

# Principles and Methodologies for Strategic Monitoring in Fragile States

Recommendations for Implementation of the Global Fragility Act

June 2020





## About this Report

As part of the United States government's congressionally-mandated stakeholder consultation process for implementing the Global Fragility Act (GFA), the US Department of State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations requested input from the Keough School on monitoring and evaluation strategies in fragile states.

In response, the Keough School hosted a virtual roundtable discussion with representatives from the US Department of State, the US Department of Defense, and the US Agency for International Development, which are leading the government's implementation of the GFA. Faculty from the Keough School—and its Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and Pulte Institute for Global Development—addressed questions related to the design of methodologically sound monitoring and evaluation processes in regions affected by poverty and violence, where governance systems are weak.

They offered recommendations based on field experience, peer-reviewed research, and policy engagement. In particular, insights were drawn from the Kroc Institute's Peace Accords Matrix, which is conducting real-time monitoring of the implementation of peace agreements in Colombia and South Sudan.

Those recommendations and insights are summarized in this policy report, *Principles and Methodologies for Strategic Monitoring in Fragile States*, which aims to complement the work of other academic and policy institutions to provide policy-relevant research that supports the US government's efforts to address global fragility.

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*The views expressed in this report are strictly those of the individual authors and do not reflect the opinions, official policy, or position of the Keough School of Global Affairs or the University of Notre Dame. An online edition of this report can be found on our website ([keough.nd.edu](http://keough.nd.edu)), together with additional information on the subject.*

## About the Keough School

The University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs brings a concern for human dignity to the forefront of global policymaking. Its research and teaching focuses on effective and ethical responses to poverty, war, disease, political oppression, environmental degradation, and other threats to human flourishing. Drawing on a network of internationally engaged faculty, alumni, centers, and institutes, the Keough School and its Global Policy Initiative coordinate policy-relevant research, teaching, and outreach. The Global Policy Initiative produced this publication.



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## Executive Summary

The Global Fragility Act of 2019 (GFA) boldly sets forth a 10-year timeline for developing and implementing a global strategy “to stabilize conflict-affected areas and prevent violence.”<sup>1</sup> The law includes rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements to track the progress of the United State government in executing this strategy. The president and relevant agencies must submit biennial reports to Congress providing “descriptions of progress made towards achieving specific targets, metrics, and indicators for each priority country and region”<sup>2</sup> selected for implementation.

Measuring the progress of both programmatic and strategic goals against both long-term and short-term timelines will require a well-designed monitoring and evaluation process for each prioritized country or region. Effective engagement with key stakeholders in these areas, as well as a sound methodology for data collection and synthesis, are critical to the success of these M&E processes.

### Design of Monitoring & Evaluation Processes

Effective M&E processes for GFA implementation belong at the center of country or regional plans and should be informed by the “up-to-date baseline analysis” required by the GFA<sup>3</sup>. Such analysis will be most useful to the design of M&E processes if it includes a rigorous political and contextual assessment of the partner country or region, with a focus on identifying conflict dynamics and risks. The design must incorporate:

- Mapping of the most relevant political, economic, and social domestic actors, including spoilers and criminal networks; and
- An assessment of the influence of regional dynamics and foreign actors, both positive and negative.

GFA plans should be based on a *written agreement* between the US government and host government(s). The agreement should be developed in consultation with major stakeholders in the partner countries, including civil social actors, and integrate existing and planned US

government security assistance and cooperation programs as required by the GFA.<sup>4</sup> The written agreement also should be compatible with the national development plans of the host government and include:

- Specific observable commitments that can be measured and evaluated by quantitative and qualitative methods; and
- An evaluation process to assess US government commitments as well as those of the partner government.

The US government should consider adopting *real-time*, or *contemporaneous*, monitoring of the commitments in the written agreements, utilizing an independent research organization with an on-the-ground team of trained specialists from the host country for gathering and analyzing data on implementation, as developed in the Peace Accords Matrix Barometer Initiative described in this report and its annex.

### Effective Engagement

The US government should combine M&E reporting with strategic engagement of key decision makers and stakeholders. This would involve partnering with community-based actors in all stages and dimensions of M&E, including joint design of monitoring methodology, indicator selection, definitions of compliance thresholds, and data collection and analysis. For example, the US government should:

- Share monitoring findings as they evolve, meeting informally with decision makers and stakeholders to identify options for overcoming roadblocks or setbacks;
- Convene problem-solving workshops in partnership with host governments to reach agreement on any necessary adaptations to country or regional plans as contemplated in the GFA<sup>5</sup>;
- Provide capacity-building support wherever needed to help relevant actors in government and civil society collect and analyze implementation data; and
- Develop and follow responsible data management policies, including rigorous data protection protocols, following USAID guidelines to secure the trust and ensure the safety of all members of the M&E team.

## Data Collection and Synthesis Methodology

Reliable M&E methodology requires multiple and diverse data collection practices, both formal and informal, including where appropriate the use of surveys, focus group analyses, and key stakeholder interviews. In addition, such methodology goes beyond US government sources to include evidence-based data from international agencies, civil society groups, and independent research centers. The types of data must be varied as well, measuring visible signs of progress—the construction of buildings and roads—as well as less tangible outcomes, such as stronger multi-ethnic social ties and the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups.

Differentiation between tactical and strategic indicators is one of the most critical components of M&E methodology. This is especially important in order to accommodate the GFA's 10-year planning timeline as well as its biennial reporting requirement. To achieve this, the US government must:

- Develop a hierarchy of indicators that includes contextualized, in-depth, locally-derived data that can be used for tactical decision-making, as well as broader sources and standards for conducting higher-level strategic analysis;
- Identify sequencing patterns where possible;
- Utilize comparative analysis to inform possible program and monitoring adjustments; and
- Measure each specific goal or commitment by gathering multiple event reports and aggregating them up from tactical assessment to strategic analysis (aggregation principle).

# PART I: Design of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Fragile States

## The Interplay of Politics and Data Collection

The process of monitoring and evaluation is not merely a technical exercise. It is also a political process that is inherently linked to political relationships between the donor and the partner government, and to internal political dynamics within the host country. The GFA implicitly acknowledges this reality by making the Department of State responsible for leading the drafting and execution of the country or regional plans, which must be both strategic and programmatic.

The technical aspects of M&E processes exist within the dimension of political relationships. Interventions that seek to overcome fragility depend upon and affect the relationship between the donor and the partner country and also significantly affect political, economic, and social contexts within that country.

In navigating the politics of M&E, an empowering approach is more likely to lead to significant impact than one focused primarily on judgment. The goal should be to support and enhance performance rather than reward, admonish, and penalize by leveraging and withholding aid.

This empowering approach is consistent with the GFA's requirement to "ensure that appropriate local actors, including government and civil society entities, have an appropriate stake in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating relevant activities."<sup>6</sup> Realizing this goal requires the development of deep partnerships with these actors and an understanding of the multiple power centers and internal political dynamics that exist within a country.

Engaging government and civil society stakeholders and ensuring they have an "appropriate stake" in the monitoring process requires the following:

- Joint design of M&E processes and indeed of the entire engagement and intervention policy;
- An emphasis on building local capacity and strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of local institutions;
- Accepting and implementing an M&E process for donor behavior as well, and sharing that process with the partner; and
- A realistic recognition of the extreme difficulty and the long time horizons necessary for building effective institutions and accountability in conditions of fragility.

### Assessing Political Agendas and Loyalties

In some fragile settings, the lines between state and non-state actors are blurred.<sup>7</sup> High levels of fragmentation and porous boundaries between areas controlled by state forces and armed actors enable state and non-state groups to strike clandestine deals for political or economic goals. In some cases, rebel groups assume governance roles, and states support rebel groups or collaborate in criminal activity.<sup>8</sup> The political legitimacy of state and non-state actors vary considerably over time and in different geographic regions. These complex realities require careful evaluation of the organizational structures and diverse allegiances that underpin insecurity and fragility.

Clearly identifying the loyalties, motivations, and activities of armed actors in fragile settings can be difficult. Data sources about who is doing what in conflict environments may be incomplete, compromised, or part of a political agenda.<sup>9</sup> These dynamics add another dimension to the challenge of understanding local political realities. They point to the value of diverse sources of information and the need for comparing national-level data with other on-the-ground sources from different perspectives.

The risks of neglecting to sufficiently evaluate the political aspects of intervention are demonstrated by the strategy of the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in response to the 2018 Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. WHO and UNICEF interpreted the goal of local ownership as a government-led response. Yet this approach overlooked long-standing national-local tensions, including civilians' concerns that state security forces had been perpetrating violence against the area for years (figure 1). By overlooking important local voices and validating a politicized

central government role, the international intervention undermined its own neutrality and impeded containment of the epidemic.<sup>10</sup>



**figure 1** Ebola Treatment Centre in Katwa attacked by unknown people in 2019 <sup>11</sup>

Once programming begins, political dynamics should be continuously evaluated, with political assessments used to inform changes to program design and implementation. Corresponding M&E activities need to be broad and deep enough to accurately evaluate stabilization and state building in areas beset by violence, corruption, and criminal activity. To achieve this, M&E needs to employ mixed methods and utilize a diverse array of sources all the while remaining cognizant of the political dimensions of program activities and monitoring.

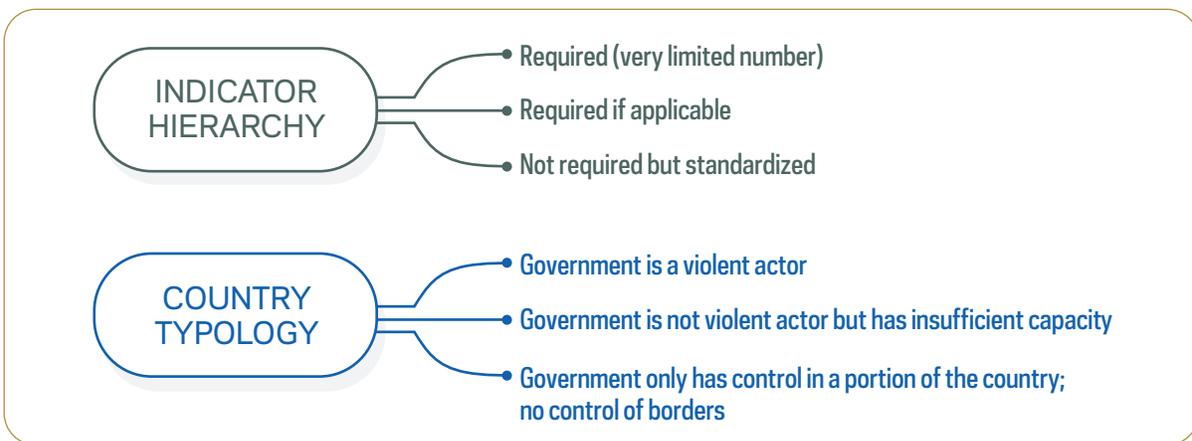
### Data Collection to Inform Strategic Decisions

In monitoring compliance and evaluating initiatives, it is important to differentiate between operational, tactical, and strategic levels of activity. M&E processes need to inform strategic decisions at the macro level, but they also need to support local decisions, particularly if they are tactical or operational in nature (figure 2).



**figure 2** Matching data to decisions

When seeking to do strategic M&E, rather than attempting to measure a large number of indicators on a shallow basis, it is better to focus on a small number of critical required indicators that go deep, based on access to a wide range of information sources, and combined with a hierarchy of indicators that allows for strategic M&E more sensitive to a variety of contexts and interventions. Similarly, a country typology can guide the selection of appropriate interventions and corresponding indicators based on the experience of US agencies in these different environments. Examples include: government as violent actor, government as non-violent actor with insufficient capacity, and government with control over only a portion of the country. The M&E design should incorporate such typology into the government’s required baseline analysis of selected countries and regions. Re-evaluating designations at regular intervals is extremely important given the volatility of fragile states (figure 3).



**figure 3** Balancing standardization and flexibility

## Strategic decisions are best informed by data and information that have been synthesized across a number of M&E initiatives and contexts.

As analysis moves from the operational and tactical to the strategic level, the assessment requires an emphasis on broader standards and principles. Our research has shown that strategic decisions are best informed by data and information that have been synthesized across a number of M&E initiatives and contexts. This allows strategic analysis to identify issues that are of more universal importance. Conversely, when local decision makers are making tactical and operational decisions within their contexts, they are best served with information that is contextualized and specific to their particular circumstances.

### Standardization vs. Flexibility

The difference in information requirements between strategic and operational M&E introduces an inherent tension between the need for flexibility in data collection at the local level (to allow for contextual information) and standardization at higher levels of strategic analysis (for information aggregation across contexts and settings). When this tension is either poorly understood or ignored, the resulting evaluation will not meet its organizational potential.

Some programs and organizations have successfully designed M&E approaches that balance this tension. For example, in the Food for Peace program and previous projects at Catholic Relief Services, the methodology of assessment included a typology of indicators that allowed for a critical level of standardization while also providing for flexibility. Some indicators were required across all contexts and programs, some were required-if-applicable (meaning they were required only if certain conditions or intervention types were present), and others were standard indicators that are commonly used for strategic analysis but may not be required in a particular setting. This allowed for using existing models and making comparisons without having to reinvent the wheel in every project.

## Benefits vs. Burdens

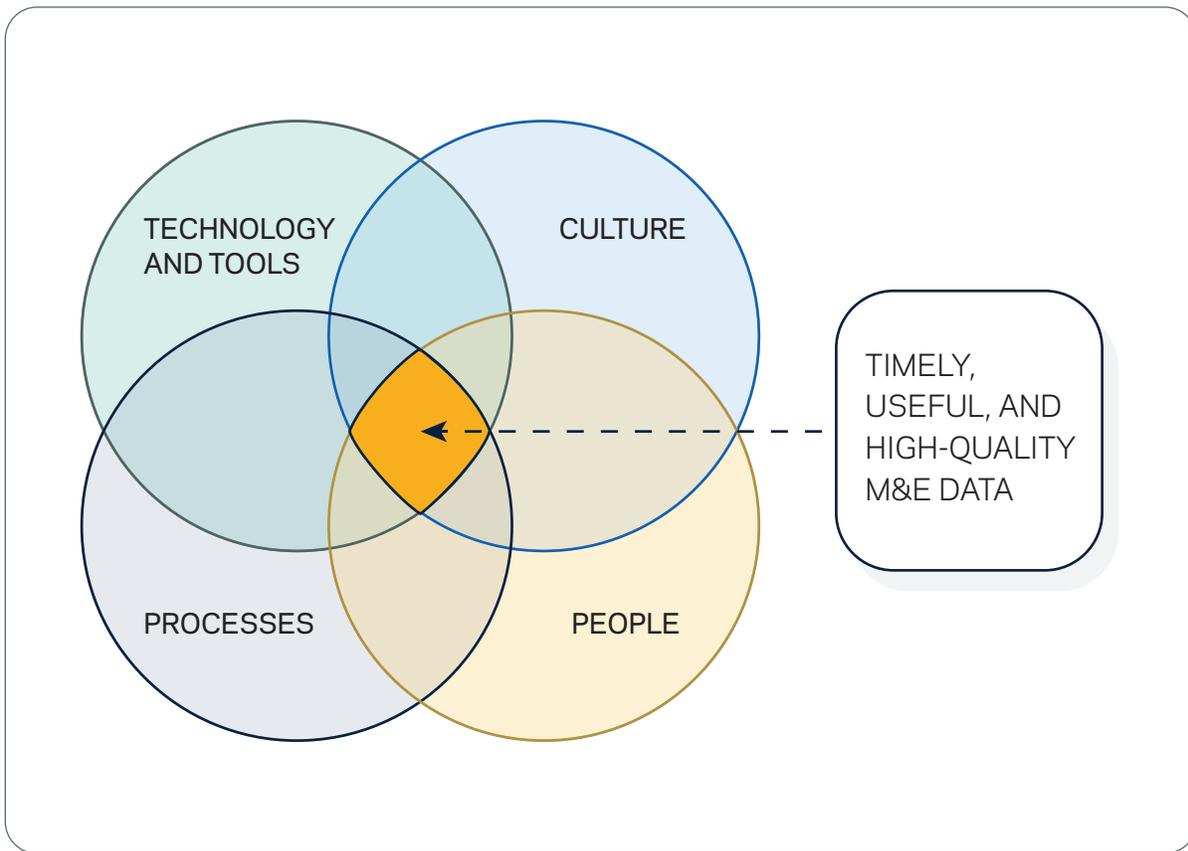
A second tension exists between who bears the burden of data collection and who benefits from that data. The GFA requires stakeholder consultation and “participatory engagement by civil society and local partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs,” but executing this mandate requires careful deliberation and continuous reflection.

Issues in M&E collection and reporting by local actors are often seen as a reflection of poor capacity, but they may also derive from motivational concerns. Developing community-level capacities for M&E efforts can indeed increase access to high-quality information and enhance program performance, but divided loyalties and conflicting agendas of various stakeholders may also compromise information chains and affect program success. Motivation is an equally important if not more important determinant of quality M&E processes. If local actors derive no benefit from collecting the data required for strategic decision-making, or see it as an externally imposed burden or audit, they might be less supportive of the process and may be motivated to hide data that could be seen as pejorative.

Thus, obtaining timely, useful, and accurate M&E data requires more than merely defining M&E processes. It also involves conceptualizing M&E approaches through four distinct lenses: technology and tools, culture, processes, and people. M&E is most successful at all levels when efforts to solve the challenges within each of these four domains align and overlap. Approaching M&E through these lenses allows us to think more holistically about the opportunities and challenges within each domain that prevent an organization from generating and using timely, useful, and high-quality M&E data in operational, tactical, and strategic decisions.

We have worked with a number of large and small organizations through these lenses to identify a more holistic approach to M&E. For example, when working with an implementing partner that was operational in Iraq and Syria, we identified the following challenges in each domain that prevented the organization from achieving the full potential of its M&E system.

Challenges in each domain include:



**figure 4** The four domains of an effective M&E strategy

### Technology & Tools

- Inconsistent internet access
- Language barriers
- No single location for data storage
- Lack of shared tools for gathering data for each item of M&E framework across a country or project

### Culture

- M&E is reactionary rather than mission-driven
- M&E is an informal process
- Limited information sharing
- Power differentials (respondents tell you what they think you want to hear)
- Saving face and job security concerns lead to hiding information

**People**

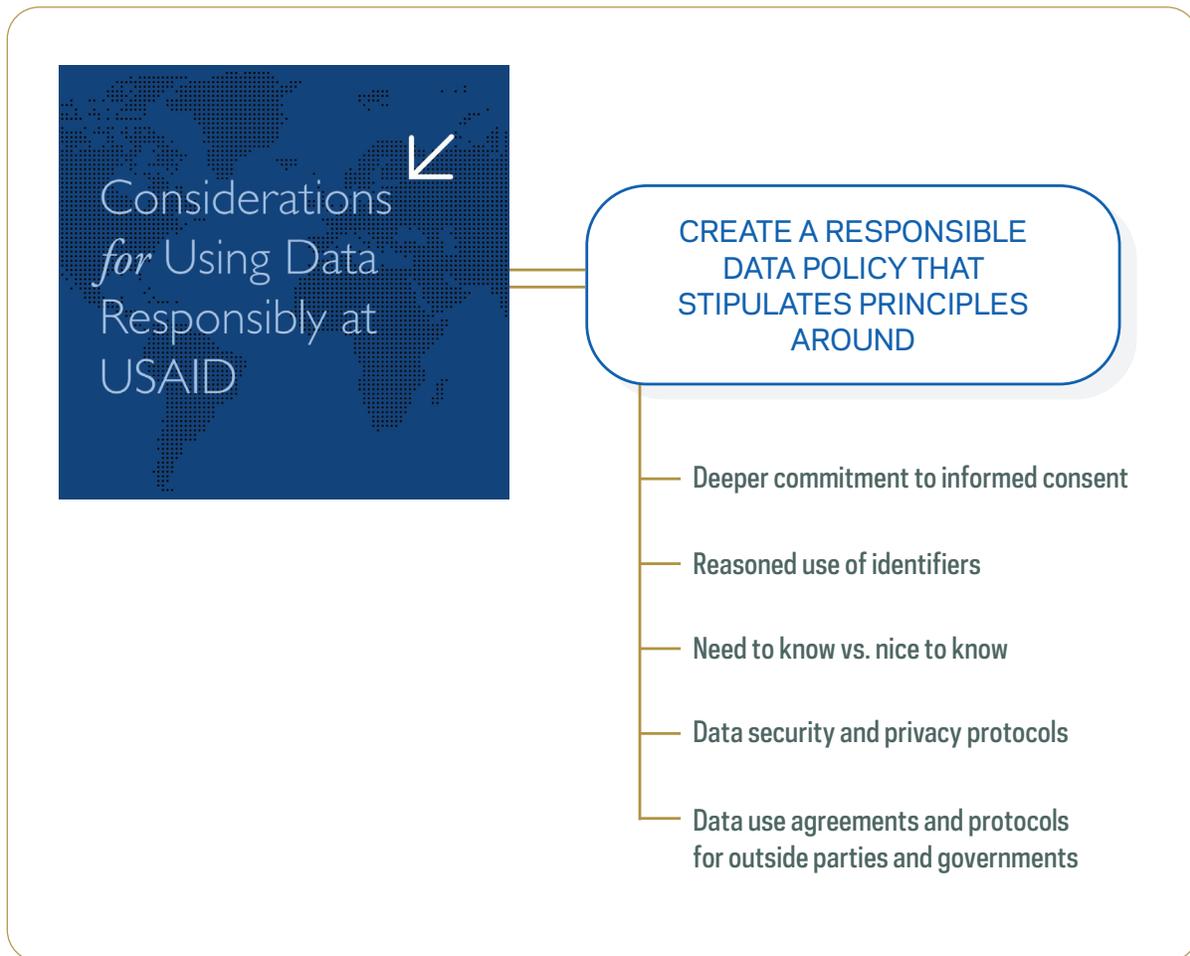
- Low aptitude for data capture
- Poorly defined roles and responsibilities  
(how each person contributes or has accountability)
- Limited staff capacity
- Inadequate quality control in partner M&E staff

**Processes**

- Unsafe circumstances for traditional in-person data collection
- No consistent process for getting data into system
- Lack of clear indicators
- Only measuring what donors ask for
- No clear data flow
- Lack of vetting process for partners

Local staff should be involved in the strategic vision of the M&E program and included in the verification and synthesis of data.

Identifying and tackling the challenges proactively in each domain and in the early stages of M&E design is critical. Solutions may include providing robust digital data collection tools and databases; establishing a formal, mission-driven data collection team; developing a roles and responsibilities matrix for M&E staff with corresponding training programs; and instituting a one-year trial period for collective development, feedback, and response. Streamlining data collection and reporting systems and ensuring the safety of data collection teams are paramount. Most importantly, local staff should be involved in the strategic vision of the M&E program and included in the verification and synthesis of data.



**figure 5** Creating a sound data policy

### Transparency vs. Security

A third tension in data collection in fragile contexts is between transparency and security. More specifically, M&E must balance the availability of information that is required for strategic decision-making and the need for protection of locally-sourced data. It is also necessary to protect the individuals involved at all levels of the data flow process, especially when they share information about themselves and their lives. Figure 5 summarizes recommendations for creating a sound data policy. The USAID report “Considerations for Using Data Responsibly at USAID” could serve as a template for such a policy.

## PART II: Applicability of Peace Accords Matrix Methodology to Monitoring and Evaluation in Fragile States

### The Peace Accords Matrix Contemporaneous Monitoring in Colombia

Since 2016, the Kroc Institute's Peace Accords Matrix (PAM)—the world's largest collection of comparative data on intrastate peace agreements—has provided contemporaneous monitoring of the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement negotiated between the government of Colombia and FARC guerrillas. This effort, the Barometer Initiative, utilizes PAM's peer-reviewed academic methodology for comparative analysis of peace accord implementation as a tool for monitoring the progress of the Colombia accord. See the annex for a description of the PAM methodology.



### PAM's Barometer Initiative in Colombia

#### Mandate

Responsible for official technical verification, monitoring, and support of implementation process of Colombia's 2016 Peace Accord to address more than 5 decades of armed conflict

#### Real-time reporting

Engagement with key decision makers to report on ongoing progress, identify options for improvement, and make any necessary adaptations

#### Team

8 researchers and staff at Notre Dame, 35+ in Colombia (specialists and analysts in the capital, "links" in rural territories)

figure 6

This is the first time that a university-based research center has played a direct role in supporting the implementation of a peace agreement, and that researchers have measured the implementation of an accord in real time.

PAM Barometer researchers collect data and produce event reports on the implementation of every stipulation in the Colombia accord. This information is coded and analyzed in periodic comprehensive reports on the status of implementation and shared with all relevant stakeholders.

While specific to peace accord implementation, this methodology shares the GFA's goal of stabilization and conflict prevention. The PAM Barometer's approaches to local stakeholder engagement, integration with local governments, and data coding and collection cycle align well with the GFA's assessment requirements for country and regional plans, and the law's mandated biennial reports to Congress.

The PAM Barometer program is in continuous dialogue with the government, civil society, and implementing agencies. It utilizes informal deliberative spaces outside of political settings and without media attention to engage the parties in reviewing the progress of implementation and identifying options for improvement.

### **Local Stakeholder Participation in Designing Monitoring Methodology**

One of the key principles of the PAM Barometer is the need for participation and buy-in from local government and civil society actors on development of the methodology and the analysis of implementation. The PAM Barometer team consulted local groups at the outset of the monitoring process, making them partners in creating the methodology and in defining criteria for what counts as implementation. In effect, local actors helped to establish the rules for coding.

PAM Barometer research specialists partnered with major civil society actors on various issues. For example, women's groups helped to define what is meant by commitments to gender inclusion. They helped answer questions such as what percentage of the beneficiaries and participants in a process should be women. Local groups also worked with Barometer researchers to define thresholds and establish criteria for coding. This had a priming effect. It helped to encourage and sustain the interest of local groups in maintaining cooperation with the PAM Barometer. Moreover, it gave civil society groups a sense of ownership of the methodology.

### Methodological Integration: Sharing M&E Data with Local Governments

A lesson from the PAM Barometer experience is the need to establish and maintain methodological integration with the local government in the design of the agreement and in establishing monitoring procedures. The government of Colombia created the methodology for monitoring implementation of its national development plan independent of the methodology created by the PAM Barometer program. This initially created divergence in the evaluation of implementation.

The goal should be to integrate fragility programs into the national development planning of local governments.

To resolve the differences in monitoring implementation, the PAM team at Notre Dame analyzed the government's Framework Public Policy Plan for Peace Agreement Implementation and compared it with the Barometer matrix for Colombia, finding that 288 specific stipulations in the Barometer matrix are directly compatible with the provisions in the Framework Public Policy. The Barometer team is now able to work directly with government officials to apply its monitoring methods to the Framework Public Policy, allowing each side to have more complete monitoring information and harmonize their respective assessments.

The design and implementation of real-time monitoring and evaluation programs should be incorporated into the fragility plans of partner countries or regions, with full input of government officials and civil society stakeholders. The goal should be to integrate fragility programs into the national development planning of local governments.

### Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation in South Sudan

Support to the development and governance of South Sudan has long been a bipartisan effort in the US Congress and across administrations. After several failed ceasefires and partial peace agreements following the outbreak of civil war in December 2013, five major armed and unarmed parties reached agreement on the Revitalized Agreement on the

Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, or R-ARCSS, which they signed on September 12, 2018. The experience of monitoring R-ARCSS offers lessons and a framework for the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the GFA.

While the Peace Accords Matrix does not have a formal role in the R-ARCSS M&E process, the program has been studying the R-ARCSS to understand and support the peace process. PAM is also seeking to identify lessons learned from Colombia and other comparative experiences that could be applied in the South Sudan context.

Chapter VII of the R-ARCSS establishes the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, or R-JMEC, the official M&E mechanism in the agreement. Decisions on implementation status under the R-JMEC are taken by consensus. As such, it is a political body and only publishes information that is politically acceptable to the parties.

PAM published a summary report on the status of implementation of the accord in November 2019 prior to the formation of the national-level Transitional Government of National Unity. PAM used diverse information sources for this monitoring effort, including documents from official governmental sources, various international organizations, civil society actors and groups, and published press accounts. A more complete monitoring would require mapping all potentially available information sources. It would also involve greater engagement on the ground with the key political actors to share findings and encourage implementation activity.

### **Accompaniment Approach**

PAM could support R-JMEC by collecting more information and attempting to depoliticize the data-gathering process through impartial spaces for dialogue and the sharing of findings. The ability to be embedded within R-JMEC would provide access to various allies and actors and their respective activities. Utilizing an engaged approach as in the Colombia Barometer, PAM could help to identify specific issues or actors in distress and suggest options for addressing difficulties and advancing implementation.

It would be helpful to involve additional actors in accompaniment and monitoring roles. This will require strengthening civil society organizations that have integrity, convening power, and community acceptance and buy-in. Faith leaders have played an important role for

many years in South Sudan, but they often do not have the resources necessary to take on the additional roles involved in supporting peace implementation. Perhaps it would be possible to use the US ambassador's self-help grants to strengthen the capacities of faith leaders for this purpose.

Other recommendations are to strengthen links with universities, particularly the Catholic University of South Sudan and universities that have been supported in the past by USAID for educational programming. The US could also provide assistance for South Sudanese women leaders, especially those who have been educated through US programs and have returned to the country. Support is needed as well for groups such as Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, the South Sudan Law Society, Roots, and other civil society organizations.

### Contemporaneous Monitoring and Impact Measurement

Contemporaneous forms of monitoring can determine if specific commitments are being implemented, but they are not intended to measure long-term impacts.

The PAM program in Colombia and South Sudan has introduced the concept of real-time, or contemporaneous, monitoring. When combined with strategic engagement of government officials and other stakeholders, this approach has the potential to influence decision-making and advance implementation of commitments.

Contemporaneous forms of monitoring can determine if specific commitments are being implemented, but they are not intended to measure long-term impacts. Assessments of impact often require randomized control trials or the application of counterfactual analysis. These methods require longer time frames and may not be feasible in fragile states such as South Sudan.

Assessing real-time policy impacts requires creative approaches to identifying sources and indicators. In evaluating interaction with decision makers, it is not sufficient to measure the numbers of official meetings and consultations that are held. It is also important to assess informal or back channel forms of influence. In the Colombia program, this is referred to as “coffee diplomacy”—a continuous iterative process in which PAM Barometer representatives meet with relevant officials or social leaders to gather information, share findings, and discuss options for addressing challenges.

The following are potential indicators for assessing real-time effects:

- Frequency and efficacy of both informal and formal meetings;
- Evidence of officials or other actors using our data to inform themselves, or as a common standard of reference;
- Changes in the behavior of key actors, such as a greater willingness of government officials to receive information and consider diverse viewpoints; and
- Stakeholders and officials taking greater ownership of monitoring efforts and paying attention to our findings and analysis.

The use of survey data can be helpful to judge perceptions of influence, especially when combined with qualitative analysis. Survey data can measure perceptions of the population about the government or other identity groups. Focus groups and key informant interviews can help provide context for survey data findings.

## Conclusion

The Global Fragility Act emphasizes the need for measurable assessments of both a 10-year comprehensive and interagency Global Fragility Strategy as well as corresponding plans for countries and regions selected for implementation. In order to fulfill the law’s specific requirements for such metrics, the Departments of State and Defense, USAID, and other relevant agencies must utilize proven methodologies for data collection and synthesis in fragile environments. These research-driven evaluation tools will allow the government to move closer to achieving the GFA’s goal to “strengthen the capacity of the US to be an effective leader of international efforts to prevent extremism and violent conflict.”<sup>12</sup>

## Annex: The Peace Accords Matrix Methodology

Founded in 2002, the Peace Accords Matrix (PAM) of the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies is the world's largest collection of comparative data on intrastate peace agreements and serves as a trusted online resource for scholars, policymakers, and peacebuilders around the globe.

PAM collects qualitative and quantitative data on more than 34 intrastate peace agreements, which are defined as "comprehensive" because the major parties to the conflict were included in the negotiations and the agreements address structural conditions of violence, such as rural reforms, political participation, and minority rights.<sup>13</sup>

PAM shows the implementation progress of 51 provisions that typically appear in peace agreements for a period of 10 years. The provisions are thematic categories such as amnesty, demobilization, women's rights, and constitutional reform.

In the database, researchers can:

- Search the complete peace agreements texts, and identify the 51 different provisions;
- Track and compare the implementation progress of one or several provisions along different agreements over time.

Based on these insights PAM produces comparative research to inform peace negotiations and other stabilization efforts.

PAM is the world's first peer-reviewed database on peace accord implementation. It is based on empirical findings from comparative research on peace implementation and on information from verification agencies over the past two decades.

Its research also indicates that the level of verification of an agreement is the most important predictive variable for explaining the success of peace accord implementation.

The level of verification is even more important than state capacity in explaining the variation in implementation. Where there is a strong focus on verification and monitoring, there are the highest levels of implementation.<sup>14</sup>

### **The PAM Barometer Methodology in Colombia**

In Chapter Six of the 2016 Final Peace Agreement between the government of Colombia and FARC guerrillas, the Kroc Institute was given the responsibility of developing a methodology and providing reports on implementation of the accord, as part of an elaborate system for verification and monitoring of the agreement. This puts the University of Notre Dame at the forefront of innovative peace research on the nexus of peacebuilding practice, research, and policy making.

To fulfill its mandate in Colombia, the Kroc Institute developed the PAM Barometer Initiative and adapted the Peace Accords Matrix methodology specifically for Colombia by coding the 300-page Colombia peace accord for 578 distinct and observable commitments. This methodology was approved by the negotiating parties, based on input from both parties and from research groups and civil society organizations in Colombia.

The PAM Barometer team consists of eight researchers and staff at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, and a team of more than 30 researchers and specialists in Colombia. The team in Colombia includes territorial links (or enlaces) who collect information in the rural areas most affected by the war and where reconstruction efforts are prioritized. PAM Barometer team members collect data on implementation of each stipulation. This information is evaluated through a mutual process of assessment at Notre Dame and in Colombia, producing a numeric scoring of the degree of implementation.

For purposes of objectivity, information collection is separated from data analysis and coding. This allows any disputes about sources of information or interpretation of event reports to be evaluated and resolved at the coding phase, in the context of assessing all other relevant information.

The PAM methodology operates through the common social science principle of aggregation. The greater the number of sources of information, the higher the probability of accurate assessment. Combining numerous areas of analysis creates a clearer and more

comprehensive picture of implementation.

This principle is applied in Colombia by reducing the agreement to its lowest common denominators and identifying the smallest units of analysis. This allows for collecting data on each specific commitment and aggregating up from there to higher levels of analysis. Imagine a pyramid with tens of thousands of implementation events at the base. Each stipulation in the accord will have a few dozen up to a hundred or more event reports. This information is used for coding of the degree of implementation. The stipulations in turn can be aggregated up to plans, programs, themes, and subthemes, for more complete analysis of specific elements of the accord and for a comprehensive assessment of whole-of-the-accord implementation.

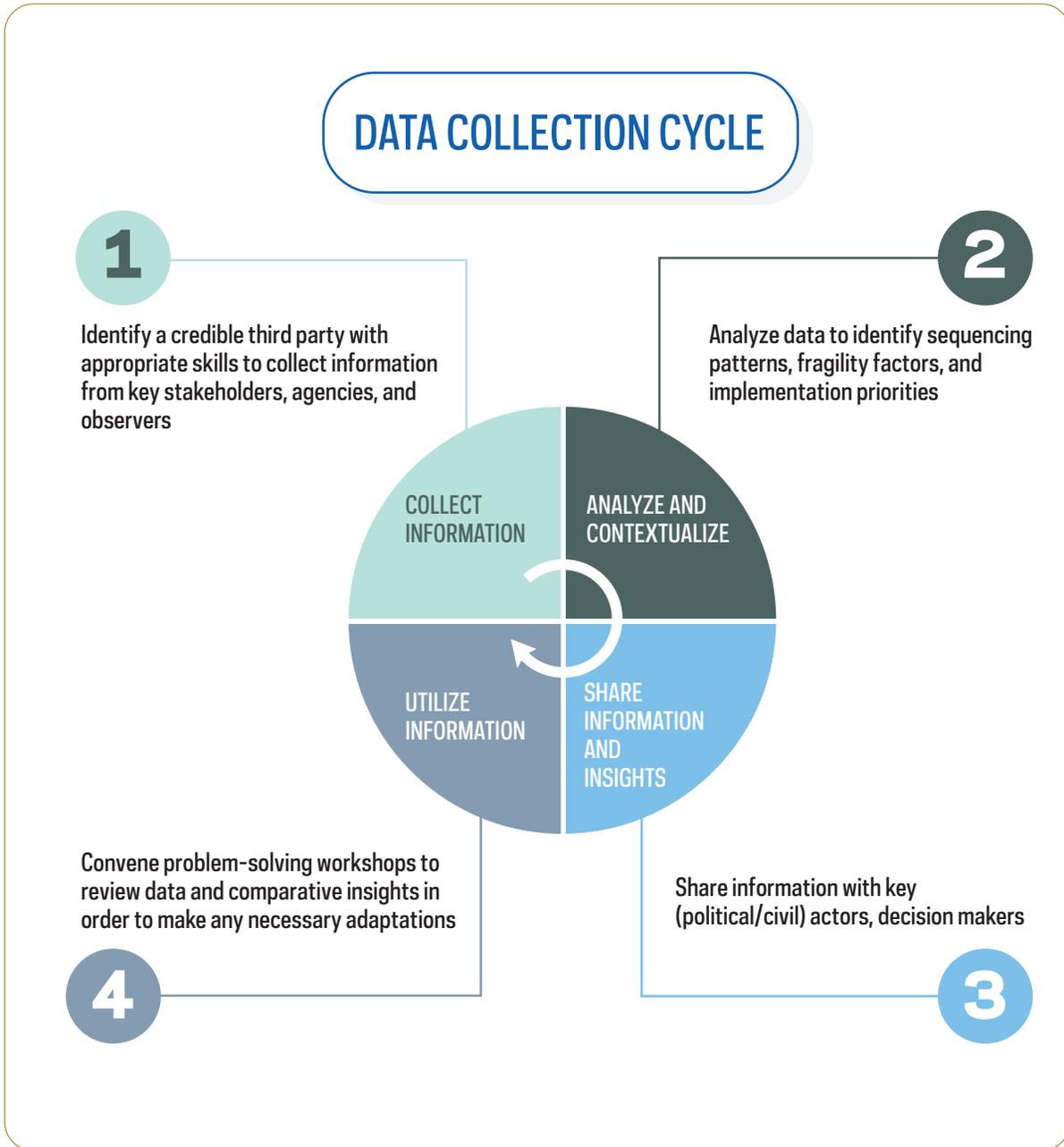
The PAM methodology also relies on an information cycle approach (figure 7).

In the first step, PAM serves as a neutral third party collecting information from key stakeholders and agencies, and providing independent observations. As an impartial actor PAM is able to gain political buy-in from the parties regarding the methodology to be used and the indicators to be followed.

Second, the information collected is processed and contextualized to identify sequences and priorities of implementation, as well as factors that enable positive or negative cascading effects. The goal is to harness comprehensive and systematic data in a timely manner to advance implementation. This information is used to provide guidance on overcoming problems that may arise.

The third step is to share strategic information with key political and civil actors and principal decision makers. The goal is to share data objectively and equally with all actors so that they are operating on the basis of the same information and can make informed decisions together.

The fourth step is to co-design and co-convene problem-solving workshops in partnership with local actors. The process brings together relevant parties in a neutral non-political space to assess problems that have been identified and to work together with them on identifying solutions.



**figure 7** Information cycle approach

## Notes

1. Global Fragility Action, Section 503.
2. Section 508(3).
3. Section 506(2).
4. Section 506(6).
5. Sections 506(7) and 508(4)
6. Section 506 (5).
7. This analysis draws on Rachel Sweet, "Militarizing the Peace: UN Intervention against Congo's 'Terrorist' Rebels" *Lawfare* (Lawfare Institute and Brookings Institution): June 2, 2019. Online at <https://www.lawfareblog.com/militarizing-peace-un-intervention-against-congos-terrorist-rebels>
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