

LASER PULSE

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

Executive Summary: Developing Locally -Relevant Measures of Commitment

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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.

Executive Summary

This collaborative research study was designed to provide guidance to USAID staff and other stakeholders to further articulate potential indicators and approaches for understanding “commitment” as a component of the Journey to Self-Reliance in a way that is operationalizable at the project or activity level.

The following are two outputs along with potential users of this research:

Output 1: Highly contextualized documentations of how program participants and other stakeholders (including Ugandan beneficiaries, community leaders, and local partners) conceptualize and assess the commitment of themselves and other actors ([Annex 1](#); [Personas](#))

Users: May be of particular interest to USAID Uganda Program, Health, Education, and/or Gender Officers for adapting to other USAID-funded programs that seek to support commitment as either a programmatic outcome or to assess locally-appropriate levels of commitment as a context monitoring indicator - this will be left up to those officers/mission guidance if the findings are applicable

Output 2: “Ground truthing” of a pilot study approach for developing indicators of “commitment” that are locally relevant to stakeholders in other contexts (using Output 1 as the test case for the approach) (Job Aid¹), to be used in concert with the [Measurement Matrix](#) of known capacity and commitment indicators

Users: May be of use to any M/B/IO or IP seeking to develop locally-relevant indicators of commitment as either a programmatic outcome or a context-monitoring indicator

This codesigned study adapted the [Everyday Peace Indicators](#) (EPI) methodology to come up with locally-sensitive commitment indicators and followed a qualitative case study methodology. The EPI is an ideal approach to develop indicators for difficult-to-measure concepts like commitment, as it is built on participatory research methods where local communities are best placed to conduct research to understand the local-level context using observable behaviors and/or a qualitative case study method.

The study explores local level commitment in two sectors, education and health, as well as from a gender perspective in a local Ugandan community. Case subjects were participants of *Just Like My Child* (JLMC), an NGO training program at the local level in Laredo, Uganda. JLMC is not funded by nor otherwise related to USAID and thus provided an opportunity to explore locally-relevant definitions of commitment without “contamination” of those locally-relevant concepts by donor-generated frameworks. The focus of the case was not in evaluating JLMC interventions, but rather in capturing social and community responses to commitment initiatives that were supported by the Government of Uganda. While speculative in nature, this ground truthing approach offers rich perspectives and insights that can lead to an in-depth, locally-relevant understanding of commitment variables, issues, and problems, as well

¹ [Participatory Process for Developing Locally Sensitive Commitment Measures](#)

as generate a number of candidate indicators of commitment in one context. For example, if *women's participation* was coded as a possible commitment indicator, we converted it into a measurable indicator by assessing its ability to be observed and measured (such as, *the number or percentage of women participating in self-help groups*). This produced a small selection of candidate commitment indicators from the qualitative data that could be used by USAID staff or implementing partners in Uganda to assess changes in commitment over the course of a program.

In order to better contextualize the findings, the research team developed four personas to characterize the commitment that community leaders and members perceive and expect, respectively. The four personas reflected the aggregate of different program participants' and community leaders' perspectives and priorities regarding commitment data - a complex construct.

While the study tried to elicit "sector-specific" conceptualizations of commitment (e.g., observable behaviors that indicate commitment to girls' education), many candidate indicators appear to be sector-agnostic or relatively easy to adapt to different sectoral programs and outcomes.

This study also produced candidate evaluation and research questions to consider when interrogating the locally-relevant conceptualization of commitment, and from a subset of these, candidate commitment indicators. The intent is for these questions, and candidate indicators to be used to provide rich descriptions of the Ugandan context, community-level characteristics, events, and other variables for a local definition of commitment.

These specific indicators are not necessarily expected to be generalizable to other contexts and countries, though in a cursory review many could be easily adapted. However, the research team has also documented their pilot process for developing these indicators that could be used by USAID staff or their implementing partners to develop locally-relevant indicators of commitment that are relevant to their specific context. Developing these indicators of commitment in a participatory manner as outlined in this approach may help measure and understand changes to commitment that result from programmatic interventions, and/or changes to commitment that may influence the relative success of a given program.