# Reflecting Dignity, Empowerment, and Listening:

## Revising PTI's Success Metrics

Dr. Laura Cordisco Tsai and Lilly Yu
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# Introduction

In December 2018, Paglaum Training International (PTI) published its first formal program assessment (Cordisco Tsai, 2018). The assessment provided a systematic understanding of PTI'Ss operations, key services, and subprograms from the perspective of its clients, staff, and partners. It revealed that PTI stakeholders had multiple perspectives on what constitutes program success: while clients defined success as achieving their goals and giving back to the program, staff more commonly defined success as safe, sustainable, and gainful employment (SSGE). Clients and staff were concerned regarding whether SSGE was too narrow, unrealistic, or even undesirable in some circumstances. Clients and staff alike questioned whether narrowly measuring SSGE was meaningful as PTI'S key metric of success.

In light of this feedback, one key recommendation from the program assessment was to revise PTI'S measures of success to include more than SSGE and include both quantitative and qualitative measures. In October 2018, before the program assessment was published, PTI convened its Core Leadership Team (CLT), led by Program and Learning Advisor (PLA) Dr. Laura Cordisco Tsai, to begin the process of revising its success measures. In addition to Dr. Cordisco Tsai, the members of the CLT included the following PTI leaders: Jeremy Floyd, Executive Director; Jonna Eleccion, Philippines Director; Janice Ubaldo, Philippines Deputy Director; and Rhea Baylosis, Clinical Team Manager.

This report documents PTI'S success metrics revision process. Revising PTI'S success metrics took place from October 2018 through August 2019 and included the deliberative, iterative process of expanding, revising, and piloting the program's success metrics into a new monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. This report describes the revision process and discusses the challenges and important takeaways learned from identifying and defining new ways of measuring success.

# Guiding Principles: PTI Organizational Values

The CLT tasked with revising PTI'S success metrics embarked on the process according to PTI'S organizational values, with a focus on dignity, listening, empowerment, and genuineness.

> *Dignity.* PTI believes in success measures that reflect the worth, rights, and interests inherent to all. As such, metrics should be holistic and encompass more than narrow quantitative measures of success.
>
> *Listening.* The process of revising success metrics should be informed by listening to the perspectives, experiences, and priorities of its clients, staff, and partners.
>
> *Empowerment.* Revised success metrics should reflect the degree by which PTI clients use their own agency to determine and achieve their self-defined goals.
>
> *Genuineness.* Success metrics should reflect the truth about our program, clients, and outcomes, instead of relying on simple, sensationalist outcomes that do not reflect the realities of our clients' lives.

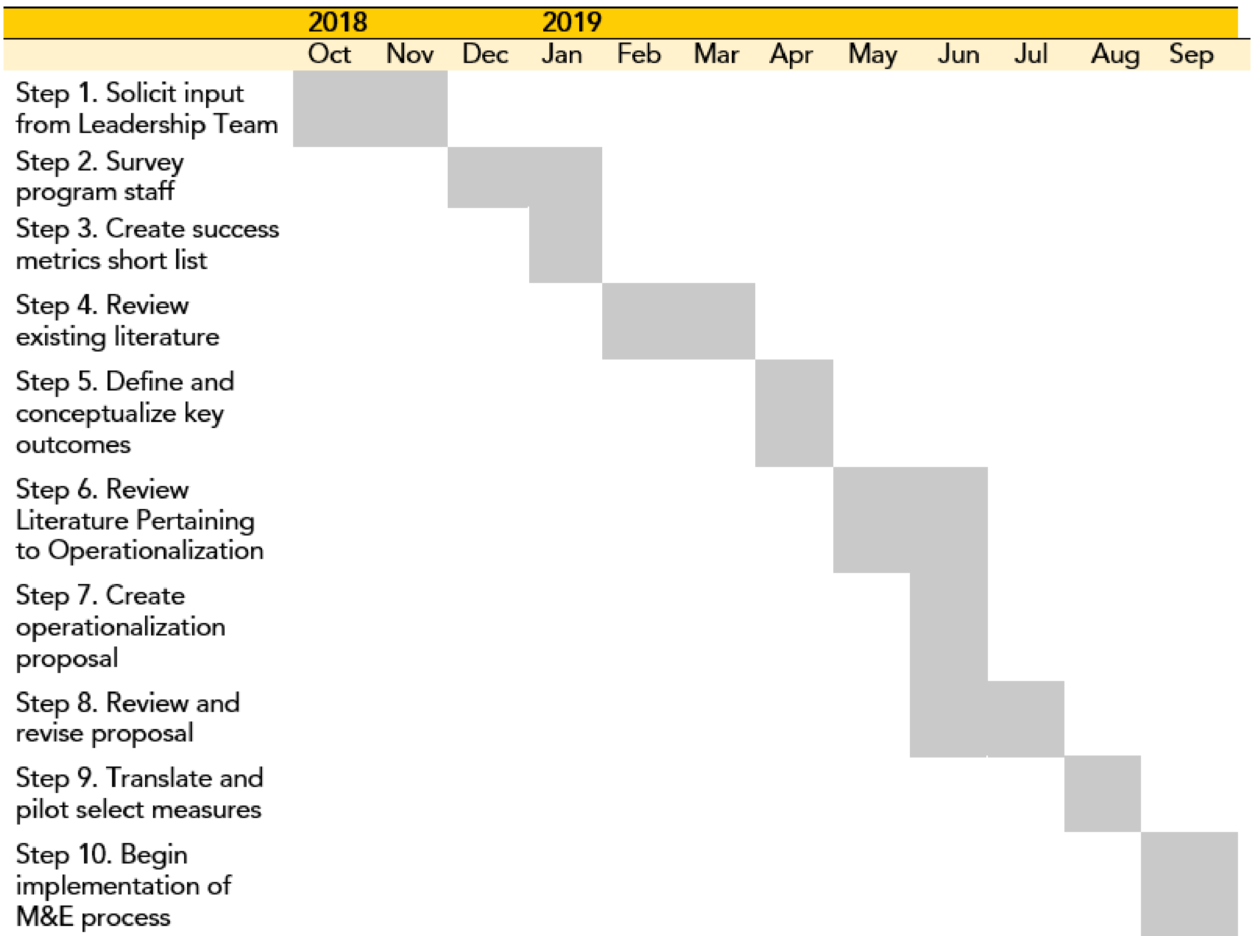
## PTI Organizational Values

| | |
|---|---|
| **Dignity** | Protecting and promoting the worth, rights, and interests inherent in us all. |
| **Listening** | Seeking first to understand the perspectives, experiences, and desires of others, especially those who are marginalized. |
| **Empowerment** | Helping others determine and achieve their own goals through their own agency. |
| **Expertise** | Engaging our work with the relevant skills, education, and competency to ensure our services conform to the highest industry standards. |
| **Curiosity** | Seeking and sharing new methods, models, and strategies to continuously achieve greater impact. |
| **Collaboration** | Tackling complex problems and creating effective solutions together. |
| **Genuineness** | Being sincere and truthful in our motives, actions, and words. |

# Success Metrics Revision Steps

From October 2018 through September 2019, Dr. Cordisco Tsai led the CLT through a ten-step success metrics revision process to create PTI'S new M&E system. Figure 1 summarizes the revision timeline.

## Figure 1. Revision Timeline




# Step 1. Solicit Input from Leadership Team

First, PTI'S CLT developed an initial list of potential success metrics. The original list was inclusive of a wide range of both program outcome and process measures. Program outcome measures focused on the intended outcomes for clients who have completed PTI programming, including instrumental goals such as employment and education; socioemotional goals such as self-efficacy and decision-making; and recovery and healing goals, such as safety, freedom, empowerment, and hopefulness. Process measures assessed the administration and implementation of programming, including implementation of program activities; relationships with clients and partners; training of program staff; and client engagement throughout PTI'S subprograms.

## Step 2. Survey Program Staff

The PLA then conducted a survey of all PTI staff to solicit their feedback on the PLA's initial list of outcome and process measures and seek their suggestions for additional metrics. The survey asked the twelve program staff to rank their top five outcome/success measures and indicate their desire to include various process measures associated with each PTI subprogram.[1]

The program staff prioritized the following five outcomes measures: client self-efficacy, obtaining employment, sustaining employment, educational achievement, and economic empowerment. For process measures, the majority of staff agreed that a comprehensive list of process measures for each subprogram should be included, including the number of clients engaged in each subprogram; number of programmatic sessions or "dosage" for each respective subprogram; client and staff perceptions and feedback on effectiveness and impact; and the quality of referrals to external partners, among others. Staff suggested including several additional outcome and process measures, such as client readiness, informal check-in mechanisms between staff and clients, and expansion of partnerships.

## Step 3. Create Success Metrics Short List

The CLT then convened to create a short list of success metrics in light of staff feedback from the program staff survey.[2] Through the deliberation, the CLT integrated feedback obtained from clients during the program assessment, survey results from staff, and their own programmatic knowledge to compile a shortlist reflecting the views of key stakeholders. The CLT used the measures that were highest ranked by all program staff and added client goal setting and achievement based on client feedback from the 2018 program assessment and PTI'S organizational goals. Ultimately, the CLT decided on the following initial short list of success metrics: employment (obtaining and sustaining employment), educational achievement, client self-efficacy, client goal setting and achievement, and economic empowerment. There was, however, recognition among the CLT that the ultimate list may adapt throughout the remainder of the revision process.

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[1] PTI support staff were given a brief survey that asked them to rank their top five outcome measures and provide feedback on the success metrics revision process; only 1 member of the support staff completed the survey.
[2] At this stage, developing process measures was placed on hold in order to prioritize the development of outcome measures.

## Step 4. Review Existing Literature

The PLA commissioned a graduate student at Harvard University to conduct a brief literature review regarding economic empowerment and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997; 1986). Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs in their capacity to achieve their goals. A person's sense of self-efficacy helps determine whether and to what extent a person will engage in efforts to achieve their goals in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1986; van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). Whereas self-esteem refers to a generalized belief in oneself, self-efficacy is domain-specific; at PTI, emphasis is placed on occupational self-efficacy pertaining to client career goals.

Empowerment is both a process and an outcome (Zimmerman, 1995). Through empowering processes, people gain greater control and mastery over aspects of their lives that are important to them, participate in decisions that impact their lives, and have heightened capacity to cope with life challenges (Dasgupta & Soto, 2018; Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman & Warchausky, 1998). Economic empowerment, therefore, refers to clients gaining enhanced mastery and control over their financial wellbeing and challenges, and a heightened capacity to achieve desired outcomes (Fox & Romero, 2017; Postmus et al., 2013). Research with survivors of human trafficking in Southeast Asia has found key domains of empowerment to include meaning and purpose in the workplace and family life; belief in one's own capacities; a sense of inner peace; and healing, growth, and personal relationships (Dasgupta & Soto, 2018).

## Step 5. Define and Conceptualize Key Outcomes

The PLA then created research literature-informed definitions of each shortlisted outcome. Figure 2 provides an overview of each measure.

The economic empowerment metric was informed not only by the research literature, but by clients' own definitions and perspectives. The PLA, through a separate project unaffiliated with the success metrics revision process, conducted a research study regarding clients' own definitions of economic empowerment utilizing photovoice, a community-based participatory research methodology grounded in empowerment theory, feminist theory, critical consciousness, and documentary photography. Further information regarding the findings of the photovoice study can be found elsewhere (Cordisco Tsai, forthcoming). The photovoice project occurred simultaneous to the preliminary steps of the success metrics revision process. While stakeholders identified the shortlist described in Figure 2, there was agreement within the CLT that ultimately PTI wanted the metrics to be consistent with the photovoice study findings, as these findings reflect the perspectives of clients themselves. Because Dr. Cordisco Tsai's photovoice study was conducted concurrent to this process, findings were integrated into PTI'S decision making as they became available.

## Figure 2. Short List of Success Metrics

| Metric | Definition | Reason for Inclusion |
|---|---|---|
| **Economic empowerment** | Client gains greater control and mastery over his/her financial situation, participates in decisions pertinent to his/her financial goals, and has a heightened capacity to cope with associated challenges. | Client economic empowerment is the ultimate outcome for which PTI is aiming. PTI aims not only to equip clients to complete school and obtain safe, sustainable employment, but to also regain a greater sense of control and agency in their lives, a process that is central in trauma recovery. |
| **Employment (obtaining and sustaining)** | Client obtains and sustains employment. Measures will include varying levels/forms of employment, not only employment that meets SSGE criteria. | PTI'S core services pertain to helping clients achieve safe and sustainable employment. |
| **Education** | Client graduates from school or educational program. | Further education is often required for clients to achieve safe employment. PTI client goals commonly include completion of education pertinent to their career paths. |
| **Self-efficacy** | Clients believe in their capacity to achieve their career goals. | Belief in one's capacity to achieve goals is essential to accomplishing them. A sense of self-efficacy is a foundation for agency. Clients often doubt themselves and their own capabilities due to their trauma histories. Self-efficacy is a component of empowerment. |
| **Goal setting and achievement** | With PTI'S support, client establishes individualized career goals for him/herself and succeeds in achieving his/her goals. | Clients' own goals for their lives and careers are at the center of PTI'S services. Trauma recovery involves regaining a sense of agency, which includes setting goals for one's own life and achieving those goals. Goal setting and achievement is part of empowerment. |

## Step 6. Review Literature Pertaining to Operationalization

After the CLT agreed on the five shortlisted success metrics, the PLA began the process of determining what qualitative and quantitative measures could accurately capture each outcome. The PLA and a Harvard graduate student conducted a review of existing qualitative and quantitative approaches by examining a variety of publications, including journal articles, research reports, and evaluation reports of programs seeking similar outcomes for other client populations. Adjacent interventions examined included programs targeting higher education students seeking to meet their basic needs (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, Looker, & Williams, 2019), workforce development and job readiness programs (Herrera, Lurier, O'Regan, & Rieger, 2013; Lansing, Carreon, & Schlecht, 2018), and women in underrepresented economic industries developing self-efficacy (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). It was difficult to find studies that simultaneously examined the same outcomes *and* included their interview or focus group protocol questions. The biggest challenge, however, was the applicability of these studies to PTI'S client population. There were no published studies that examined the same set of outcomes for clients who had also experienced exploitation. PTI clients have varied backgrounds, experiences, and educational levels, whereas many of the existing studies target a specific client profile or educational level. Applicability of existing measures to the Filipino cultural context was another concern. Due to these challenges, the PLA examined a small number of sources, but ultimately developed new qualitative questions for focus group discussions (FGDs).

Each metric's quantitative measures were primarily counts or percentages of clients' outcomes within a specific timeframe, or pre- and post-survey data for clients' self-reported outcomes. For the self-efficacy quantitative measures, the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001) was selected. A basic needs survey was developed based a variety of sources, including Philippines-specific poverty measures, a U.S. higher education-based survey of students' basic needs, and U.S. federal measures of food insecurity and adult well-being (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2012). Questions from an education-based survey of students' basic needs, specifically whether clients had food and housing insecurity and the frequency of their concerns and resulting actions, informed the basic needs survey (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019).

The purpose of qualitative measures is to capture clients' own perceptions and experiences related to each success metric, particularly the meaning of achieving the program outcome to their lives.

## Step 7. Create Operationalization Proposal

The PLA then created a detailed proposal on how to quantitatively and qualitatively assess each of the metrics. The proposal was informed by the first several steps of the revision process, as well as preliminary findings from the photovoice project that highlighted PTI clients' conceptions of success. PTI clients in the photovoice study defined economic empowerment to encompass a holistic set of economic and non-economic dimensions including: education, employment, meeting basic needs, goal achievement and overcoming difficulties, support systems, and psychosocial wellbeing. As a result, the short list of success metrics identified in Step 5 (Figure 2) were modified to reflect clients' perspectives per the photovoice study. The operationalization proposal included draft qualitative group discussion protocols and draft quantitative survey questions and scales for each metric. Figure 3 provides a summary of the proposed outcome measures and their quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment within the fiscal year.

### Figure 3. Proposed Outcome Measurement System for Dimensions of Economic Empowerment

| Outcome | Quantitative Measures | Qualitative Measures |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Education** | Numbers of clients who graduated from Alternative Learning Systems/high school, senior high school, vocational training, college, or educational bridge programs. | FGDs with graduating clients to understand the meaning of education completion to their lives. |
| **2a. Employment (obtaining)** | Number of clients who obtained employment across a spectrum of employment types, divided into 7 tiers. | FGDs with clients about the meaning of employment to their lives and how their experiences in work readiness programming have impacted their work experiences. |
| **2b. Employment (sustaining)** | Number of clients who have sustained each type of obtained employment across 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, or 2 or more years. | FGDs with clients about their challenges and successes in sustaining employment. |
| **3. Meeting basic needs** | Pre- and post-program survey for clients to assess whether there are improvements in their capacity to meet basic needs, including food and housing needs. | None. |
| **4. Goal achievement and overcoming difficulties** | Number and percent of clients who have participated in Career Counseling sessions who have made progress toward their goals. | FGDs regarding whether and how Career Counseling program sessions have impacted their goal achievement. |
| **5. Support systems** | None. | FGDs with clients about their perceptions of staff-provided support, acceptance, |

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| | | communication, and availability of support systems. |
| **6a. Psychosocial wellbeing (mental and emotional strength)** | Tabled to be revisited in the future. | Tabled to be revisited in the future. |
| **6b. Psychosocial wellbeing (self-efficacy)** | Pre- and post-program assessment of clients using the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen et al., 2001). | FGDs of whether and how client self-efficacy has changed since involvement in programing. |

Additionally, the draft proposal contained process measures to capture the progress of each PTI sub-program on a monthly basis. The purpose of process measures is to evaluate sub-programmatic activities and track basic quantitative outcomes, including but not limited to the number of client enrollees, number of graduates, and the number of sub-program sessions or activities in which clients participate. Process measures also capture sub-program specific metrics (for example, the number of clients assisted in seeking birth identification documents from PTI'S social worker). Figure 4 provides a summary of the proposed quantitative process outcome measures.

## Figure 4. Proposed Sub-program Process Measures

| Subprogram | Process Measures |
|---|---|
| **Soft Skills Training and Empowerment Program (STEP)** | Number of clients referred by program partners, enrolled, and graduated. |
| **Career Counseling (CC)** | Number of clients engaged in CC and sessions completed. |
| **Education Program** | Number of Advanced Learning Initiative for Vocational Training and Education (ALIVE) clients who used tutoring services, completed a program year, and received scholarships; number of tutoring sessions provided. |
| **Work Immersion Program (WIP)** | Number of clients in WIP and actively seeking employment or in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). |
| **Job Referral Assistance Program (JRAP): Client** | Number of client education sessions, clients assisted with applying for jobs, clients receiving coaching services, and clients receiving post-employment monitoring. |
| **Job Referral Assistance Program: Employer** | Number of outreach activities to build employment partnerships, partners who interviewed and/or employed clients, interventions provided to workplace problems; employment partners' ratings of partnership quality. |
| **Social Work Services** | Number of clients assisted with birth documentation and identification problems; number of reproductive health partnerships formed; number of clients attending substance-abuse related programming; number of referrals made to external organizations for legal, mental health, and housing services; and number of new partnerships formed. Additionally, number of sessions across services. |
| **Crisis Intervention** | Number of clients who disclose and receive assistance for intimate partner violence (IPV); disclose ideation for or attempt suicide and receive assistance; and disclose and receive assistance for other emergency situations; number of sessions across services. |

Given concerns regarding the budget available for ongoing M&E, it was proposed that data would be collected on a regular basis primarily by sub-program staff. The proposal contained a timeline for outcome measures data collection for each success metric during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The PLA incorporated the processes of collecting data into a workplan for all involved program staff with data collection spaced throughout regular intervals during the fiscal year.

# Step 8. Review and Revise Proposal

PTI leadership and program staff reviewed the operationalization proposal, and provided feedback. Overall, PTI leadership and staff were satisfied with the quantitative and qualitative measures of each of the success metrics. While the original proposal included both quantitative and qualitative process measures, the process measures were modified per input from the CLT. Leadership staff in the Philippines felt that introducing expanded process measures alongside new qualitative and quantitative outcome measures would be too much of a shift in practice for program staff, who must balance M&E activities alongside their primary programmatic work with clients.

Program staff posed additional questions and minor changes. Program staff feedback was oriented toward the logistics of data collection, including how sampling should be conducted, specific selection criteria, and the number of participants for FGDs and surveys. The PLA incorporated this feedback into the final operationalization proposal, including more logistical details on carrying out the data collection activities and procedures necessary for M&E. Each program would target at a minimum of 10-15 clients who meet specific inclusion requirements for each FGD. Requirements are specific to each sub-program, including criteria such as graduation or success meeting a specific metric within the fiscal year. Participants who meet the requirements would be randomly selected for participation.

## Step 9. Translate and Pilot Select Measures

In August 2019, PTI staff began to translate surveys from English into Cebuano. PTI staff piloted two surveys with clients: the basic needs survey and the self-efficacy scale. Clients participating in the pilot surveys were part of the Work Immersion Program (WIP). The reasons for piloting with WIP clients were two-fold. First, WIP clients come into the organization five days a week to participate in work activities, eliminating the burden of travel for clients. Second, the majority of WIP clients represent some of PTI'S most vulnerable clients: most are studying to obtain their high school degrees, are not currently working outside of the organization, and/or are experiencing crisis situations. Ensuring that WIP clients understand the surveys is a reliable way to ensure that other clients would understand survey content.

WIP staff ultimately piloted the basic needs survey and self-efficacy scale with 10 clients. Clients asked for clarification for meaning on specific questions and provided feedback for alternate translations. The PLA revised these two surveys based on the pilot results.

## Step 10. Begin Implementation of New M&E System

To prepare for the new M&E system using these revised success metrics, PTI established the part-time role of Monitoring Coordinator to work closely with the PLA and Philippines Director in collating and tracking evaluation activities monthly. Each month, the Monitoring Coordinator will review sub-program data, perform data reporting and quality checks, and provide support for sub-program staff in their data collection and reporting requirements.

Before the end of the upcoming fiscal year, PTI will assess the progress of the new M&E system, including the new success metrics and the logistics associated with its implementation and operationalization into programmatic work. Measures will be revised for the subsequent fiscal year as needed based upon lessons learned during implementation.

# Challenges

Several challenges arose in undergoing a systematic revision and operationalization of PTI'S programmatic success metrics. First and foremost, PTI'S work is centered on serving clients. This means that client-related activities, needs, and emergencies are the priority of all staff, including members of the CLT. Therefore, while the process of revising the success metrics was important, this process was sometimes sidelined for higher priority client needs.

The process of thoughtfully and systematically revising success measures takes resources and time. All staff, including the members of the CLT, had many concurrent responsibilities that were unrelated to the success metrics revision process. Staff often had to juggle more pressing tasks and deadlines that competed with the revision process. Relatedly, creating a data collection plan that balanced the realities of a small organization without M&E staff with the need for rigorous measurement was challenging. Additionally, the photovoice research study which ultimately formed the basis for the operationalization of economic empowerment at PTI was an exhaustive and participatory process that took extensive time and that was performed outside of the PLA's working hours at PTI through her appointment at Harvard University.

Third, the revision process highlighted a tension between the needs of PTI'S clients and the need for PTI to communicate its priorities, work, and value to external audiences, stakeholders, and funders. It was imperative that the new success metrics, in the context of PTI'S overall monitoring and evaluation goals, reflect the realities of clients' lives, including the nuances of their lived experiences. Simultaneously, the success metrics needed to be understandable and clear to external stakeholders who may not be familiar with the complexities of PTI'S programming and goals, including its cultural and geographical context in the Philippines and its clientele's lives. A related challenge during the operationalization process involved the lack of existing validated measures that were appropriate for PTI'S clients. As noted in step 6, finding both qualitative and quantitative measures for PTI'S unique client population was difficult. Robust information on how other programs measured success were either not shared via publications or, if shared, inappropriate for PTI'S clients.

# Important Takeaways

There are four key takeaways in the success metrics revision process. First, the perspectives of PTI'S clients were central to the revision process. Their feedback regarding the narrowness of success metrics during the 2018 program assessment was a primary motivator for the revision process. Client-originating definitions from the photovoice research study were key to the deliberation and conceptualization of economic empowerment, as well as the ultimate operationalization of new metrics. While the CLT team was informed by the research literature-based definitions of economic empowerment, it was ultimately clients' own definitions through the photovoice project that informed the eventual system.

Second, the revision process was a participatory one in which PTI staff were involved and informed in every step of the process. At each of the revision steps, the PLA provided staff with updates and sought staff feedback and approval for all changes. Staff provided feedback regarding not only the quantitative and qualitative measures for PTI sub-programs, but also expressed their input regarding which changes in the M&E system would be practical and manageable. They raised valuable questions for and insights into the actual administration of the newly operationalized metrics. Similar to their contributions to the revision process, PTI clients also provided feedback for new M&E data collection activities. Including stakeholders on every aspect of programmatic decision-making, including the success metrics revision process, is central to fulfilling the organization's principles and goals.

Third, as PTI underwent the process of revising its M&E system, it became clear that transparency was important throughout the process. It is often difficult for outsiders to understand an organization's M&E processes and procedures, as evidenced by the review of existing measures from other similar programs that resulted in the identification of very few qualitative protocols. While many organizations do not publicly share their M&E processes (such as how they collect data and operationalize their metrics), PTI seeks to engage in a transparent process by detailing how the operationalization process progressed over several months via several stakeholder groups, as well as the challenges and lessons learned.

Lastly, it is vital for PTI to engage in anti-human trafficking and client empowerment services and activities in a way that does not perpetuate harmful messages of clients needing to be "rescued" or "restored" by PTI staff. PTI strives to provide client-centered services according to its organizational values, which recognizes clients as capable of self-determination and deserving of dignity. Success metrics should reflect these values instead of simplistic outcomes without empirical basis. As such, PTI'S success metrics may not be black and white or provide an easy, quantitative answer about our clients' outcomes. They instead reflect clients' holistic selves and individual paths to recovery and empowerment.

# Conclusion

Creating a new M&E plan concluded an eleven-month-long process of reconceptualizing PTI'S success metrics into ones that better capture the organization's work and centers its clients' own definitions and perceptions of success. The process was guided by PTI'S organizational values, namely concern for clients' holistic wellbeing, dignity, and capacity to determine their own successes and make their own decisions for their recovery and empowerment. Through a deliberative, collaborative process involving PTI clients, staff, and leadership, PTI was able to come to a consensus in revising their success metrics to reflect a broad, nuanced set of measures to understand client economic empowerment. Ultimately, PTI was able to revise its entire M&E system to reflect these organizational priorities. Over the course of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, PTI will implement this new system and assess its progress through the perspectives of these very same stakeholders.

# Acknowledgements

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