can be done in a conflict sensitive manner to reduce the likelihood of negative effects on the conflict while increasing the likelihood of positive movement toward peace. For example, intervention participants can be engaged in a way that encourages positive interactions between groups in conflict while minimizing the potential for grievances caused by unequal intervention benefits. However, these conflict sensitive approaches do not necessarily have an explicit peacebuilding or conflict management aim. ToCs and approaches to monitoring and evaluation should ensure that CS is applied intentionally and measured appropriately.

**CS Recommendation:**

Undertake evaluations and share learnings.

About half (52%) of the resources included in this synthesis explicitly assessed CS; yet, nearly a quarter (24%) indicated that conflict has negatively affected interventions. It is therefore important that the application of CS be evaluated, and any lessons learned from those evaluations be shared.

Each resource was also coded based on the technical area(s) or sector(s) it addressed, with 14 separate sectors identified. The most represented sector was food security (42% of resources), followed by education (38%), health (30%), governance (14%), and justice (14%; see Table 2).

Program or Research Subject Goal	N	%
Food Security	21	42%
Education	19	38%
Health	15	30%
Governance	7	14%
Justice	7	14%
Environment and Conservation	4	8%
Peacebuilding	4	8%
Workforce	4	8%
Economic	2	4%
Public Works (Water and Sanitation)	2	4%
Technology	2	4%
Agriculture	1	2%
Arts and Culture	1	2%
Disaster Preparation	1	2%

Table 2: Sectors

Most resources (94%) had at least one target group identified, with the most frequently cited target groups being the general population (N=10), the education sector (N=8), women (N=7), children (N=6), and families (N=6).

Timeline of Publication

The majority (82%, N=41) of the resources were published since 2018. Similarly, most resources with indicators (81%, N=13) have also been published in the last six years. The number of resources spiked in 2018 and has continued to grow (more than eight resources per year except for 2022), appearing to correspond with similar trends of growing interest in CS in development work.

Methodology: Research Design, Analysis, and Limitations

The research design of CS resources is predominantly reported as non-experimental case studies (68%). The second most common research design is non-experimental correlation studies (12%), followed by experimental studies (6%), quasi-experimental design (QED) (4%), and literature reviews (2%).

Research Design	N	%
Experimental	3	6%
QED	2	4%
Non-Experimental Correlation	6	12%
Non-Experimental Case Study	34	68%
Literature Review	1	2%

Table 3: Research design

Most resources (92%) used more than one method of data collection. The most common types of data collection were key informant interviews (90%), focus group discussions (64%), self-completed or administered surveys (50%), and secondary data (40%). Resources also referenced observation (36%), document or desk review (34%), records (32%), and storytelling, enumerated surveys, and mobile phone surveys (all one resource each).

CS INDICATORS AND MEASURES

While CS has existed as a theoretical concept for many decades, it is a growing area of practice, and practitioners are still trying to understand what it means in practice and how it can be measured. This is evident both in the number of resources identified, as well as the limited number of resources with explicit indicators (N=16, 32%). As a starting point, the following section presents findings and related examples of current CS indicators and measures to determine what CS programs are seeking to change.

Included Resources with Explicit Indicators

Manual scraping of the resources identified 72 indicators from 16 resources. Most of the indicators (68%) are defined in terms of how they were measured, and some indicators also include indicator measure options.

Type of Indicator

Indicators were coded as impact, outcome, or output indicators (with some indicators being coded to multiple types).⁸ The most common type of indicator was reported as outcome (58%), followed by output (44%), and impact (18%). Thirty of the indicators (42%) were code as both outcome and output.

Indicator Type	N	%
Impact	13	18%
Outcome	42	58%
Output	32	44%

Table 4: Indicator types

Indicator Categories and Examples

The included indicators were coded into nine categories based on the types of process or outcomes that they measured.⁹ The largest category was conflict awareness (18%), which is an essential aspect of CS, followed by inclusion and participation (15%), beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and norms (13%), engagement and cooperation, and skills (11% each), and conflict management (10%). When considered together, exclusion, stigma, and intolerance (8%) and inclusion and participation

⁸ Indicators were coded as impact, outcome, or output indicators only if the original resources categorized them as either impact, outcome, or output indicators.

⁹ Note that some indicators fell into more than one category.

(15%) were also common categories, and they serve as the largest group of indicators, measuring the degree to which people are included, participate in, excluded from, or stigmatized by processes or people.

Often, the indicators are measures of outcomes or impacts of conflict-related work rather than the degree to which the work was conflict sensitive. As a result, these indicators are more akin to proxy indicators (assuming that programs must be conflict sensitive to be effective) rather than directly measuring CS. Therefore, they serve as a starting place from which to further develop measures of CS and connect the degree of CS to positive outcomes in conflict-affected settings. For example, one indicator included in this study is: “The design of the NbS¹⁰ incorporates risk identification and risk management beyond the intervention site.”¹¹ Identifying risks in order to respond to them is a way for interventions to be conflict sensitive. However, many indicators captured here instead measure proxies, such as the number of teacher trainings that include CS or the degree of acceptability of violence, an outcome to which a conflict sensitive approach could contribute.

It is also worth noting that a high number (N=23, 32%) of indicators were in relation to either gender and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or education (N=11, 15%). Gender or SGBV-related indicators were most often associated with indicators measuring beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and norms (N=8 out of 23), while education-related indicators were most often associated with measures of skills (N=4 out of 11).

Conflict Prevention, Awareness, and Management

Taken together, conflict prevention, conflict awareness, and conflict management indicator categories account for 32% of the indicators.

Conflict Prevention: There are three indicators (4%) related to conflict prevention, and two of them also relate to SGBV. Indicators in this category explicitly reference early warning or the prevention of violence and are measures of program outcomes focused on reducing conflict and the incidences of SGBV, as well as building better community relations or social cohesion. These indicators are:

Table 6: Conflict prevention indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Women, men, and youth of all tribes respect and behave toward one another with dignity	Community influencers understand gender equity and SGBV and conflict prevention	Open ended
Reduced conflict and incidence of SGBV	Local and government systems effectively prevent and address SGBV	Open ended
Reduced conflict and incidence of SGBV	Communities maintain systems, including early warning systems, to prevent and resolve conflict locally	Open ended

¹⁰ NbS is a specific program acronym defined as nature-based solutions.

¹¹ See Haseeb Md Irfanullah and Tom Gillhespy, *Connecting Conflict, Climate Change and Ecological Crisis* (Itdad, October 2021).

Indicator Category	N	%
Conflict Awareness	13	18%
Inclusion and Participation	11	15%
Beliefs, Behaviors, Attitudes, and Norms	9	13%
Engagement and Cooperation	8	11%
Skills	8	11%
Conflict Management	7	10%
Exclusion, Stigma, and Intolerance	6	8%
Security or Insecurity	3	4%
Conflict Prevention	3	4%

Table 5: Indicator categories

Conflict Awareness: Conflict awareness is the most prevalent indicator category (18%), and the one most closely linked with the concept of CS. The measures for these indicators include open-ended questions, rating scales, and yes/no responses. Many also contain sub-indicators. For example, one indicator of conflict-related risk is assessed by looking at five areas: beneficiary participation, geographic targeting, interaction with conflict stressors, accountability and transparency, and political economy. Another indicator of conflict sensitive education practices also includes numerous sub-questions related to training, policies and guidelines, and supervision. Other examples of indicators include:

Table 7: Conflict awareness indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Perception of pressure from illegal armed groups on beneficiaries	Specific measure not available	Not available
Changes in community leader norms, attitudes, and behavior on SGBV	Awareness of different types of SGBV	Not available
Conflict monitoring and early warning systems	Q1. Developing conflict indicators Q2. Monitoring conflict factors, causes, and issues	Rating scale 1-3

Conflict Management: Conflict management accounts for 10% of the indicators and includes open-ended, yes/no, and scale-related measures. These indicators seek to measure a willingness to intervene or act in the face of conflict, risk management, and an overall ability to resolve conflict. In some cases, these indicators are proxy indicators of actual conflict management and are more indicative of the likelihood that someone or something might effectively manage conflict. Examples of indicators include:

Table 8: Conflict management indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Confidence and self-assessed competence to act	Competence and confidence to act in the face of religious intolerance, violence, or violent extremism on campus	Measure options were taken from validated scales and adapted for the study
The design of the NbS incorporates risk identification and risk management beyond the intervention site	Specific measure not available	Not available
Willingness to intervene	Willingness to intervene by having empathy for someone experiencing threats of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual violence • LGBTQ bullying • Religious harassment • Desire to commit an act of violent extremism 	Measure options were taken from validated scales and adapted for the study

Beliefs, Behaviors, Attitudes, and Norms

Indicators of beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and norms measure the outcomes or impacts of conflict-focused work and are largely from a single resource and implementer (Burundians Responding Against Violence and Inequality or BRAVI) and centered on SGBV or gender (8 out of 9 indicators, or 89%). Indicators in this category measure the prevalence of these beliefs and perceptions and their general acceptability. Examples of indicators include:

Table 9: Beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and norms indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Changes in community leader norms, attitudes, and behavior on SGBV	Prevalence of harmful beliefs and behaviors related to violence against women and girls	Changes in community leader norms, attitudes, and behavior on SGBV
Perceptions of SGBV in the community	Community members' perceptions/ treatment of survivors by community/ family	Not available
Women, men, and youth of all tribes respect and behave toward one another with dignity	Women, men, and youth of all tribes have positive perceptions about gender dynamics, conflict sensitivity, and women's empowerment	Open ended

Only two indicators have measures (open ended); the rest do not contain additional information on how the indicator data is captured. Given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, collecting information on these indicators would need to be done in a conflict and gender sensitive way.



CS Recommendation:

Collect indicator data in a conflict sensitive way.

Indicator data for projects in conflict-affected and fragile contexts must be collected in a conflict sensitive manner to avoid exacerbating tensions or putting anyone at risk. For example, it may be inappropriate or even dangerous to ask women about their perceptions of violence or the survivors of violence in front of others, both for the women and for the person asking the questions. However, asking to speak with women alone in some cultures may be seen as disrespectful and promote mistrust. Therefore, it is important to consider both the data collection process and the information gathered when designing conflict sensitive indicators, including trauma-informed practices that safeguard the physical and mental well-being of all involved.

Engagement and Cooperation

Intergroup and community engagement and cooperation are common among peacebuilding and conflict management programs as one ToC. Bringing people together to work on an issue is seen as increasing the likelihood of developing relationships and, thus, reducing conflict. Engagement and cooperation can be among people, as well as institutions such as government. Eleven percent of the indicators measured engagement and cooperation as programmatic outcomes or impacts. For those that included measurement options, three (38%) were open ended, while one other indicator was assessed using a rating scale. Examples of indicators include:

Table 10: Engagement and cooperation indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Changes in community leader norms, attitudes, and behavior on SGBV	Ability to engage and work with community members on issues of SGBV	Not available
Willing and constructive dialogue	Initiating contact with someone they want to reconcile with	Open ended
Coordination with other institutions	Q1. Beneficiary contribution method Q2. Cooperation with traditional authorities	Rating scale 1-3

Exclusion/Inclusion, Intolerance/Participation, and Stigma

Indicators of inclusion, participation, and tolerance (or the lack thereof) make up 24% of the indicators when taken together. Like engagement and cooperation, these indicators are closely related to peacebuilding and conflict management ToCs. Inclusion and participation of stakeholders in programs is also closely correlated with CS when done correctly.

Exclusion, Intolerance, and Stigma: These indicators were related to marginalized groups, such as certain religious groups, persons with disabilities, and gender, and make up 8% of the total. Most (67%) came from a single resource—an impact evaluation of a Youth Training Leadership Program in Bangladesh—and used what the study reported were validated scales to measure the indicator. Some examples include:

Table 11: Exclusion, intolerance, and stigma indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Religious intolerance	To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “Bangladesh is a Muslim country above all else.” Measures the extent to which the respondent ties his/her national identity to their religious identity	Measure options were taken from validated scales and adapted for the study
Reduced harassment and stigma for gender diverse populations	Specific measure not available	Not available

Inclusion and Participation: Some indicators measured positive qualities of inclusion and participation, making up 15% of the total. Of the indicators that mention measurement options, they include open-ended and ratings or scales. Examples of indicators include:

Table 12: Inclusion and participation indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Risk appraisal	Q1. Language spoken by project staff Q2. Consideration of youth as beneficiaries and members on community development committee Q3. Proportion of the less educated or illiterate as beneficiaries	Percentage and rating scale 1-3
Stakeholders who are directly and indirectly affected by the NbS have been identified and involved in all processes of the NbS intervention	Specific measure not available	Not available

Security and Insecurity

These indicators, which make up only 4% of the total, measure perceptions of security (2) or implementation challenges related to the security context (1). While representing a small number of the total, these indicators are important given their relevance to potential impacts on programming and the ways in which programming can impact a conflict context.

Table 13: Security and insecurity indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Religious perceived group victimization	To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "Muslims around the world are under threat."	Measure options were taken from validated scales and adapted for the study
Implementation challenges related to security context	Not available	Not available
Perception of security	Not available	Not available

Skills

The final category of indicators covers skills, competencies, and trainings related to conflict management and CS. This category is important in the field of CS because the ability to act in a conflict sensitive manner and build conflict sensitive processes into a program is not always straightforward, depending instead on the development of knowledge and skills. Examples of indicators include:

Table 14: Skills indicators

Indicator	Indicator Measure	Indicator Measure Options
Training professionals in the Art for Reconstruction model	For training of trainers' objectives (eight organizations), willingness and ability to learn and apply the Art for Reconstruction model	5 point Likert scale
Participant self-assessed skills related to environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity	Self-assessed belief in having the skills and resources to integrate conflict sensitivity in their work	Open ended
Conflict sensitive education practices	Awareness of conflict sensitive education practices and lack of pedagogical skills and competencies to teach in conflict or fragile areas	Open ended



CS Recommendation:

Make use of innovative data collection approaches.

Emerging resources indicate that there are new ways of collecting information in insecure and conflict-affected contexts that are relevant and important for measuring CS, including remote sensing, social media data, and new methods for crowd-sourcing data. Practitioners should make use of these, identifying which are appropriate and effective, and using the findings to improve CS (and, thus, the effectiveness and sustainability) across their work.

EMERGING RESOURCES IN CS

In addition to the included resources, there are several relevant guides that provide useful information for ensuring conflict sensitive interventions, either explicitly or implicitly. Some of these resources even provide indicator examples. These resources, although limited, provide a useful starting place from which to develop and test approaches to, and indicators of CS.

- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and International Alert collaboratively developed a resource directly focused on CS indicators: [***Conflict Sensitivity: Indicators for Local and Community Development Programming in Myanmar***](#).¹² The guide includes in-depth information on the process of developing indicators, as well as indicator examples on the effects of conflict-related programming and the degree of CS of an intervention. In particular, it highlights the importance of both context and interaction indicators and provides an entire menu of indicators related to conflict sensitive local and community development in Myanmar. These indicators assess, for example, an intervention's effects on the conflict or whether its activities are reaching the right people.

¹² UNDP and International Alert, *Conflict Sensitivity: Indicators for Local and Community Development Programming in Myanmar* (2017).

- While only mentioning conflict once, USAID's [***MEL Practitioner Guide: Engagement and Inclusion in Theory of Change Design***](#) is an example of the ways in which development practitioners are increasingly considering inclusion as essential for good programming.¹³ The guide includes instructions for engaging a variety of stakeholders in the design of projects, outlines the importance of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), and provides case studies of the application of the principles. In particular, the process for contextual analysis that the guide outlines is highly relevant to ensuring CS. The section on indicators focuses on ensuring inclusion is captured.
- Another USAID resource, the [***MEL Practitioner Guide: Alternatives to Survey Measurement for Activity and Context Monitoring: Use Cases from Latin America and the Caribbean Citizen Security Program***](#),¹⁴ provides a variety of useful data collection options that are applicable in cases of insecurity or conflict where traditional modes of monitoring may not be appropriate or safe. This includes remote sensing data, social media data, and crowd-sourced data. It provides a number of cases in which this data is used to capture information on conflict and insecurity and examples of how interventions might be able to increase their own conflict awareness (and, thus, sensitivity).
- The forthcoming [***Toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation of Environmental Peacebuilding***](#)¹⁵ provides practical guidance throughout each chapter on the incorporation of CS into environmental peacebuilding work. It also lists CS as a major ToC category, providing an outline of what that means in practice, and includes some examples of indicators of CS.
- A recent publication, [***Doing No Harm & Doing More Good: Stories of Applying Conflict Sensitivity at Helvetas***](#),¹⁶ discusses the organization's approach to CS, the various components of CS, and how it actually implements these practices. While the publication does not include any indicators, the information it provides on the actual implementation of CS complements the guides listed above that contain indicator examples without any information on their applicability in the real world.

¹³ *MEL Practitioner Guide: Engagement and Inclusion in Theory of Change Design, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Descendants in Latin America*. United States Agency for International Development, n.d.

¹⁴ Gregory Haugan et al. *MEL Practitioner Guide: Alternatives to Survey Measurement for Activity and Context Monitoring: Use Cases from Latin America and the Caribbean Citizen Security Program* (USAID, 2023).

¹⁵ Carl Bruch et al. *Toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation of Environmental Peacebuilding* (Washington, D.C.: Environmental Law Institute, forthcoming).

¹⁶ Julia Barandun, *Doing No Harm & Doing More Good: Stories of Applying Conflict Sensitivity at Helvetas* (Switzerland, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the application of CS to interventions is still at an emerging stage, with blurred lines between CS and conflict management or peacebuilding, as well as other objectives and results. There is a concrete need for greater distinction and clarity of measurement with regards to CS in peacebuilding programming and evaluation. The indicators identified reflect this lack of distinction, focusing on a range of categories and results including conflict awareness; conflict prevention and management; changes in behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and norms; inclusion, participation, and cooperation; and the development of relevant skills. A very limited number of indicators directly and explicitly measure an intervention's degree of CS. Rather, most indicators are indirect, proxy, or assumed measures.

Additional resources in the form of guidance documents and case studies are similarly limited, while sometimes blurring the lines between CS and conflict- or peacebuilding-focused objectives. Taking note of this lack of clarity is important; practitioners may assume that interventions with conflict- or peacebuilding-related ToCs are inherently conflict sensitive, but this is not always the case and cannot be assumed. For example, peacebuilders may unknowingly or unintentionally provide benefits largely to members of a single ethnic group or community or leave people out because of their inability to speak or read a certain language. Participants in peacebuilding projects can also face additional dangers. The resources and indicators included in this study are indicative of the need to develop distinct approaches to monitoring CS in addition to conflict and peacebuilding outcomes.

CS FIELD-BASED MEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Unique recommendations resulting from the CS findings presented within this report are incorporated within the report sections. The following overarching recommendations were informed by individual study recommendations, challenges, and best practices, as well as broader insights from research to enhance the state of CS MEL. Many of these recommendations would apply to multiple sectors outside of CS and result from best practices to improve the overall state of measurement. Some recommendations have been made by the researchers based on their subject-matter expertise.

1. **Develop and test new indicators:** As practitioners increasingly recognize the importance of CS, it is crucial to develop and test new indicators that explicitly and directly measure CS, rather than relying on indicators of conflict or other proxies. New guidance documents contain some recommended indicators, but there is little evidence of their effectiveness, feasibility, or utility. These and other new indicators should be tested. Additionally, as the field of CS measurement matures, it is crucial to develop and test new indicators across a variety of contexts. Existing indicators should not simply be copied and repeated in a cookie-cutter fashion.
2. **Develop appropriate time-bound indicators:** Many changes interventions seek to achieve, such as improved trust and social cohesion take considerable time to affect and are often influenced by external factors outside the control of a program. Consequently, it is vital that indicators be aligned with realistic expectations. Indicators must capture both achievable and realistic changes within an intervention timeframe and lay a foundation for capturing the nuances of long-term change contributing to broader phenomena like developing resilience and social cohesion.
3. **Contextualize indicators:** Given the diversity in sectors where CS approaches are implemented, it is critical to tailor indicators and measures to be culturally sensitive and contextually relevant. A comprehensive approach that incorporates diverse indicators addressing various ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and political dimensions is essential for a thorough assessment of the multifaceted factors influencing CS.

4. **Develop and integrate quantitative and qualitative measures:** To gain a comprehensive understanding of CS programming impacts, it is crucial to blend the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. While quantitative metrics deliver concrete data points and trends, qualitative research delves into the nuanced lived experiences and perceptions of community members. By seamlessly integrating findings from both approaches, evaluations can capture the full spectrum of program outcomes—from tangible results to subtle shifts in attitudes. This holistic view is instrumental in refining and enhancing the effectiveness of conflict sensitive interventions.
5. **Engage diverse stakeholders in indicator design:** Engage a wider range of stakeholders in measurement design, including religious leaders, educators, and community elders. Their insights can refine indicators, making them more relevant and actionable.
6. **Rigorously evaluate and scale conflict sensitivity practices:** Improving the overall state of measurement for CS requires the field to not only evaluate the quality and impact of minimum, field-accepted and required CS practices, but also enhance their scalability and applicability, thereby contributing to more effective and sustainable outcomes through four supporting steps:
 - **Define and assess the quality of conflict sensitivity:** First, develop a comprehensive framework to define what constitutes high-quality minimum CS practices. This should include criteria such as relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness in reducing harm while promoting peacebuilding objectives. Implement tools and methods for evaluating these practices, such as structured assessments, peer reviews, and field-based feedback mechanisms.
 - **Examine the potential impact of CS on programmatic outcomes:** Conduct in-depth studies to analyze how the application of high-quality CS practices may influence the outcomes of programs. This involves comparing programs with robust CS strategies to those without to discern measurable differences in effectiveness, community engagement, and long-term sustainability of peace initiatives.
 - **Expand CS application across sectors:** Extend the evaluation of CS practices to a variety of contexts and sectors. This broader application will enable an understanding of how these practices can be adapted and applied effectively across different conflict scenarios and program types. Document and disseminate lessons learned and best practices widely to inform future program design and implementation strategies.
 - **Support feedback loops for continuous improvement:** Establish feedback loops where findings from these evaluations inform the ongoing refinement of CS frameworks. This approach ensures that CS practices remain dynamic and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities in HDP efforts.

By implementing these recommendations, the field of CS programming can ensure more accurate, relevant, and actionable insights, driving more effective interventions tailored to the unique needs of each context.

CS PUBLICALLY AVAILABLE INCLUDED STUDIES

Citation	Research Design	Location
Art for Reconstruction-Second Phase: Final Report. Prolongar Foundation, 2021. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XSCB.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Colombia
Bangura, Sheka. "Testing Conflict Sensitivity of Development Projects in Ghana an Evaluation of Two Projects in Ejisu-Juaben District, Ashanti Region." <i>International Journal of Political Science and Development</i> 1, no. 1 (2013): 8–31. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0956713518303815?via%3Dihub .	Non Experimental Case Study	Ghana
Baseline Survey Report. <i>Strengthening the Capacity of the Teaching Workforce in Primary and Secondary Schools for Conflict Sensitive Education</i> . United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019. https://www.edu-links.org/resources/strengthening-capacity-teaching-workforce-primary-and-secondary-schools-conflict .	Non Experimental Case Study	Uganda
<i>Burundians Responding Against Violence and Inequality (BRAVI) End-of-Project Evaluation</i> . EngenderHealth, 2020. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XSM9.pdf .	Non Experimental Correlation	Burundi
Castro, Manuel Fernando, Jairo Herrera, Luis F. Monroy, Maria Andrea Rueda, Mauricio Aguilar, Oscar Quiroz, Camila Chavarria, et al. <i>Artisanal Gold Mining Activity (ORO Legal) Performance Evaluation: Final Report</i> . United States Agency for International Development. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z8GS.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Colombia
<i>Draft Evaluation Report: Final Evaluation of the USAID/Mali Education Emergency Support Activity (EESA)</i> . United States Agency for International Development, 2020. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2KJ.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Mali
<i>Enhancing Sensitivity to Conflict Risks in World Bank-Funded Activities: Lessons from the Kyrgyz Republic</i> . World Bank Group, 2014. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/17e8848a-262a-5dde-8032-d4ee07cc21c8 .	Not available	Kyrgyzstan
Hellmuth, Molly, Andrés Gómez, John van Mossel, Angela Wong, Maya Bruguera, Jamie Liu, Jessica Kyle, et al. <i>Resilience in the Limpopo Basin (RESILIM) Program Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report</i> . United States Agency for International Development, 2019. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00wtdf.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe
IMPEL. <i>Mid-Term Evaluation of the Tuendelee Pamoja II Development Food Security Activity in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)</i> . The Implementer-Led Evaluation & Learning Associate Award, 2020. https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Tuendelee_Pamoja_II_Mid-Term_Report_15May2020_508_0.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Irfanullah, Haseeb Md, and Tom Gillhespy. <i>Connecting Conflict, Climate Change and Ecological Crisis: Working Paper</i> . Itad Ltd, 2021. https://www.itad.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Working-Paper-October-2021.-Connecting-Conflict-Climate-Change-and-Ecological-Crisis-002-ID-265107.pdf .	Not available	Global
ME&A, Inc. <i>Final Performance Evaluation for USAID's Rights for Gender Diverse Populations Activity</i> . United States Agency for International Development, 2021. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XRQS.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Bangladesh

Citation	Research Design	Location
Reisman, Lainie, and Cornelia Janke. "Conflict-Sensitive Teacher Education: Viewing EDC's Experience with the South Sudan Teacher Education Project through a Conflict-Sensitive Lens." <i>Journal on Education in Emergencies</i> 1, no. 1 (October 2015): 131–66. https://archive.nyu.edu/bitstream/2451/39656/2/JEIE.V1N1.Reisman_and_Janke.Conflict-Sensitive_Teacher_Education.Oct2015.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	South Sudan
Rowand, Fiona, Mohammed Ibrahim, Benedicta Agusiobo, Ganya Adamu, Arowolo Ayoola Abimbola, Comfort Kaliyad Boma, and Hadiza Shettima. <i>Northern Education Initiative Plus (NEI+): End Line Performance Evaluation Report</i> . United States Agency for International Development. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XB17.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Nigeria
Vining, Peter, Cyrus Samii, and Michael Gilligan. <i>Impact Evaluation of the Obirodh - Road to Tolerance Youth Leadership Program in Bangladeshi Universities</i> . United States Agency for International Development, 2021. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XM6F.pdf .	Experimental	Bangladesh
Woldehanna, Sara, Barbara De Zaluondo, Donna Espeut, Karim Sahyoun, Jackie Yipton Avila, and Elisabeth Nolan. <i>Second Performance Evaluation of USAID Ebola Pillar II Activities: Final Report</i> . United States Agency for International Development, 2019. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00V45X.pdf .	Non Experimental Case Study	Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone
Woomer, Amanda S. "Conflict Sensitivity and Conservation: Evaluating Design, Implementation & Practice," 2018. https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/incmdoc_etd/18 .	Non Experimental Correlation, Non Experimental Case Study	Philippines

