



EVERYDAY PEACE INDICATORS

WHAT IS THE EVERYDAY PEACE INDICATORS APPROACH?

The Everyday Peace Indicator research approach is a new means of understanding and tracking changes in difficult-to-measure concepts like peace, reconciliation, governance, and violent extremism. Instead of outside experts and scholars developing indicators of success, communities themselves are asked to establish their own everyday indicators. These are then measured longitudinally to assess changes in community perspectives over time. This approach is driven by the premise that communities affected by war know best what peace means to them and therefore should be the primary source of information on peacebuilding effectiveness.

The framework emerges from a long history of critical scholarship in international relations and peace and conflict studies, and is sympathetic with bottom-up, participatory approaches. It is a tool that seeks to assist communities, practitioners, and policymakers to question the assumptions that lie behind traditional peacebuilding measurement systems that may promote an over-dependence on outside intervention. The EPI approach assumes societies are multifaceted and are based on enduring processes of negotiation and adaptation.



The Everyday Peace Indicators approach seeks to complement, not replace, orthodox indicators as community-level approaches are negotiated and harmonized with macro-approaches to more effectively measure peace. By systematizing a process for having community-sourced indicators to guide the development and evaluation of programs and policies, the EPI approach fosters learning for both outsiders and locals that moves toward more emancipatory peacebuilding and conflict transformation in realizing sustainable peace.



WHAT IS THE EPI PROCESS?



STAGE 1: DEVELOP

Local partners conduct representative focus group discussions with community members to generate a long list of indicators that people are already using in their daily lives to measure their own peacefulness.



STAGE 2: VERIFY

Participants follow a two-step verification process where they first refine the original lists by adding or subtracting indicators, then rank the indicators by voting. Additional community members help to identify the most representative indicators.



STAGE 3: ANALYZE

Local partners and program managers apply the everyday indicators as a diagnostic tool to understand community priorities and design projects and programs in a grounding process to meet the needs of communities to foster greater ownership and sustainability.



STAGE 4: SURVEY

Local fieldworkers survey the community using mobile phone applications with the refined list of indicators. Surveys are repeated frequently to be able to track whether or not people's perceptions of peace and safety in their communities have changed.

WHY THE EPI APPROACH?

There is growing recognition in policy and practitioner communities of the limitations to existing sets of indicators for many concepts related to recovery from conflict and disasters. The following are some of the limitations of orthodox indicators the EPI research approach responds to:

Accuracy

Orthodox indicators tend to measure proxies of the concepts of interest, such as peace and reconciliation, rather than peace and reconciliation themselves.

Scope

Many indicators are limited to project or program evaluation which may tell us little about the wider dynamics of the transition society.

Ownership

Current indicator exercises are often top-down and originate from the global north, with outside actors initiating, organizing and designing surveys.

Empowerment

The marginalized position of community members may be reinforced by the ways indicators are represented and disseminated.

Scale

Many existing indicators are unable to see the differences, often subtle, within and between communities.

Because major policy assumptions and decisions are based on indicator systems that only give a partial picture of the reality, it is possible that flawed evaluation methods lead us to pursue the wrong goals. This undermines peacebuilding efforts by failing to meet the needs and expectations of the very people transitioning from violent contexts. There are also limitations with using strictly bottom-up indicators including issues with access, credibility, and comparability. Conflicts as phenomena are necessarily complex and unlikely to be rendered accurately through a single methodological, ontological, and epistemological lens. The EPI research approach addresses the limitations of orthodox and purely bottom-up indicators by offering a hybrid approach to measuring social change.



IS THE EPI APPROACH RIGOROUS?

The Everyday Peace Indicator research approach recognizes that conflict-affected societies do not constitute a laboratory; thus, scientific purism cannot be assumed. Such expectations can lead to indicators being 'precisely wrong' by having methodological rigor while being inaccurate or meaningless to those experiencing conflict. The EPI approach reconciles the desire to capture local voices while meeting the demands of rigor expected by donors and the peacebuilding community by attending to standards of data quality. Since the approach is a hybrid framework of measuring change, it may not appease methodological purists of either top-down or bottom-up camps. The following standards take precedence in the EPI approach:

Internal Validity

Using inductive methods, the EPI approach aligns the representation of the dimensions of peace to a particular community or culture, instead of the available literature review or proxy indicators coupled with outside expert opinion.

External Validity

Using two-level theory, the EPI approach codes and categorizes everyday indicators into emergent dimensions of peace that can be used to address the issue of the incomparability of granular indicators across different contexts.

Reliability

The EPI approach employs tools such as randomization, Likert scales, verification focus groups, and enumerator monitoring to ensure methodological reliability, while also allowing indicators to be adaptable and reflexive to the changing dynamics of conflicts.

Precision

By using indicators identified by communities in their own words, the methodology can reveal sub-state variations in data and more accurately reflect the on-the-ground situation in a refined way that is meaningful to local communities.

Integrity

The EPI research approach addresses the manipulation of data by primarily ensuring indicators are representative of the community as a whole and not individual opinions of community elites or local NGO staff, thereby mitigating some of the elite capture that often comes with program implementation.

Timeliness

Surveys are repeated over time and can be administered as frequently as the dynamics of the conflict dictate and based on the management needs of peacebuilding programs.

COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF MEASUREMENT

Little concern is paid to investigating whether the results from top-down measurement and evaluation systems are measuring outcomes based on the values and needs of elite interests, or whether they reflect those of the people the interventions are actually intended to assist. The Everyday Peace Indicator research approach is driven by the premise that beneficiaries are best placed to determine the efficacy of the external interventions, policies, programs, and projects designed for them. Using people's own indicators of peace and reconciliation in communities affected by violence is an innovative alternative to existing measurement systems and addresses several of the unanswered questions and criticisms about how the international community can more effectively support conflict-affected localities work towards peace.



If you'd like to learn more, or work with us to integrate the EPI research approach into your design, monitoring, and evaluation systems, visit our website at everydaypeaceindicators.org, or Pamina Firchow at pamina.firchow@gmail.com.