



Call for Capacity Statement

USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean and OCE Activity Design and Evaluation Scoping for a Gang Violence Prevention Activity in Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, and Saint Kitts and Nevis

The United States Agency for International Development Office of the Chief Economist (USAID/OCE), USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean Regional Office (USAID/ESC), and Long-term Assistance and Services for Research, Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER PULSE) at the Purdue Applied Research Institute, Global Development Innovation Division (PARI-GDI) seek Capacity Statements (CSs) from teams of researchers to support the design of a new USAID gang violence prevention activity in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean and to assess the feasibility of and provide options for a randomized impact evaluation and/or other rigorous methods of piloting and testing activity interventions.

A. Background

Gangs are entrenched in many countries in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC), and recent studies show that gang dynamics are shifting: gangs are splintering, increasing in geographic spread, and growing in number and membership. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), there are an estimated 1,750 gang members, with many more gang-adjacent youth. Saint Lucia (SL) has an estimated 12 -15 gangs with up to 300 gang members, and Saint Kitts and Nevis (SKN) has an estimated 19 gangs with up to 500 gang members. Gang behavior varies across countries, ranging from drug peddling and trafficking, extortion, up to and including homicides. Homicide rates are increasing and are among the highest in the region; recent studies estimate that gangs are responsible for around 40 percent of these, with significant variation across countries.

USAID/ESC and various local and international stakeholders have implemented a number of interventions designed to address both crime and violence in general. With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), there have not been any interventions aimed at addressing gang violence in ESC countries. The interventions implemented in T&T were not able to demonstrate a sustained reduction in gang violence.

USAID/ESC is undertaking the design of a new evidence-based activity that aims to address youth involved in gang violence or at risk of joining gangs in Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. A customized package of interventions will be implemented in each country based on a number of factors such as country needs, youth-gang/crime dynamics, programming gaps, in-country capacity, existing or complementary interventions, opportunities to leverage existing resources, and country commitment. This is a new area of focus for USAID/ESC, which intends to incorporate results from rigorous evidence on the topic, be responsive to the evolving context on the ground, and innovative with respect to piloting and testing promising interventions using a Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) approach. As such, USAID/ESC seeks to work with researchers to further refine the problem definition, identify key programmatic outcomes, propose and adapt promising or novel

interventions tailored to each country’s context, and propose rigorous pilot testing and impact evaluation approaches.

B. Research Study Information

USAID/ESC aims to engage at least two researchers (including a regional expert) with significant experience in the design and evaluation of gang violence prevention interventions. Through LASER PULSE, and with the support of USAID/OCE, USAID/ESC will take a phased approach to this activity design and evaluation process. This approach begins with an activity design and evaluation scoping phase (“Phase 1”) during which the research team will consult with USAID/ESC on the activity design, and will concurrently explore the potential to use A/B testing or other rigorous methods for pilot testing interventions prior to implementation at scale. The research team will also assess the feasibility of conducting a randomized impact evaluation of some/all of the proposed interventions as part of the Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation plan for the Activity. If rigorous A/B testing and/or a randomized impact evaluation is feasible and sufficient funds are available, and USAID/ESC and the research team mutually decide to proceed, this award will be amended to include an evaluation implementation phase (“Phase 2”), and the research team will evaluate appropriate interventions within the gang violence prevention activity.

Phase 1: Intervention Activity Design and Evaluation Scoping:

I. Support intervention activity design: The research team will hold a number of discussions with USAID/ESC and local stakeholders (such as CSOs, law enforcement officials, and local experts) in July to explore opportunities and constraints to implementing evidence-based interventions. The research team will travel to the region in early August to meet with the USAID/ESC activity design team and other stakeholders to share and discuss relevant evidence and recommendations, refine interventions and/or approaches for USAID/ESC to consider incorporating into the activity design, and explore the availability of data from different sources. The research team will then participate in a series of discussions with the USAID activity design team to draft a theory of change based on the recommended interventions, and contextual factors the week of August 26.

Deliverables:

Recommended interventions: up to five pages detailing potential recommended interventions that USAID/ESC could include in the activity design, drawing on and citing evidence reviews¹, other rigorous research, and discussions with USAID, other key stakeholders, and subject matter experts. Draft due by

¹ For the purpose of this activity, “evidence” is defined as systematic and analytic methodologies designed to test hypotheses, and includes impact evaluations, systematic reviews, and academic studies. Consistent with USAID’s Evaluation Policy, when research evidence is being used to support causal claims about whether an intervention is likely to achieve a specific outcome, USAID prefers impact evaluations (ideally including information on cost-effectiveness, and with a preference for experimental methods) to performance evaluations or other types of evidence. Impact evaluations and syntheses of cost-effectiveness evidence can be found at J-PAL’s library of randomized evaluations and 3ie’s Development Evidence Portal, among other freely available public goods. All else equal, USAID encourages researchers engaged in this activity to focus on evidence reported in peer-reviewed academic articles.

August 19, presentation and discussion by August 23. Presentation will also include a discussion of what piloting and impact evaluations of these interventions could consist of.

II. Assess feasibility of pilot testing and impact evaluation within a broader monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach. USAID/ESC is interested in taking an evidence-based approach to activity design and testing. In conjunction with recommending evidence-based interventions, the research team will outline related operational and/or basic research questions that could be answered through a randomized impact evaluation and/or other rigorous MEL approaches. If an A/B test or randomized impact evaluation of the intervention is deemed feasible, the evaluation approach will be further developed in Phase 2 once an implementing partner has been selected and a specific set of interventions defined.

Deliverable:

Recommended pilot testing and impact evaluation approach: three to five pages outlining a recommended process of piloting and/or iterative testing to refine activity design, and a recommended approach for a randomized impact evaluation - including identifying which of the recommended interventions would be most suited to a randomized impact evaluation and the conditions under which they could be evaluated (e.g with respect to standardization, sample size, roll-out, etc).

Recommendations should identify evaluation risks that require mitigation strategies and monitoring. Due Sept 15, presentation and discussion by September 20.

III. Deliverables Schedule

| Deliverables | Prospective Deadline (to be adjusted once the research team is identified) |
|--|---|
| Activity design support 1) Recommended interventions memo 2) Presentation | 1) August 19, 2024 2) August 23, 2024 |
| Piloting and impact evaluation approach memo 1) Recommended pilot/testing and impact evaluation approach 2) Presentation | 1) September 15, 2024 2) September 20, 2024 |

IV. Estimated Funding and Timeline for Phase 1: Activity Design and Evaluation Scoping:

Approximately 65 person days over 2.5 months (July 15 - Sept 30), with an estimated budget up to \$50,000. The estimated Funding and Timeline for the Impact Evaluation Phase (Phase 2) will be determined after the close of the Design and Scoping Phase.

Phase 2: Impact Evaluation Design and Implementation (Potential: projected to begin in March/April 2025)

It is anticipated that upon completion of the Activity Design and Evaluation Scoping phase, and pending availability of funds, and feasibility of a randomized impact evaluation, and mutual agreement between USAID and the research team, will initiate Phase 2 to refine the piloting approach with the selected IP and design and conduct a randomized impact evaluation of one or more intervention(s) from the gang violence prevention activity, once implementation begins, slated for 2025. The final Program Document for Phase 2 will be co-created with USAID/ESC and the research team, but will incorporate some or all of the following:

1. The researchers, in coordination with USAID/ESC and the selected IP, will propose an evaluation workshop, launch event, or other in-person gathering to ensure stakeholder alignment.
2. Evaluation activities will include the design and testing of data collection instruments; data collection (including but not limited to specifying the sample frame, surveys, collection of any monitoring data not collected by the Implementing Partner, and any relevant administrative data); coordination with USAID/ESC and OCE, the IP, and local stakeholders; all data analysis; and drafting, submission, and revision of evaluation reports, presentations, summaries, and other knowledge products. These activities will be further refined in the evaluation SOW for this phase.

C. OVERVIEW OF CAPACITY STATEMENT (CSs) AND SELECTION PROCESS

USAID and LASER PULSE seek capacity statements (CSs) to assist USAID activity design and identify and assess the feasibility of up to three options for a rigorous impact evaluation, of which at least one must be a randomized evaluation, of an upcoming USAID gang violence prevention activity in ESC. The applicants should meet the qualifications, expertise, and experience in areas and roles identified in the eligibility and qualifications section below. We require all applicants to register on the LASER PULSE Network at <https://laserpulse.org/network/>.

I. Principles

The Office of the Chief Economist (OCE) aims to increase the use and generation of high-quality cost-effectiveness evidence in USAID programming. OCE intends for the impact evaluations it supports via LASER PULSE to yield not just actionable evidence on the programs being evaluated, but also knowledge that expands the global evidence base and serves as a global public good. To this end, OCE encourages applicants to assemble diverse Research Leadership Teams² (RLT) with track records of publishing research in peer-reviewed academic journals. OCE also encourages the meaningful engagement of researchers from historically underrepresented groups, such as women in academia, researchers from the countries and/or regions of study, and those affiliated with low- and middle-income country (LMIC) institutions.

² “Research Leadership Teams” consist of research team members expected to provide intellectual leadership and be co-authors on academic outputs.

II. Qualifications

Capacity statements will be used to assess how well qualified the Research Leadership Team is to conduct the proposed activities. Capacity statements will be rated on the degree to which each team demonstrates the following capabilities:

- Experience conducting research that requires primary data collection, preferably in countries in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean
- Demonstrated experience conducting randomized controlled trials (RCTs) (also known as “randomized evaluations”)
- Relevant subject-matter expertise, e.g. on youth violence prevention and gang violence prevention
- Publications in peer-reviewed academic journals
- Meaningful engagement of researcher(s) with primary institutional affiliation(s) in an LMIC and gender diversity

III. Eligibility

Every applying team or individual is encouraged to include researchers from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the US and/or Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), especially from the Caribbean. The CS will be assessed according to the strength and experience of the Research Leadership Team when applying as a team.

Individual applicants and teams must apply under an umbrella institution that can receive U.S. federal funds, i.e., an institution registered on <https://sam.gov/content/home> with a UEI number provided by the U.S. government, or an institution in the process of registration on <https://sam.gov/content/home> to acquire UEI (please read the requirements in the call).

Applicants with an active SAM.gov registration will be given priority, though applicants with a SAM.gov application in process will also be considered.

IV. Data collection capabilities

The PI’s recipient institution should have the ability to subcontract for data collection through an affiliated University or other institution in Eastern and Southern Caribbean (specific countries are Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, and Saint Kitts and Nevis)

V. Required Documents for Submission

Use the [Capacity Statement Template](#) provided. The CSs must be in English, with narrative portions prepared in MS Word or Open Office format, using Calibri font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing. They must include the following sections:

- a. **Title:** USAID/ESC and OCE Activity Design and Evaluation Scoping for a Gang Violence Prevention Activity

- b. **Contact details:** Full name, position, affiliation, role on the project, and contact information. Include the PI and all other collaborators on the team and their roles and responsibilities (For example, Co-PI, sector technical expert, etc).
- c. **Summary:** Summarize team’s relevant expertise, interest in the research project, and describe one previous randomized controlled trial you’ve been engaged in that required management and coordination with multiple stakeholders. (one page)
- d. **Work plan and management:** describe how the research team will accomplish the proposed activities, including the management structure for the research team (one page)
- e. **Budget.** Applicants must propose a high-level budget for accomplishing the activities described in the work plan. USAID estimates up to 60 days of LOE for this phase, with a budget up to \$50,000.
- f. **Availability for impact evaluation:** upon completion of the scoping phase and at the approval of USAID, do you anticipate your team will be available to implement an impact evaluation (IE) of one or more of the gang violence activity interventions? Please list additional partners you may include for the IE implementation phase. (This is not binding and may change to reflect the selected evaluation design)
- g. **Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise:** Complete [this worksheet](#).
 - a. Tab 1: Please complete for all members of the Research Leadership Team
 - b. Tab 2: List up to 15 research outputs that demonstrate experience relevant to the research request in this call for capacity statements. Research outputs should involve primary data collection that was conducted in the country/region of this activity, and/or be randomized controlled trials. Research outputs may include peer-reviewed publications, conference papers, presentations, working papers, or pre-analysis plans for ongoing research. (15 is the total number of outputs to list, not per team member)

VI. Capacity Statement submission information and deadline

- Applicants should submit their (1) Capacity Statement and (2) Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise through Qualtrics at this link (Add the link here) by June 7, 2024 at 5:00 pm EDT. Items to submit include:
 1. Capacity Statement with required documents listed under Section V: Required Documents for Submission except the (h) Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise workbook, which must be submitted as a separate .xlsx file. All the rest of the documents should be combined into one PDF file.
 2. Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise listed under Section V (K): This should be submitted as a separate document in MS Excel Worksheet.
- Prospective applicants can submit any questions concerning the call for capacity statements. Questions should be sent to Leulseggged Kasa (lmekonen@purdue.edu) with the Subject Line: “Questions for LASER PULSE OCE ESC Design and Evaluation Application”. Questions should be received no later than May 24, 2024 at 5:00 pm EDT.
- Announcement of finalist teams will be released tentatively on June 28, 2024.

VII. Capacity Statement Review

LASER PULSE and the USAID/ESC team will review all capacity statements. The submitted CSs will be evaluated by a committee of reviewers, jointly selected by USAID and LASER PULSE. Capacity statements will be rated on the degree to which each Research Leadership Team demonstrates the following capabilities:

- Experience conducting research that requires primary data collection, with a preference for experience in countries in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean or the broader Caribbean region.
- Experience conducting randomized controlled trials (RCTs) (also known as “randomized evaluations”)
- Relevant subject-matter expertise
- Publications in peer-reviewed academic journals
- Meaningful engagement of researcher(s) with primary institutional affiliation(s) in an LMIC and gender diversity
- Cost will be considered among technically similar proposals

USAID will use the above criteria to select a research team for this activity.

D. NEXT STEPS

Once a CS is selected, the selected team will be invited to an orientation session hosted by LASER PULSE. The co-creation among the research team, LASER PULSE, and USAID commences after the orientation meeting to refine an in-depth program description of the Design and Scoping Phase. As part of the full program description co-creation, the finalist team will be required to do the following:

- The Principal Investigator (PI) (and Co-PI) must (a) register on <https://laserpulse.org/network/> and (b) complete both LASER PULSE’s online training [gender analysis in research](#) and [Embedded Research Translation training](#).
- All the other members of the research team are encouraged to register on the network and complete the training.

NOTES:

- LASER PULSE may contact applicants with follow-up questions on the CS submission if clarification is needed.
- LASER PULSE reserves the right to select individuals from different CSs to form a qualified research team based on experience in Guatemala and study expertise.
- LASER PULSE reserves the right to have another call for CSs if the quality of CSs received is not satisfactory.