Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) 2.0 Programs
Bi-Annual Performance Report Narrative

LASER PULSE

Long-term Assistance and Services for Research (LASER)
Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

FY2019 BIANNUAL REPORT (YEAR 1)

1. BACKGROUND

LASER PULSE is a five-year USAID-funded consortium, led by Purdue University and also comprising Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame. LASER PULSE supports the research-to-translation value chain through a global network of 1,000+ researchers, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector for research-driven, practical solutions to critical development challenges in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). LASER supports the discovery and uptake of research-sourced, evidence-based solutions to development challenges spanning all USAID technical sectors and global geographic regions.

The LASER PULSE strategy ensures that applied research is co-designed with development practitioners, and results in solutions that are useful and usable. LASER does this by involving development practitioners upfront - from topic selection, research question definition, conducting and testing research, and developing translation products for immediate use. We support this process with capacity building and technical assistance to enable the researcher/user partnerships to function effectively.

2. MAJOR MILESTONES / ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **Researcher Capacity:** Makerere University had an opportunity to engage with USAID Uganda's Regional Development Initiative. The team accompanied the Uganda Regional Development Initiative team on several visits, to provide feedback on working with local universities in order to enhance their role in the path to self-reliance. This is a model that can be replicated in other countries and regions. The collaboration (Makerere and RDI) has resulted in a new buy-in opportunity for Makerere to work with regional universities in strengthening resilience for indigenous Ugandan groups).

2. **Researcher Needs Assessment (Gap Analysis):** This output results from an assessment, designed by Purdue with Makerere, and carried out by Makerere among RAN members and local Ugandan universities, the findings of which will be shared in a plenary session at the first R4D conference and mined for training opportunities, as well as for opportunities to work on policy change through our Network.

3. **Comprehensive Issue (and Stakeholder) Analysis:** This output is in the form of "Success Factor Trees" for use at the first R4D conference in order to elicit RFA topics for the first Research Grant Round. These trees are the result of months of textual analysis and data mining techniques, as well as input from sectoral experts, and cover the four sectoral thematic areas of the Uganda R4D Conference: Basic Education; Water Resources; Maternal/Child Health; and Food Security.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIVITIES

IR1: Increased HEI delivery of collaborative and effective development-focused research

Sub-IR 1.1: Increased capacity of LMIC HEIs to obtain, administer, and conduct effective applied research programs

1.1.1 The HEI Network is activated: HEI Network activated and informational documents on processes finalized. Additional organizations have been included in HEIN, including those institutional partners of consortium partners not included in the LASER PULSE proposal). We have identified researchers to invite to the network through outreach on buy-ins, and we have had many new researchers join the network through invitation to the R4D Conference in Uganda, as joining the network was a requirement. A Qualtrics survey serves as the registration platform for both HEI researchers and development practitioners to join the LASER PULSE Network.

1.1.2 The HEI researcher needs assessment has been carried out: Research ecosystems in Universities in low income countries like those in Africa face many challenges. These challenges translate into a relatively much lower level of research outputs from universities compared to developed countries. Not only is there inadequate data and tools to inform development decisions among development practitioners and funders in LMICs, but involvement of LMIC universities in generating this data is low compared to the level of need for such evidence. Furthermore, research products are not systematically translated and disseminated to end-users, as well as policy makers and development partners in these countries. Nevertheless, LMIC Universities are strategically placed to address the information and data needs to inform development in their countries and localities given that they have large pools of experienced scholars in proximity to the target communities, a better understanding of the local context and development issues, and strong linkages with government entities. LASER PULSE has conducted a capacity assessment of the research environment among the Makerere University-ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) university partners and affiliated networks/ institutions in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The findings will be used to identify, prioritize, and describe key capacity gaps that need to be addressed in order to increase development research outputs and impacts from low-income country universities.

Sub IR 1.3 Increased inclusion of private sector, government, NGOs, and others in research for development

1.3.2 As part of R4D preparation, develop issue and stakeholder analysis specific to R4D region: The R4D Conference priority sectors, listed in Section 2, were derived from a review of 25 key documents (e.g., Country Development Cooperation Strategies, National Development Plans) and input from 19 sectoral experts that included both academic researchers and development implementers. Success Factor Trees were then generated via automated iterative searches using natural language processing and pattern recognition to organize and synthesize qualitative information obtained from 160,000 – 480,000 documents (depending upon the sector) accessed from the Internet. Further streamlining and refinement (1,000 Google searches per tree, plus manual mining of approximately 1,500 on-line articles and 200 academic articles) was conducted, as well. Extensive work was subsequently undertaken to develop a protocol for R4D conference participants to understand how to navigate the trees during the CIA sessions at the conference. There, by sector, program participants will contribute to shaping the research agenda that shall underpin the first grant

round challenges. Because researchers will publish findings, the methodologies and reports will be released in the Yr 1 Annual Reporting period.

IR2: Increased HEI synthesis, exchange, and translation of research results into useable development products and practices

Sub IR 2.3 Enhanced capacity of HEI researchers to translate research results into useable products and practices.

2.3.1 Develop and launch a matchmaking site for researchers on the LASER PULSE network: This site, built from the researcher data from the Qualtrics form to activate the Network, will facilitate the collaboration of Network partners (both US and LMIC) on LASER PULSE research proposals and other opportunities.

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS

4.1 List of partnerships (subawards/subcontracts, formal, or informal) with institutions of higher education

- Link to list of LASER PULSE HEI partners (64 institutions, from 24 countries)
- Link to list of LASER PULSE Researchers and NGO implementers (more than 1,000 researchers from 34 countries).

This report cover's LASER's first six months, which have been focused on start-up activities. We have garnered many partnership commitments (see the institutions and researchers above), and have provided funding through buy-in activities, but have not yet been able to hold the first grant rounds, owing to delays resulting from the partial government shutdown. Therefore activities and outreach (see 4.2. below) have been robust, and funding disbursements will begin as planned in the second semester of the program.

4.2 New and ongoing partnerships of particular interest

1. University of Nairobi (for Tusome Buy-In): $207,747. The University of Nairobi's Centre for Pedagogy and Andragogy is the direct local implementing partner institution for this buy-in, leading stakeholder engagement, developing research tools, coordinating field activities, ensuring quality data collection and analysis, generating research translation products such as policy and information briefs, manuscripts and case studies; and dissemination of the research findings to the identified audiences. Makerere University manages the processes and builds capacity of UoN for all of these activities.

2. Uganda regional universities: Makerere University successfully convened local Ugandan universities at a stakeholders meeting held on April 3, 2019. The theme of the meeting was "Towards enhancing Ugandan University involvement in supporting in-country regions to improve development programming capacity." In this event, and the larger, ongoing USAID engagement towards regional development, Makerere was able to engage the following local Universities to dialogue about ways to enhance Ugandan local University involvement in supporting in-country regions to improve development programming capacity: Uganda Christian

University; Uganda Martyrs University; Muni University; Kumi University; Soroti University; Lira University; Kabale University; Mountains of the Moon University; Busitema University; Islamic University in Uganda; and the Constituent College of Gulu University in Moroto.

3. Colombian universities for planning Fast Track Conference. The "fast-track" conferences have streamlined review and approval to accommodate research initiatives of $100,000 that address USAID Mission priorities. From our core $20M, we anticipate about sixteen fast-track research grants spread over years 1-4. The $325K is budgeted, not yet expended. The Fast Track Conference and grant round planning is underway in close collaboration with the following LASER Network partner institutions: Universidad de Los Llanos, Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad de Cartagena, Universidad del Norte Universidad EAFIT, Universidad de los Andes, Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, and Universidad Nacional de Colombia. The researchers are requested to partner with an implementer to respond to challenges in the following sector areas identified by the USAID/Colombia Mission: Integrated Rural Development; Youth; Venezuelan Migration.

4. University of Indonesia for planning future jointly-held Fast Track conference. Two representatives of this LASER network institution visited the LASER team at Purdue on February 19th to propose collaboration on research to translation initiatives, ncluding a joint R4D conference, oriented at Smart Cities initiatives.

5. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

Table 1. Bi-annual Performance Indicator Table for LASER PULSE (Fiscal Year 1).

Key result Area (Intermediate Result)	Indicator Code	Indicator Name	Life of Project Target	Year 1*		Data Collection Method	Comments
				Target	Q1,Q2 Achieved		
Objective: Enhanced discovery and application in policy and practice of university-sourced, evidence-based solutions to development challenges	L3.S.2_in1	# of program or policy changes made by public sector, private sector, or other development actors that are influenced by Lab-funded research results or related scientific activities	20	2	0	n/a	No results yet; it is unlikely the target will be achieved since buy-ins expected to be completed by end of FY1 will likely not be finished
IR1: Increased HEI delivery of collaborative and effective development-focused research	L3.S.1_in2	# of research products produced with LASER-supported funding [gender d/a]	84	2	2	Submitted by PI or Co-PI	HEI research capacity report; poster for an academic expo
Sub-IR 1.1: Increased capacity of LMIC HEIs to obtain, administer, and conduct effective applied research programs	Custom LP.1	# of tertiary-level educators & faculty who complete pro. develop. activities w/ USG assist. [gender d/a]	560	80	0	n/a	No results yet; target is expected to be achieved by end of FY

Sub-IR	Indicator	Description		Target	Actual	Data Source	Notes
Sub-IR 1.2: Adoption by HEI networks of best practices for conducting and translating research	Custom LP.2	Percentage-point improvement on research readiness assessment score [gender d/a]	--	30	0	n/a	No results yet; how this ind. will function is unknown
	Custom LP.3	% of research proposals with adequate gender & translation components [gender d/a]	--	50%	0	n/a	No results yet; how this ind. will function is unknown
Sub-IR 1.3: Increased inclusion of private sector, government, NGOs, and others in research for development	Custom LP.4	# of development actors (d/a by institution) engaged in research for develop. [gender d/a]	494	30	25	Buy-in data reporting survey	16 F, 9 M; data is from 3 Buy-ins
	L3.S.2.2_in1-num	# of collaborative research initiatives resulting from engagement btw. researchers & develop./ policy actors	28	6	0	n/a	No results yet; target is unlikely to be achieved for the FY report
Sub-IR 1.4: Increased partnership opportunities for US and LMIC HEIs within the research to translation value chain	L3.S.1.2_in3	# of institutions or affl. individuals associated w/ CDR research networks	--	70	71	Program records	All LP Network partners, plus others
	L3.S.1.1_in3	% of research projects led by LMIC or MSI HEIs/ research institutions;	--	50%	0	n/a	No results yet; how this ind. will function is unknown
IR2: Increased HEI synthesis, exchange, and translation of research results into useable development products and practices	L3.S.2.2_in4	# of research products translated for use	80	2	0	n/a	No results yet; target is expected to be achieved by end of FY
Sub-IR 2.1: Increased HEI collaboration with field-level development actors throughout the research to translation value chain	Custom LP.5	Partnership scorecard to measure deep collaboration (co-creation) btw researchers and develop. practitioners [gender d/a]	--	0	0	n/a	This metric has yet to be developed
Sub-IR 2.2: Increased capacity of field-level development actors to participate in the research to translation value chain	Custom LP.6	# of development actors trained on translation (@ R4D conf. and on-line modules)	270	30	0	n/a	No results yet; target is expected to be achieved by end of FY
	Custom LP.2	Percentage-point improvement on research readiness assessment score [gender d/a]	--	30	0	n/a	No results yet; how this ind. will function is unknown
Sub IR 2.3: Enhanced capacity of HEI researchers to translate research results into useable products and practices	Custom LP.7	# of LASER-produced research translation materials (e.g. toolkit) utilized by researchers [gender d/a]	70	0	0	n/a	No results to report; this is n/a until FY2

IR3: Increased dissemination of translated research solutions and policy	L3.S.2.2_in2	# of convenings with decision-makers to disseminate research for use and/or develop policy recommend.	142	4	0	n/a	No results yet; see 1st row comment for further detail
	L3.S.2.2_in3	# of participants in convenings with decision-makers to disseminate research for use and/or develop policy recommend. [gender d/a]	4,375	90	0	n/a	No results yet; see 1st row comment for further detail
	L3.S.2_in2	# of instances of USAID OUs using CDR-supported research tools, approaches or mechanisms	34	6	4	Buy-in data reporting survey	2 bureaus and 2 missions
Sub-IR 3.1: Increased access among develop. actors and information brokers to good practices and systems for delivery of translated research	Custom LP.8	# of translated research products shared with networks, policy-makers, private sector, and/or donors	78	2	0	n/a	No results yet; see 1st row comment for further detail
Crosscutting Sub-IR 4: Enhanced systems and structures for gender and minority considerations in the HEI network that enable women and minorities to conduct research	Custom LP.9	# of female researchers, and/or US minority researchers, conducting LASER-funded research	28	6	0	n/a	No results yet; target is unlikely to be achieved by end of FY

* This mid-year report covers program performance only for Q1 and Q2 of Fiscal Year 1.

M&E Updates

Reporting on performance indicators is limited for the period just ending, as this is the first reporting period for the LASER PULSE program and some key activities have not yet taken place (e.g. the initial R4D conference in Uganda). All of these results represent reporting from the 3 current buy-ins managed by the program, since research sub-grants have yet to be awarded. As shown in Table 1 above, therefore, only 4 of the 18 official LASER PULSE indicators have any data to report on:

- 25 people   Custom LP.4   (# of dev./policy actors engaged in research for development)
- 71 institutions   L3.S.1.2_in3   (# of institutions associated with CDR research networks)
- 1 poster   L3.S.1_in2   (# of research products produced)
- 4 instances   L3.S.2_in2   (# of instances of USAID OUs using CDR-supported research tools, approaches or mechanisms)

Of the 25 individuals tallied from development and/or policy actor organizations, they are disaggregated into 16 females and 9 males. The poster was produced by the Tusome Early Grade Reading Case Study buy-in for display at an academic conference; it covered findings of the desk review which represents the initial phase of their work. L3.S.1.2_in3 reports the number of institutions affiliated with the program; this includes the 64 institutions that comprise the LASER PULSE HEI Network, as well as 7 additional

research partners established under the buy-ins. These include 3 USAID Bureaus, 2 USAID Missions, 1 local NGO, and 1 International NGO (UNICEF-South Sudan).

From a suite of additional CDR Standard Indicators that LASER agreed to provide data for, sans targets, we can report on the following:

- 3 projects   L3.S.1.2_in1   (# of research projects)
- $2.7 million   L3.S.2_in3   ($ value of USAID OUs using CDR tools, mechanisms, etc.)
- 1 instance   L3.S.1.1_in1   (# of host country HEIs receiving capacity dev. support)
- 10 engmnt.   L3.S.2.2_in2-d   (# of ongoing engagements btw. researchers and dev./policy actors to develop research initiatives)

Reporting Notes

Aside from 1 or 2 exceptions, at the end of the fiscal year the remaining 14 LASER PULSE Indicators will report progress towards targets in the Year 1 Annual Report; the same can be said for the remaining additional CDR Standard Indicators we are informally tracking. By that time we will have completed the first R4D conference, awarded the initial research sub-grants, initiated work on several more buy-ins (currently in the works), and likely see the completion of 1 of the current buy-ins. As a result, we foresee that most indicators will achieve their targets. For some custom indicators that rely upon performance scores, it is unknown whether or not targets will be achieved since we have no objective experience with which to gauge performance at this point in time.

We anticipate that targets for some indicators will not be reached due to the government shutdown in January, and because the South Sudan buy-in has been extended for several months instead of being completed by the end of FY1. The government shutdown initiated the postponement of the Uganda R4D conference, which in turn pushed back the date for the Colombia Fast-Track Workshop. This means that Fast-Track subgrants will not be awarded until FY2, impacting the ability of a couple of indicators (L3.S.2.2_in1-num, Custom LP.9) to achieve their targets for FY1. The extension of the South Sudan buy-in will likely affect reporting on L3.S.2.2_in2, L3.S.2.2_in3, L3.S.2.2_in4, Custom LP.8, and L3.S.2_in1 for FY1. There is nothing that can be done to mitigate the impacts of these programmatic delays, apart from revising targets downwards.

Finally, we alerted the Karen Fowle (USAID M&E Specialist) about a reporting issue that may require some target revisions to resolve. The initial display in DevResults of data for L3.S.1.1_in3 was incorrect due to the interaction between L3.S.1.2_in1, L3.S.1.1_in3-num, and L3.S.1.1_in3 (the latter is a calculated indicator); the error was corrected manually later by Karen. LASER had only wanted to track it for the research awards, but its calculation is being affected by L3.S.1.2_in1 (which we are informally tracking w/o targets) and the inclusion of buy-in data. Resolving this issue will likely take the form of including buy-ins in the reporting of this indicator.

6. USAID ENGAGEMENT

Brief Summary of Current/Active USAID Buy-ins

1) Title: Impact Evaluation of Psychosocial Support on Children's Well-being, Literacy, and Math Outcomes in the Integrated Essential Emergency Education Program

<u>USAID operating unit/mission:</u> USAID South Sudan Mission

<u>Buy-in amount:</u> $1.2 Million

<u>Duration:</u> 1 year (10/15/2018 - 9/30/2019)

<u>Overall objective:</u> Evaluate the impact of psychosocial support on children's well-being, literacy, and math outcomes within an existing and expanding project in South Sudan

<u>Summary of progress to date</u>

- First capacity development workshop held (in Uganda),
- Carried out revision and finalization of the evaluation plan,
- Developed research instruments; selected sites for data collection (with input from UNICEF),
- Instruments submitted to USAID for review; schedule for data collection developed,
- South Sudanese partners secured a letter of approval for research from the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI),

<u>Projection of the work to be completed</u>

Quarter 3 will focus on the bulk of the data collection, with some additional collection possible in July. Quarter 4 will focus on data analysis, development of the final report, and dissemination. The team will not be able to analyze EGMA and EGRA data from the current group of subjects as it will not be available during the award period. As a result, we will review historical EGMA and EGRA data from schools with a similar profile and distribution to the study schools. If a second phase of this evaluation is conducted, analysis of 2019 EGMA and EGRA data (which should be available in February 2020) would provide stronger evidence of impact on academic performance.

2) Title: Building the Evidence Base on Effective Private Sector Engagement, Phase I

<u>USAID operating unit/mission:</u> USAID/Lab/CTP

<u>Buy-in amount:</u> $1,012,422 (Phase 1)

<u>Duration:</u> 10/15/2018 – 12/31/2020 (Phase I)

<u>Overall objective:</u> Implement a private sector engagement evidence and learning strategy that will enable USAID staff to implement best PSE practices, based on learnings and evidence. The research will address several priority questions, posed by USAID as part of their PSE Evidence and Learning Strategy: What is the effectiveness of different forms of engagement? What external factors drive effective engagement in the private sector? What PSE relationship qualities influence results?

<u>Summary of progress to date</u>

This reporting period has largely involved co-creation between the research team and the development practitioner counterparts of the approach and projected deliverables list. Phase 1 of the

buy-in has been approved, with 4 distinct work streams identified: 1) Evidence Gap Mapping; 2) Indicator Framework; 3) Perspective Study; 4) Failure Risk Analysis. Each work stream now has a lead appointed by the research team and by the donor team. Work stream teams have met or have scheduled to meet with the donor point people to do further action planning. Hiring processes for student support has begun within the various workstreams. Phase 2 is in final stages of approval.

Projection of the work to be completed

The next reporting period will see the formal launch of buy-in activities in each of the work streams. The evidence gap mapping work is expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year. The remaining work streams have an additional year beyond that for completion.

3) Title: Case Study of Kenya's Early Grade Reading Program and the Journey to Self-Reliance

USAID operating unit/mission: USAID/Lab/CTP

Buy-in amount: $500,000

Duration: 10/15/2018 – 09/30/2019

Overall objective: Provide a detailed account and analysis of Kenya's early grade reading program from 2011 to 2018 and the context within which it happened to provide a useful case study for the Agency to ultimately be better able to design and implement equally, if not more, successful programs in other countries.

Summary of progress to date: A desk review report was completed and shared with USAID/Washington D.C. for review; an associated poster was presented at an academic expo in March 2019. An abstract was submitted and accepted to the forthcoming 11th Pan African For All (PALFA) Conference (August 2019, Kampala). A proposal was submitted to the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta National Hospital, Ethics Research Committee for ethical review. The team is reviewing their comments and thereafter will register the study with the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) who will issue a research permit to collect the data. Data will be collected from three categories of stakeholders: USAID/KEA and RTI International, the Ministry of Education, and the schools that implemented Tusome. We have completed co-creation of the study tools, which have been shared with USAID/D.C, USAID/KEA and RTI for review.

Projection of the work to be completed: A final desk review report will be submitted to USAID/DC by early May. We anticipate to receive ethical approval by mid April, 2019, and a research permit from NACOSTI by end of April, 2019. Training of enumerators and then data collection will take place in May 2019. This will be followed by analysis and report writing. We anticipate to provide a draft report to USAID by end August, 2019.

Note: By-in Agreements attached as Appendices to this report.

USAID Buy-ins under Development

1. Title: Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE)

USAID operating unit/mission: USAID/E3/ED

Buy-in amount: $2.15 Million, but seeking additional funding from Missions

Duration: 3-5 years, depending on funding level

Overall objective: USAID/E3/ED seeks to partner with USAID/LAB/CDR through LASER to conduct a multi-country study on inclusive education for learners with disabilities in Cambodia, Malawi and Nepal.

2. **Title: Evaluation of Somalia's Accelerated Quality Learning contract**

USAID operating unit/mission: USAID/Somalia

Buy-in amount: $2.15 Million, but seeking additional funding from Missions

Duration: 60 months, starting o/a May 2019

Overall objective: USAID/Somalia seeks to partner with USAID/LAB/CDR to: <(1) identify the most effective and cost-efficient models of delivering accelerated education programs in the pilot phase of the contract, focusing on learning outcomes, equitable access, and retention for all students, particularly the most vulnerable; (2) measure the results of the full program, in terms of learning outcomes, equitable access, and retention for all students, particularly the most vulnerable. (3) measure the cost effectiveness of the program (for pilot models and scaled-up models); and (4) capture the lessons learned for scale (for pilot models, and scaled-up models).

3. **Title: Self-Reliance Learning Agenda (SRLA)**

USAID operating unit/mission: USAID/ LAB/EIA

Buy-in amount: $248,500.

Duration: One Year (?)

Overall objective: The objective of this buy-in is to conduct research on the question: *Does a strategic and/or programmatic focus on capacity and commitment support country self-reliance?*

Through primary research that analyzes development actors' (donors, private sector, and civil society, partner country governments) strategies and programming we hope to yield findings that can be used to refine the theory of change in the Policy Framework and guide further work into the linkages in the theory of change. We are interested in looking broadly across donor strategies and programs focused on building capacity and commitment to understand effectiveness on self reliance outcome. The hope is to use this broad scan to identify past or ongoing work that can serve as potential case studies for a subsequent deep dive or developmental evaluation by the SRLA team or another partner.

Other engagements with USAID

- Uganda Mission (for planning of the Uganda R4D conference; for engagement of Makerere University in the Regional Development Initiative)
- Asia Regional Mission (for planning of the Bangkok R4D conference in 2020)
- Colombia Mission (for planning of the fast track conference in August 2019)

7. LESSONS LEARNED / BEST PRACTICES

LASER lessons learned were chiefly centered around:

- Buy-In Standard Operating Procedures: The LASER team learned more about USAID operating units and missions preferences, and especially about what works to ensure that LMIC researchers are able to join teams working on buy-ins. LMIC researchers often require support in understanding the exact focus of the buy-ins, and also lack project management skills (as do US researchers as well, if they have not been on development project research teams previously).

- There is a need to manage expectations for network membership, and the how-to of defining and articulating network membership benefits up front.

8. PIVOT POINTS/ CHALLENGES

- The partial government shutdown resulted in certain delays. It meant pushing back the R4D conference in Uganda by two months, and therefore pushing back the first full grant round. The Fast Track conference and grant round therefore were also delayed by at least two months. There also were impacts to carrying out some activities related to the South Sudan buy-in.

9. KEY ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

- Uganda R4D Conference (May 2019) and the First R4D Grant Round (July 2019)
- Colombia Fast Track Conference (August 2019), and First Fast Track Grant Round (September 2019)

10. ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

The LASER-PULSE FY 2019 work plan was reviewed by the U.S. Global Development Lab's Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO) for potential environmental impacts and received a categorical exclusion for each included activity pursuant to 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2).

11. GENDER/SOCIAL INCLUSIONS CONSIDERATIONS (if applicable)

- LASER PULSE Gender Plan, with implementation mechanisms regularly monitored for effectiveness. The Plan was shared with the consortium members who shared their input. We are now addressing these comments and the document will be sent to Purdue university for approval.

- Prior to registration, HEI Network members were provided the following request: "LASER PULSE is committed to increasing the participation of women researchers in development related research. Please use the attached excel spreadsheet to present a list of women researchers at your University/Institute/Research Center who have interest in a USAID technical sector of development research as it pertains to a Low or Middle Income country (LMIC)." We expect to establish an online community of practice to engage women researchers. We have responses from the Gap Analysis that Makerere University conducted, with responses from 26 universities in their Resilient Africa network, that support for women researchers and junior faculty is especially lacking. This is a double whammy for women, who - according to research results, are less likely to reach higher-level faculty status because of discrimination as well as family burdens from gender role expectations.

- Women researchers are prioritized for consideration in buy-in research teams. Of the three current buy-ins, women researchers lead two of them. For the three buy-ins in development, one (MCSIE) will go to a woman-led consulting firm; another (SRLA) is being developed for a team entirely comprising women.

12. DELIVERABLES COMPLETED

1. **HEI Researcher Needs Assessment Report and Dataset:** this document will be uploaded to the USAID DEC and DDL upon approval by the AOR.

2. **Tusome Case Study Poster:** this PowerPoint slide will be uploaded to the DEC upon approval by the AOR.