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**COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT
FOR STABILIZATION ACTIVITY PLANNING
AND IMPLEMENTATION: AN EVALUATION OF
BEST PRACTICES**
ANALYTICAL REPORT

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT FOR STABILIZATION ACTIVITY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: AN EVALUATION OF BEST PRACTICES

ANALYTICAL REPORT



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Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, prepared under USAID’s Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) program, presents findings from an evaluation conducted between June and December 2012, on best practices for community outreach and engagement during stabilization planning and implementation in Afghanistan. This paper focuses, in particular, on the way in which the District Stability Framework (DSF), developed in 2009 to support USAID’s Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI), evolved into the set of tools for community outreach and engagement for stabilization activity planning and implementation that are currently used under the Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) program, and the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI). The evaluation team sought to answer the following questions:

- **Question 1.** What are the concepts, definitions, and logic flow that underpin DSF?
- **Question 2.** To what extent and why have components of DSF been incorporated into SAM, Governance SOI Workshops, and CCI’s stabilization assessment approach?
- **Question 3.** What are the core principles, concepts, and processes of community outreach for stability analysis?
- **Question 4.** How effective are the concepts and tools for resiliency assessment, relationship building, and community engagement that are currently employed by stabilization programs?

This report answers the first 3 questions, and describes a plan for answering the fourth question, once the programs being studied have implemented a sufficient number of projects from which to determine effectiveness of their approaches.

DSF was a tool intended to help USAID officers and implementing partners plan and program for stabilization assistance in Afghanistan. Stabilization, in this context, differs from long-term development: it is intended to create a sufficiently stable environment (often in support of counterinsurgency or broader national security objectives) to enable long-term development efforts to succeed. As the USAID Administrator stated in his Stabilization Guidance of January 2011, “stabilization programming often has different objectives, beneficiaries, modalities, and measurement tools than long-term development programming. Our training, planning, metrics, labeling, and communications efforts, among others, must reflect both the differences and the linkages.”¹

DSF guided users in identifying sources of instability (SOIs) at the district and village level, developing activities to address those SOIs, and designing metrics to measure the outputs and stability impact of programming. DSF was not radically new; rather, it was adapted from the earlier Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF). DSF was, however, more rigorous than anything previously fielded in Afghanistan and, though imperfect (and often ignored by users in the field despite extensive training in its use), it represented a major conceptual advance over previous best practice. It established a common methodological baseline that allowed coalition military units, civilian agencies, and implementing partners to develop a shared understanding of the environment in which they operated.

However, DSF was very much a product of its time—the 2009-2011 “Surge” and Counterinsurgency (COIN) phase of the Afghan campaign. During this phase, international civilian agencies and coalition military forces were present in relatively large numbers, there was a proliferation of civilian and military stabilization programs, and a wide variety of civil-military organizations such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), District Stabilization Teams (DSTs) and Agricultural Development Teams (ADTs) that were conducting intensive stabilization, reconstruction, and capacity development activities

¹ USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, *Stabilization Guidance*, Washington DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, 29th January 2011, online at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACQ822.pdf

all over Afghanistan. This effort was internationally led and internationally funded, and it thus made sense to design a programming and planning tool optimized for the use of international actors. DSF filled this requirement.

Over time, however, some DSF users (including civilian staff of USAID stabilization programs as well as civilian and military personnel using the tool within PRTs, DSTs and ADTs) have come to see the tool as less suitable for current conditions in Afghanistan. This is not so much because the methodology itself has shortcomings (though DSF does indeed have limitations that are acknowledged by users and designers). Rather it is because, like any analytical framework, DSF embodies assumptions about the nature of the environment and the purpose of activities, and these assumptions need to be periodically re-evaluated to ensure that they are still valid, as that environment and the scope of the stabilization task changes. Clearly, the environment and tasks for which DSF was originally devised have changed dramatically since 2009, while the scope and purpose of international assistance programming has also evolved.

In particular, as the international military presence continues to draw down, and the war has mostly transitioned away from COIN towards Security Force Assistance (SFA) and Foreign Internal Defense (FID), the entire framework for civilian stabilization programming and foreign assistance continues to shift. By late 2012 many PRTs and DSTs had closed, coalition troops had withdrawn from several areas of the country, and even where international troops still remained, their numbers were dramatically reduced and their roles were shifting to advisory and assistance missions. Likewise, the level of international funding available for reconstruction and stabilization continues to decrease and the ability of expats from civilian aid agencies to access many areas of the countryside is also diminishing. The international community is working to transition the bulk of its assistance to long-term development, and to on-budget programs run through the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), a process which requires greater Afghan leadership than previously sought.

In these circumstances, DSF—as originally designed and used—is seen as no longer appropriate for stabilization programming in the changing Afghan context. DSF in its original form was designed and dominated by expatriate staff, with limited Afghan involvement. It was military-centric, with an emphasis on ways in which aid programming could support military stabilization objectives and on helping military units understand SOIs in their environment. DSF in its original form was also a rather complex exercise, requiring users to undertake long and intensive training. The tasks associated with the DSF included completing and regularly updating a series of workbooks, matrices and tables. The time and complexity involved was rather demanding for military units and civilian organizations using DSF, and there were translation challenges in explaining some of its key concepts to local interlocutors.

In addition to these conceptual issues with the design of the tool, practical concerns emerged over the use of DSF, to include the difficulty of gaining “buy-in” from GIROA officials and local communities and increasing concern that local actors were reverse engineering DSF by claiming security and stability concerns in order to further their underlying desire for specific types of infrastructure projects. Early experiences with DSF M&E were marred by survey fatigue, and by observer effects on populations with which the tool was in use.² There were also significant challenges with data collection and reliability: different organizations collected data in different ways, military units often failed to pass sufficiently detailed information to successors during their rotation process (which happened at least annually, and often more frequently) and data corruption and data quality assurance were ongoing problems for all users

² Survey fatigue can occur when surveys are conducted frequently within the same population, leading individuals or households to be approached multiple times. Those who respond to such surveys may give biased answers due to their disinterest or even in an attempt to manipulate the responses for perceived benefit (even despite explanation that no benefit may result). Observer effects can occur when the characteristics or behavior of the observer (in this case, a surveyor) alter responses. Under early DSF implementation this concern was primarily linked to the administration of the questionnaire by soldiers, often armed.

of DSF. Often, due to time or resource constraints, data were never collected in the first place, or were collected too late to inform decisions.

The Changing Character of Stabilization in Afghanistan

As the COIN “surge” has ended in Afghanistan, and international military and civilian presence continues to reduce, GIRoA has assumed greater ownership and responsibility for stabilization and reconstruction programming, as part of a general transition to Afghan leadership across all areas of governance, security and development. While analysts differ as to whether Afghan ministries are ready to assume their new responsibilities, there is no disagreement that the transition is happening on a rapid and accelerating timeline. GIRoA is eager to assume full control of all programs and associated funds as soon as possible, a transition that will result in a radically different environment for foreign assistance from at least the middle of 2013.

Within the larger context of the end of the United States-led counterinsurgency campaign, the current strategic shift to Afghan-led stabilization operations supported by U.S. Security Force Assistance, and the potential future implementation of light-footprint Foreign Internal Defense that may occur under a future U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Arrangement (subject to negotiations currently under way) Afghan government ministries are assuming substantially greater responsibility for stabilization programming. Within GIRoA, the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has been seen as primarily responsible for stabilization programming as distinct from longer-term development programming under its long-running National Solidarity Program and other initiatives. MRRD officials see the ministry’s role as extending GIRoA’s reach and connecting the Afghan people with their government in a way that helps build cohesion at the local level. In addition to MRRD, the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG) is becoming increasingly involved in SIKa planning and programming, with district governors closely involved in SAM activities at the district level.

MRRD, in common with other GIRoA agencies including IDLG, has expressed mixed feelings about DSF, which some officials see as a tool that foreigners have used to impose their own stabilization priorities, involving little consultation with (and sometimes ignoring opposition from) the Afghan government. In this sense, DSF has perhaps unfairly come to symbolize the broader frustration of some GIRoA officials with the events of the past several years, which according to some officials entailed unilateral and often misguided stabilization efforts by a large, well-funded but ill-informed international presence. Rightly or wrongly, these officials complain about the creation of parallel competing power structures (especially PRTs and DSTs) that undermined GIRoA authority in key areas, and taught the population to turn to foreigners rather than to their own government for assistance. They also decry the large-scale influx of international funds that were subject to little accountability, with little coordination or oversight by GIRoA—especially military funds associated with the Commander’s Emergency Relief Program (CERP). This influx of funds, in the view of some GIRoA officials, contributed to corruption and waste. Finally, some Afghan officials believe that international stabilization assistance during the “Surge” period undermined the central government, placing resources directly into the hands of local, district and provincial leaders who then had no need to take account of central government priorities.

This perspective is, of course, countered by some in the international community, who point to very significant corruption, fraud, waste and abuse on the part of GIRoA officials, the lack of apparent desire by many officials to undertake their governance responsibilities in an energetic manner, and the need for international assistance to fill some very real capability gaps. While these factors are not issues for this assessment to judge, these disagreements appear to have led GIRoA in general, and MRRD officials in particular, to have a strong, negative reaction to DSF or to anything that resembles it. However, the need to synthesize situational awareness and allocate resources appropriately remains an important

programming concern. Given the conceptual and practical concerns with DSF, USAID and its implementing partners have adapted and rebranded the DSF, or, in some cases, developed new strategies.

Retention of DSF Concepts and Methods in Current Programs

Despite these concerns, there is still a need for a stabilization programming and assessment tool, whatever its name and format. As a consequence, USAID implementing partners in each of the four SIKA programs have developed their own methodologies under various names. All these programs retain some aspects of DSF, but all have modified it significantly in order to fit their new circumstances, and no USAID program currently uses the term “DSF” to describe its programming and impact assessment tools.

The Tactical Stability Matrix (TSM) is one component of DSF that is still used widely for stabilization programming. The TSM guides users to identify root causes of SOIs, define a related stability objective and design an activity that would achieve that stability objective. Many practitioners acknowledge that the TSM is a useful tool, and thus three of the four SIKAs use some variant of TSM (though no program uses that term). A TSM-like approach is also used (to a lesser extent) by USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) through its CCI program, which focuses on community-level stabilization objectives including building resiliencies and community-formal and informal leadership linkages. CCI operates in seven strategic provinces across the country, many of which are kinetic, with a limited government presence. Thus the program is not coordinated centrally with GIRoA, but seeks to link communities to GIRoA and informal governance structures at the local level where doing so would have a stabilizing effect.

The four SIKAs and CCI differ in their future plans for assessment of community perceptions and grievances. Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) provides the findings of its biannual survey to all stabilization programs. The SIKAs tend to rely heavily on the information generated by their stabilization workshop sessions, but some SIKAs supplement this information with some form of survey sampling, atmospheric, or perception monitoring. CCI currently commissions qualitative research in its program districts to provide in-depth data on each of its programmatic objectives. In some cases (described in more detail below) particular programs are adopting a methodology similar to that of DSF, while in other cases different approaches are being taken.

All current stabilization programs have dropped DSF terminology, along with its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) component. The latter has been replaced with internal and third-party M&E efforts to include MISTI. The programs have dropped the four-question TCAPF survey that was used within DSF to gather community-level perception data. They have also dropped the environmental assessment component of DSF³—, although this component was and is seen as an extremely valuable tool in building up the understanding of international actors who lacked knowledge of the local-level environment, it is considered to be unnecessarily detailed for Afghan officials and local staff who are presumed to already be intimately familiar with conditions on the ground. As noted above, OTI’s CCI program is a special case since its purpose differs significantly from that of other USAID stabilization programs in country. In keeping with OTI’s need to be agile and reactive to changes in the security situation as the coalition drawdown continues, CCI has streamlined DSF tools, and adopted an approach that allows for variations in programming responses and activities across different districts.

³ The primary tool was called ASCOPE-PMESII which organized information on politics/governance, military/security, economic, social, infrastructure, and information/communications by areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people and events. See Annex I for detail.

Key Insights

This report's key insights, which are primarily focused on the SIKa program and its stabilization sessions, are summarized below and described in more detail in the main body of the paper.

- Transparency in programming decisions is critically important in gaining community buy-in and protecting perceptions of GIROA partners, particularly since stabilization programming is generally not a purely needs-based or equity-based process, but rather is driven by strategic priorities associated with the conflict. If mismanaged, this process of determining how to strategically allocate resources to address SOIs runs the risk of alienating communities from GIROA.
- While it is easy to engage communities in listing grievances, getting to root causes of instability remains difficult for international actors and Afghans alike. It may be difficult for Afghan participants in stabilization working groups to shift from the usual discussions of development needs, to thinking of sources of instability and solutions to the SOIs. Even when root causes can be identified, discussing them publically can be a sensitive exercise, particularly when SOIs stem from power relations between stakeholders; thus, the topic might need to be approached from multiple angles. International actors are even less equipped to understand such dynamics, or assess the validity of a locally derived assessment. A structured and rigorous approach to understanding, prioritizing, and addressing sources of instability remains essential, whatever its format.
- Prepared and experienced trainers and staff matter a great deal in all aspects of stabilization programming—and in this respect, there are some significant variations among SIKAs in terms of staffing levels and the development of effective Afghan trainers.
- There have been some significant early successes (particularly in SIKa-North and SIKa-East) in facilitating district-level stability analysis using tools derived from the DSF TSM.
- There is a necessary, and appropriate, emphasis in all programs on doing as much as possible through Afghan staff while minimizing the direct interaction of international staff with local communities. USAID should support this goal by refraining from sending representatives to any local SIKa meetings.
- At this stage, it appears that one of the most important criteria for a successful program is its ability to generate activities that tackle SOIs or strengthen resiliencies, while being as simple as possible. This balance is necessitated by the difficulties faced in the field, including low capacity of working group members, limited time for stabilization sessions, lack of district-level GIROA and, in some cases, ANSF presence, and – perhaps more important in future program iterations – limited resources to fund such sessions.
- Apart from linking programming activities to SOIs, it is also important to identify and link programming efforts to district and sub-district level resiliencies -- strengths which enable society to function normally and peacefully -- that can then be leveraged to address SOIs.
- Future planning of programming activities should carefully consider the needs of local communities in order to receive the buy-in of local leaders and community members.
- Expectation management, both for local-level officials and community leaders, and with GIROA officials at the central and provincial level, remains a key element of effective stabilization programming. For example, it should be clear to all stakeholders how ideas generated in stabilization sessions will be used to create final work plans. If ideas are going to be filtered or prioritized outside the local public venue, without local stakeholder knowledge, this should be clarified and not come as surprise to stakeholders.
- There is a clear need for additional training and outreach to Afghan interlocutors so that they understand the objectives of the SIKa and CCI programs, and do not expect that the programs

will fulfill a development agenda. Otherwise, targeted stabilization programming may be interpreted as arbitrarily distributed development programming.

- Because of the programming delays, and the fact that most SIKAs have only just begun their activities, it is too early to make a judgment on the effectiveness of each program's community outreach, engagement, programming and implementation tools, and thus a follow-on assessment will be required in mid-to-late 2013.
- There has been, and will continue to be, very significant evolution in the MRRD/USAID relationship as the drawdown and transition to full Afghan control continues, as well as in the relationship between MRRD and the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG). To the extent that USAID, MRRD and IDLG are able to develop a joint approach to transitioning stabilization programs, these programs are likely to be more effective.

For this report, our focus has been on cataloguing and understanding the tools that are currently used by each SIKA and CCI, and in capturing the program staffs' intentions, to support the next phase of assessment, which will compare the tools as understood in late 2012 (at the beginning of the program), with the way these tools have evolved by mid-to-late 2013. Our working assumption is that SIKA and CCI implementing partners are in the best position to understand the tools they are using on a daily basis; if tools have been significantly modified or are no longer used by the time a follow-up assessment is conducted, this is likely to be a more objective indication of their usefulness and effectiveness than the MISTI team's external impression.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Stabilization programming differs from long-term development: it is intended to create a sufficiently stable environment (often in support of counterinsurgency or broader national security objectives) to enable long-term development efforts to succeed. The USAID Administrator stated in his Stabilization Guidance of January 2011:

“USAID programs in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are critical enablers for the success of the President’s strategy. In particular, USAID’s stabilization programs play a vital role supporting counterinsurgency efforts ... While stability is a necessary precursor for our long-term development goals, stabilization programming often has different objectives, beneficiaries, modalities, and measurement tools than long-term development programming. Our training, planning, metrics, labeling, and communications efforts, among others, must reflect both the differences and the linkages. ... Customized, adaptive programming, grounded in research and experience, is required to identify and effectively respond to specific drivers of instability. The disciplined application of analysis is as critical in a stabilization context as in any other. [USAID officers must] ascertain and prioritize sources of instability, establish a whole-of-government common operating picture, design a focused set of interventions accordingly, and systematically evaluate measures of progress and impact. One of USAID’s analytical tools is the District Stabilization Framework (DSF). Employ DSF, with appropriate modifications for your mission, in areas where we have stabilization objectives. Demonstrate impact against targeted sources of instability”.⁴

Since late 2001, and particularly since the inception of OTI’s earlier program Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI) in July 2009, USAID Afghanistan stabilization programs have evolved and so have the tools and methods for working with Afghan communities, GIRoA, military partners, and other stakeholders. These tools and methods have two main purposes:

- **Decision-Making Support**—providing a mechanism for assessment and strategic planning for stabilization efforts in order to maximize stabilization impact, and for project-level targeting of programming efforts to ensure effective prioritization and selection.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**—seeking continuous feedback from local stakeholders and beneficiaries, in order to facilitate program monitoring and impact evaluation, as well as triangulating and assessing information to review and revise programming approaches

Developed in 2009 to support ASI, the District Stability Framework (DSF) was a program management and planning tool that guided users in identifying SOIs at the district level, developing activities to address SOIs, and designing metrics for measuring the outputs and impact of programming over time. The DSF was not a radically new tool; rather, it was adapted from the earlier Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF).

As U.S. and Coalition Forces were preparing for a military Counterinsurgency (COIN) surge in Afghanistan in mid-2009, USAID planned a similar “civilian surge” in both staff and programs. The designers of the DSF methodology aimed to promote unity of effort by establishing a common theoretical and methodological approach across programs, and by creating a common language that could be used by

⁴ Rajiv Shah, *op. cit.*

diverse actors in the stabilization arena.⁵ For a time, DSF saw use by U.S. and Coalition military forces and civilian agencies, and by select USAID stabilization programs across the country. More than 15,000 USG civilian and military personnel have undergone formal DSF training since early 2010, nearly one third of them since the beginning of 2011.⁶

As the surge and associated campaign evolved, so did the tools and methods used by each agency; civilian and military users modified DSF to meet their needs, some elements of DSF were dropped, and new tools such as the Region South Stabilization Approach (RSSA) emerged. By late 2012, each of USAID's four regional Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) programs, and the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)—the successor program to ASI managed by the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)—was using different methods for community engagement to assess stability and plan stabilization activities:

- SIKA East, North, and West use the term “Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM)” to describe the set of stabilization program management and planning techniques that they are using in partnership with GIRoA's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), even though the processes they use differs significantly across the regions.
- SIKA South uses the name “Governance SOI Workshops.” Like other SIKA programs, SIKA South is coordinating with MRRD. Reflecting the historical evolution of stabilization programming in RC-S, the SIKA South Governance SOI Workshops incorporates certain elements of RSSA, a tool developed by U.S. and Canadian military Civil Affairs officers and USAID personnel at the Civilian Platform in Kandahar in 2010, and used (at times in parallel with DSF) by organizations across RC-S. However, the SIKA-South approach is primarily derived from methods such as SWOT analysis (which charts strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and Participatory Rural Analysis (PRA), which are used by MRRD's flagship NSP and NABDP programs.
- CCI employs a multi-faceted approach to assessing stability dynamics and designing activities. Information is gathered through traditional assessments, atmospheric data, secondary data sources, *ad hoc* interviews, and community events called “cohesion jirgas,” which explicitly seek to identify sources of instability and ideas for activities to strengthen cohesion. Equally important to the CCI process are notes and observations from activities implemented in the field. These methods are used in an iterative way to update knowledge and programming approaches. In keeping with OTI's operating methods, these activities are not implemented in formal partnership with MRRD or any other GIRoA ministry. However the program coordinates and collaborates closely with the local-level representatives of various ministries as well as district leaders.

By late 2011 the concept of stabilization (as defined in the USAID Administrator's Stabilization Guidance of January 2011)⁷ began to be accompanied by the concept of “resilience,” which is defined as building the capacity of Afghan communities to “mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth”.⁸

This report presents initial findings from fieldwork conducted by a team from USAID's MISTI project, which sought to learn from DSF implementation, and to analyze and codify best practices and approaches, in order to support the development of a planning and assessment “tool box.” The evaluation team undertook a close examination of the core concepts and application of SAM, Governance SOI

⁵ Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Request for Task Order Proposals, Statement of Work.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Shah, *op. cit.*

⁸ “Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance.” December 2012

Workshops, and the CCI approach, as an initial step in assessing their efficacy as community engagement and planning methods. Additionally, since assessing and evaluating sources of instability is increasingly being accompanied by efforts to better understand resilience, the MISTI team's assessment also seeks to identify context-specific insights into the growing body of literature on resilience.

Purpose and Scope

This analytical effort seeks to describe and assess the methodologies for community outreach, engagement and analysis that stabilization programs are currently using. The intent is to illuminate how, why and to what extent key DSF concepts, definitions and logic flow have been interpreted, reformulated, differently defined and newly operationalized under the regional SIKA programs, and through CCI.⁹

Within the context of the broader effort, this report is the first deliverable for this assessment. Other deliverables include a final report, and a reporting template and guidance (to be produced following the follow-up assessment of current tools to be conducted in mid-to-late 2013); and a summary PowerPoint presentation with the major findings, recommendations, guidance and display of the proposed common reporting format.

This report is structured in four sections, each focusing on a key analytical question, with supporting documentation, as follows:

- **Question 1.** What are the concepts, definitions, and logic flow that underpin DSF?
- **Question 2.** To what extent and why have components of DSF been incorporated into SAM, Governance SOI Workshops, and CCI's stabilization assessment approach?
- **Question 3.** What are the core principles, concepts, and processes of community outreach for stability analysis?
- **Question 4.** How effective are the concepts and tools for resiliency assessment, relationship building, and community engagement that are currently employed by stabilization programs?
- **Appendices.** Supporting documents and examples of tools used in DSF, and in current stabilization programs.

⁹ USAID's MISTI COR, Sam Schueth, in an email to Caerus Associates describing the intention of this evaluation.

QUESTION I. WHAT ARE THE CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, AND LOGIC FLOW THAT UNDERPIN DSF?

DSF is not a single tool, but rather a set of tools and methods. Depending on when it was used, and by whom, this toolset had different features and usages. This section outlines the principal concepts, logic flow and definitions that underpin DSF. It should be read with the caveat that this description, while representative of the use of DSF across most military and civilian actors in Afghanistan, does not cover the full variety of applications of DSF in every situation.

Key DSF Concepts

DSF was designed specifically for use at the district level, with the intention that it be used as a planning tool by district Stability Working Groups (SWG), who would use DSF assessment tools to gain a detailed understanding of conditions in their district, then apply DSF programming tools to identify, prioritize and address relevant SOIs, and use iterative perception surveys to determine the impact of stabilization programming by tracking shifts in public perception (via changes in survey responses) over time. The SWG, as originally conceived, was meant to be a combined Afghan-international group that would include representatives from the United States and Coalition military forces, USAID and other donor agencies, implementing partner organizations, GIRA and local civil society organizations. In practice, American officials or other international staff often dominated SWGs, and there was little or no direct participation from Afghans. This was not necessarily because DSF users did not recognize the value of Afghan participation in stabilization planning, but rather because—under the circumstances of the early Surge period of 2009, when DSF was first fielded—stabilization operations were primarily occurring in extremely high-threat districts. These areas typically had a heavy coalition military presence and a relatively high level of stabilization reconstruction funding, but had little Afghan government presence and extremely limited willingness to participate in SWGs on the part of local community leaders and organizations.

OTI and its implementing partner under ASI-East used the DSF for district level planning for the life of the program, from 2009 – 2012. British forces also used DSF during the initial period of their intervention in Helmand province, as did the United States Marine Corps (USMC) forces that relieved the British during the Surge and expanded their stabilization efforts across RC-SW between 2010-2012. The U.S. Army (both battlespace owners—i.e., combat units—and PRTs/DSTs) in RC-S and RC-E applied DSF or DSF-like methodology for stabilization programming and as a situational awareness tool.

Situational Awareness: The DSF approach to situational awareness reflected the fact that most users were expatriates—usually military planning staff, USAID international staff or expatriate staff of implementing partners—with little direct experience or knowledge of the districts where they were programming. The situational awareness component of the DSF was thus designed to provide a comprehensive, structured overview of conditions in a given district, so as to allow users to identify the main features of the district and understand how these features related to each other, and how they contributed to patterns of stability or instability. Accordingly, DSF asked participants to consider all aspects of society, from political, military, economic and social conditions to key actors, structures and organizations in the district, and to record this knowledge in several matrices. The principal assessment framework used was the ASCOPE-PMESII framework (fig. 1):

- ASCOPE assessed each district against each of six categories—Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People and Events

- PMESII evaluated the Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information conditions within a district, against the ASCOPE categories

FIGURE I: ASCOPE-PMESII MATRIX

AO: As at: Remarks:		P	M	E	S	I	I
		Political سیاسی	Mil / Sec نظامی / امنیت	Economic اقتصاد	Social/Culture اجتماعی	Infrastructure زیر بنا	Information معلومات
A	Areas ساحات						
S	Structures ساختار						
C	Capabilities توانایی ها						
O	Organizations سازمان ها						
P	People مردم						
E	Events زیرداد ها						

Monitoring and Evaluation: As used by ASI-East and by some military users, DSF required three levels of M&E: output data monitoring, impact assessment and overall stability monitoring. Program staff and M&E field teams monitored outputs, with the goal of ensuring that activities were implemented according to plan. Impact was assessed to learn whether programs were making progress towards stability objectives. Overall stability was monitored to allow the SWGs to see how conditions in the district were changing over time, even while understanding the limitations to claiming such changes as program impact.

The forerunner to the DSF, the Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF), offered a link between conflict assessment, activity design and evaluation. Its assessment and evaluation function was driven by a TCAPF Survey, which included the following four questions:

- (1) Has the number of people in the village changed in the last year?
- (2) What is the most important problem facing the village?
- (3) Who do you believe can solve your problems?
- (4) What should be done first to help the village?

The TCAPF Survey was carried forward into the design of DSF as a key M&E element. It was supposed to be conducted at regular intervals, usually by military personnel interacting directly with a local population. The survey was dropped from the DSF process early on, for four main reasons.

First, there was a problem of survey fatigue. Since local respondents were aware that the TCAPF survey was tied (albeit indirectly) to coalition stabilization spending, some DSF users reported that populations became irritated over time at being asked the same four questions over and over again, stating the same set of priorities and problems, and yet never seeing action on the problems they nominated. Although the

purpose of the TCAPF survey was to gather perceptions (and *not* as a programming tool), the survey process inevitably created expectations among the population that, when unfulfilled, created resentment.

Second, over time, DSF users recognized a problem with survey responses. Local respondents began to “game” the survey by providing answers that would be indicative of projects they wanted to see implemented, rather than reflecting their perception of problems, needs and priorities as the survey intended. Thus, while participation rates remained reasonably constant, DSF users’ confidence level in survey results began to drop.

Third, DSF users experienced a related “combatant observer” effect that arose from the fact that coalition military personnel, in some cases Marines and soldiers on armed patrols, frequently conducted informal questioning of the population using the four TCAPF Survey questions. For example, during the Marines’ operations in Helmand in 2009-2010, many squad leaders and individual riflemen carried a laminated card with the four questions taped to the butts of their M4 rifles, and were encouraged to interact with local people on the basis of informal questioning about these issues. The power disparity between unarmed local survey respondents and interviewers who carried guns (or who were believed to be connected with a powerful armed group, in the form of ISAF) distorted survey results. Even when Afghan civilian staff or qualified field researchers were the ones actually conducting the survey, over time the four questions came to be closely associated with the coalition military in the minds of the local population and therefore, the “combatant observer” effect may have persisted.

Finally, widespread use of the survey by military units—none of whose personnel were trained social scientists, and many of whom rotated out and were replaced by new personnel in the district on a regular basis—led to concerns about consistency of survey methodology, data capture (especially, the reliability of handover of information between successor units) and data quality assurance (including issues with corruption of databases used to record survey responses). In the case of the U.S. Army in particular, information security regulations required units to wipe all data from computer hard drives before returning to the United States, while newly deploying units were required to arrive with fresh hard drives. Thus, except in the relatively rare circumstances where key personnel overlapped on the ground long enough to exchange data files, many U.S. Army units began their rotation in country without any reliable record of previous survey results, underwent a painful and difficult learning curve to acquire an understanding of local perceptions, and then took this knowledge with them back to the United States, only for their successors to repeat the process.

For all these reasons, later practice with DSF (from approximately mid-to-late 2010) focused on other sources of data beyond the TCAPF survey, to include direct observation of population behavior, as well as structured and semi-structured interviews, community jirgas and atmospherics surveys. A key principle was to integrate monitoring and evaluation into a programming cycle whereby programming could be continuously improved based on evidence (see next page).

SOI Identification: The central effort of DSF was the attempt to identify SOIs, defined as perceived or systemic causes of conflict within the district, often arising from unmet needs or unresolved grievances. As discussed in detail below, SOIs were vetted during the TSM workbook process, according to the degree to which they met at least two of the following three criteria: 1) Does this issue undermine support for GIROA/legitimate actors? 2) Does this issue increase support for malign actors? 3) Does this issue disrupt the functioning of society? DSF users, through a variety of tools, sought to identify the SOIs behind expressed needs and grievances, and perceived SOIs as stated in TCAPF surveys. This process explicitly recognized that often, the grievances stated by local populations reflected factional interests, competition among groups within districts who sought to use stabilization funds as a way to outsmart their rivals, or attempts by power brokers to capture coalition resources for their own purposes. In order to avoid these problems of elite capture and local manipulation DSF users sought to determine the “real” causes of violent instability rather than simply responding to overt local concerns.

Drawing on the situational awareness generated by the initial ASCOPE/PMESII environmental assessment, as well as the TCAPF survey results and other sources of information on local perception, the DSF used a Tactical Stability Matrix (TSM) to identify perceived and systemic SOIs in a community. Then the process involved the development of programming to correct these SOIs. The TSM used a workbook format, and was originally intended for use by a SWG in a group setting (as described in the next section).

District Focus: The TCAPF could be used at the village, district, or province level, while the DSF was designed specifically for use at the district (*woleswali*) level. Thus, conceptually the unit of analysis for DSF was the district, although in practice many DSF users focused at the village or village cluster level. An important underlying principle of DSF was an initial recognition that every district was unique in the ways in which it was likely to be unstable. DSF was thus conceived as a way to chart stability dynamics on a district-by-district basis, and to avoid blanket approaches that might or might not apply in a given district. It should be noted that the district-level focus of DSF was a significant advance on previous approaches (which tended to focus at the central government or provincial government level and often took little account of district-level conditions).

However, over time, many DSF users began to recognize that districts themselves were by no means homogenous units: even within a given district there was likely to be a significant variation among villages, village clusters, or from valley to valley. Thus, many DSF users began to focus on the village or cluster rather than the district, an approach that continues in today's stabilization programs such as SIKa and CCI. In addition, DSF users began to recognize that in fact, unstable districts were not completely unique in the SOIs, but rather that there was a relatively predictable set of SOIs that could be codified, and thus some DSF users moving into a new district tended to begin by looking for instances of "standard" SOIs rather than enter with a completely clean-sheet analysis. CCI continues with this approach. OTI and implementing partner staff work from a standardized set of district objectives derived from SOIs

Based on stability, not needs: The DSF purported to generate stability-based, rather than needs-based, programming. DSF was explicitly not a needs-based or equity-based program, but rather an attempt to apply a targeting methodology to more efficiently direct limited stabilization funds. It was not intended to generate equitable results across a district or between districts, but rather to demonstrate the benefits of supporting the stabilization effort (and thus, in a sense, to incentivize the population to support the Afghan government and withdraw cooperation from the insurgents). Several DSF users described the process as being akin to military fire planning (one respondent even described DSF as "a targeting process for non-kinetic fires") in that it used a structured targeting process to determine the optimal resources and targets to achieve a specified stabilization objective. This approach, which reflected DSF's origins in TCAPF and its design by a civil-military team in order to support military stabilization objectives, was arguably appropriate under the circumstances of the 2009-2011 COIN "Surge" for which the tool was developed. Nevertheless, it was sometimes interpreted as a mandate to avoid responding to the expressed needs of the local population—and this contributed to the fatigue and irritation described above, as well as to local populations' tendency to manipulate and "game" the DSF in order to gain access to funds which they knew were available but would only be spent if certain criteria (described below) were met.

Key DSF Definitions

The key DSF term was "source of instability;" indeed, as noted, the notion of the SOI was the most important concept within the tool. DSF also included the terms "factors of stability" or "resiliencies". While these concepts were not as central to the DSF as SOIs, their definitions are included below, given the increased focus on resiliencies that is being applied as part of the SIKa and CCI programs.

TABLE 1: KEY DEFINITIONS WITHIN DSF

Concept	Definition	Function within DSF
Source of instability (SOI)	Local issues that meet at least 2 of the 3 instability criteria: 1. Undermine support for GIRoA/legitimate actors 2. Increase support for malign actors 3. Disrupt the normal functioning of society	SOIs were the key concept of the DSF. The SOI was the focus of analysis and prioritization. Activities were developed in relation to SOIs.
Factors of stability/resiliencies	Resiliencies: processes, relationships, or institutions which enable society to function normally and peacefully	Factors of stability/resiliencies were identified but not fully analyzed like SOIs. They were not prioritized for strengthening and not explicitly part of the TSM. In looking for systemic causes, the question is posed, “Why aren’t existing resiliencies effectively mitigating the SOI?”

The DSF Process

DSF was designed as a cyclical process (fig. 2). After being trained, a group of DSF users moving into a new district would conduct an initial situational awareness assessment, which prepared them to analyze SOIs, and then to design stabilization activities to address these SOIs. M&E indicators were developed as part of this process, to provide a basis for assessing program output and impact. Ideally, the process would repeat in an iterative manner, with M&E data and programming experience from each cycle feeding into later iterations of situational awareness gathering, analysis and design.

FIGURE 2: FOUR PHASES OF DSF



Users were expected to build the programming framework for their district by working through a series of structured matrices. The precise number and type of matrices used depended on the organization in the lead and the time, but a typical DSF process included the following matrices as a set or in combination (see Annex 1 for examples):

- ASCOPE-PMESII analysis
- Cultural matrix
- Factors of instability
- Factors of stability
- Tactical stability matrix (TSM)
- Activity design worksheet
- Monitoring & evaluation (M&E) matrix
- Synchronization matrix
- SOI Analysis Matrix

The first step of the DSF process was to gather situational awareness, facilitated by the ASCOPE-PMESII framework, which outlined the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information aspects of a given district by organizing these into areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people and events. This analysis was intended to provide a replicable coherent framework in which to record all aspects of a new area, and in which to capture changes over time. Along with the ASCOPE-PMESII matrix, a cultural matrix described cultural groups, codes, traditions and values. As noted earlier, the need for this detailed initial analysis arose from a primarily expatriate audience. The users of the DSF tool, as outsiders, needed a coherent framework within which to understand the complex environment. The process itself was complex and required substantial training and practice. The common framework also helped enable joint planning and coordination between agencies.

The next step was to explore the factors of instability and stability in a given area. After brainstorming potential SOIs, a SWG applied the three criteria noted above: 1) Does the issue decrease support for the government/ legitimate governance structures? 2) Does the issue increase support for malign actors? and, 3) Does the issue disrupt normal functioning of society? If the SOI met at least 2 of 3 criteria, it was filtered through a final lens: Is the SOI a priority grievance for the local populace?

The Tactical Stability Matrix process began with the filtered list of SOIs, and required SWGs to analyze the perceived and root causes of each SOI in order to identify a Stability Objective which, if achieved, would address the SOI. Then, impact indicators and data sources were identified and listed, as a means to help the SWG track progress toward achieving the Stability Objective. The final step to complete the TSM was to list activities that would address these SOIs and achieve the Stability Objective.

FIGURE 3: THE TACTICAL STABILITY MATRIX (TSM)

Tactical Stability Matrix								
Analysis						Design		
Source of Instability	Causes – Perceived	Causes – Systemic	Objective	Impact Indicators	Impact Data Sources	Activities	Output Indicators	Output Data Sources
Taken from SOI Analysis	Perception data contributing to SOI (i.e. priority grievances commonly cited by the local population)	The root causes of the SOI that relate to the perceived causes	A statement of the conditions that will diminish the identified SOI	Also called “Measures of Effect,” impact indicators measure the effectiveness of your activities against the predetermined objective and systemic cause	Methods to obtain the information identified in your impact indicators	The things you will do to mitigate the systemic causes of instability and achieve the identified objective	Also called “Measures of Performance,” output indicators determine whether an activity has been implemented	Methods to obtain the information identified in your output indicators

The last step in the DSF process was to unify all M&E plans into an M&E matrix, and for all SWG members and partners to plot their proposed activities onto a synchronization matrix so as to ensure a logical phasing of activity at the district level and avoid duplication or gaps in programming.

QUESTION 2. TO WHAT EXTENT AND WHY HAVE COMPONENTS OF DSF BEEN INCORPORATED INTO SAM, GOVERNANCE SOI WORKSHOPS, AND CCI'S STABILIZATION ASSESSMENT APPROACH?

The degree to which DSF definitions, tools and concepts have been incorporated into SIKA and CCI programs varies significantly by program and across regions within Afghanistan. For the most part, for the reasons identified above—GIRoA concerns about the legacy of unilateral stabilization analysis—the formal terminology of DSF has been dropped. SIKA and CCI staff also expressed mixed views about the value of DSF in the current environment, and on the transferability of key DSF concepts to Afghan users.

In particular, many SIKA team members see a detailed environmental assessment (using ASCOPE-PMESII) as unnecessary for Afghan nationals who presumably understand the areas within which they operate at a different level from expatriate DSF users. (We note that this presumption is not necessarily always accurate, since GIRoA officials or Afghan staff on stabilization programs may well be from different areas within Afghanistan, and may therefore be just as unfamiliar with a given district as, say, a New York resident may be unfamiliar with stability conditions in El Paso. Likewise, staff members who come from a particular district can be expected, despite all good intentions, to have perceptions that are subjectively shaped by their lived experience as part of one particular group within that district). ASCOPE-PMESII clearly reflects an external, expat-oriented outsider's assessment of a given district. Nevertheless, there is likely to be a future need for GIRoA ministries and local implementing partners to develop their own replicable and coherent framework for environmental assessment. Without such a structured approach, they are susceptible to being manipulated by actors who wish to “game” the process or elites who wish to capture resources.

Knowledge of DSF among SIKA staff is variable. A few staff members have been previously trained on DSF, usually as part of USAID-sponsored training conducted in the United States or at the Counterinsurgency Training Center—Afghanistan (CTC-A) just outside Kabul; some current SIKA staff used DSF while working under ASI. Others are not familiar with the tool, or have heard of or used some components but not others. Most SIKA staff members who were acquainted with DSF recognized its strengths as well as its weaknesses, and stated that they have tried to create improved approaches as part of SIKA design. Regardless of this, several DSF concepts and definitions, and aspects of the DSF logic flow described in Question 1 have influenced current approaches in some way. Below are some of the key elements that are commonly applied in SIKA and CCI processes.

Working Groups: Each SIKA regional program convenes a group, roughly equivalent to the original concept of the SWG as defined in DSF. However, while DSF SWGs tended to be dominated almost exclusively by international staff, SIKA working groups are entirely Afghan in composition, and, with rare exceptions,¹⁰ international staff do not attend or directly participate in these groups (though they do play a critical support, analysis and/or assessment role). SIKA working group composition varies across regions, but in all cases the group is based around the District Development Assembly (DDA), with added members brought in as needed. The role of the group is to conduct, for its district, an analysis of SOIs and to determine programming priorities. SIKA East calls its groups “DDA plus”. SIKA North initially works with members of Community Development Councils (CDCs—part of the MRRD National Solidarity Program structure), and then organizes a local SWG comprised of DDA members at the district level. In some districts SIKA North has also created a district-level donor working group that meets to consider

¹⁰ It was noted that in the South, due to the co-location of some district government compounds with military bases, DST members do sometimes observe workshops. This is likely to be short-lived, however, given the imminent closure of DSTs.

activities which are identified but not funded through SIKA. SIKA West works through District Stabilization Committees (DSCs), which are chaired by the District Governor and include local GIRoA representation. In common with other SIKA working groups, DSCs are designed to be coordinated and facilitated by MRRD community mobilizers. The degree to which this happens in practice varies across SIKAs. SIKA South brings the DDA and the CDCs into different parts of the training and planning process. The first two SIKA South workshops are held at the district level, with DDA members and other invitees, while the final two workshops are held for each CDC cluster, during which CDC representatives and their respective DDA members identify local SOIs and related solutions.

SOI: The key concept of DSF—the SOI—remains in use as a term by all SIKAs and CCI. The more precise DSF breakdown, into perceived and systemic SOIs (or in current use, sometimes referred to as SOIs and “root causes”), is used by some but not all SIKA staff. CCI has retained the late-phase evolved notion of a standardized set of typical SOIs, and these are reflected in the district stabilization objectives embodied in CCI programming.

Training/workshop format: All SIKAs have retained some type of training or discussion facilitation for local community working groups, the objective of which is to understand and program against SOIs. While the approach and schedule differs, SIKAs North, South and East all run multi-day training activities for working groups on their Stability Assessment Methodology (SAM) or as part of their Governance SOI workshops. SIKA North’s training approach retains the closest similarity to the DSF as used by ASI-East, in part because of staff continuity from ASI-East into SIKA North. In SIKA East, SAM training includes detailed discussions around the concepts of social responsibility and resiliency, and the application of resiliencies to mitigate SOIs. SIKA South’s approach has the least resemblance to DSF, as it is based on tools MRRD programs use currently, such as SWOT analysis. SIKA West SAM training remains the least defined, although staff members have recently standardized a series of meetings that lead to SOI identification and solution generation. SIKA West staff appear keen to allow stability assessment in their area to develop organically through a process of interaction between local communities and GIRoA, under the theory that local residents have sufficient knowledge to identify and prioritize SOIs. Another factor behind the SIKA West approach may be their plan to transition swiftly to almost 100 percent Afghan staff. We should note that the MISTI team considered this variation among SIKAs, as in other areas, to be a strength, not a weakness—in part because conditions undoubtedly vary among SIKAs, so that there is not necessarily any justification for a completely standardized approach across regions, and in part because variations in SIKA approaches will allow greater scope for analysis of the relative merits of different stabilization assessment methodologies in future phases.

Activity/SOI connection: Each SIKA creates a District Project Portfolio (DPP), based on the working group’s discussions and analyses of SOIs and resiliencies in the community. SIKA North’s DPP is exhaustive; working group members are expected to list all projects discussed, even those that SIKA does not intend to fund. The Afghan SWGs share their larger list with the expat coordination SWG, for possible consideration by other donors. SIKA North sometimes identifies SOIs from discussions that do not make it to the Local Stability Plan (the SIKA equivalent of the DSF coordination matrix), and uses these SOIs to suggest projects. SIKA East and SIKA West DPPs only include projects that these SIKAs can consider for funding, based on their criteria. SIKA West maintains an “Ineligible” list of projects that do not meet its criteria, and staff may add or propose alternative activities to address those SOIs. SIKA East additionally makes efforts to train SWGs to go to the proper authority or source (either within GIRoA or the broader donor community) to request funding for projects that do not fit the SIKA criteria. Most SIKAs include an advocacy component to encourage communities to reach out to GIRoA or other sources of assistance. Part of this effort is related to explaining to local communities the way that their local government works—how budgets are administered, how programming decisions are

TABLE 2: KEY ASPECTS OF SIKA APPROACHES

	Working Group Structure	Training/Workshop Approach	Filtering SOIs	Filtering Activities
SIKA East	Sub-district level: DDA and CDC members in the hawza, tribal elders and other invitees	3 day SAM session including preparation of Hawza Stability Plan (HSP), followed by trainings on a variety of topics, including advocacy	Working group filters SOIs, led by facilitator. Grievances must meet 2 of 3 criteria: 1) undermine social cohesion and local governance, 2) allow ‘troublemakers’ to promote instability, 3) disrupt the normal functioning of society	Working group filters projects, led by facilitator. Should meet 8 design principles: sustainability, local ownership, long-term vs. short-term results, integration with other programs and organizations, cultural acceptability, accountability and transparency, strengthen existing resiliencies, and flexibility
SIKA North	Sub-district level to create Local Stability Plan (LSP): 2 – 3 CDC members per cluster District level to approve LSP (Local Stability Working Group): DDA members, DG, district line officers, influential elders and MRRD Social Organizers	3 days of stabilization sessions: 2 days of training on SAM, followed by 1 day preparing Local Stability Plan (LSP)	Brainstorming, led by facilitator. Added to the list of SOIs are ones which SIKA North identifies through supplementary methods	Final project list is a combination of projects proposed in LSPs, and projects proposed by SIKA North staff, based on added SOIs
SIKA West	District level (District Stability Committee): DG (chair), DDA, district line officers, as part of the official group, and invited elders and religious leaders as observers	Monthly meetings, demand driven training only	Brainstorming of SOIs and prioritization, lightly led by facilitator	Brainstorming, led by facilitator. If a proposed project does not meet project criteria, SIKA West facilitators help the group think of how to advance it through other means. Soft projects may be suggested if appropriate for the identified SOIs.
SIKA South	District level to prepare plans: CDC Executive Members and their DDA representative.	In total, there are 4 Governance SOI workshops conducted over 8 days. Workshops 2 & 3 are devoted to SOIs and mitigating activity generation.	Filtering SOIs is accomplished with SWOT analysis, a participant-generated definition of peace and conflict, and the DSF definition of an SOI.	Projects are scored based on a set of standard criteria and participants’ discussions of cluster priorities.

made, and how budgetary cycles affect the time and manner in which local communities should petition for assistance. SIKa South's module on government responsibilities is particularly detailed.

OTI's Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)

ASI ended in 2012 as OTI launched its CCI program. While not using the DSF, CCI incorporated and built upon many lessons learned through the ASI experience with DSF. During the course of ASI, district teams followed the DSF process, creating a framework for each district. It became clear through M&E efforts that while districts were indeed variable and unique, many common SOIs had been independently identified across the districts. Thus, it became possible to treat SOIs within each district as specific instances of a relatively standardized set of common SOIs that are found across multiple districts. This was extremely valuable for a program like CCI, in which team members operate under conditions that are sometimes too unstable to allow for SIKa-like trainings and stability working group processes, and where teams need to quickly gain an initial appreciation of conditions in a district so that they can commence urgent programming, with the ability to refine their understanding iteratively over time. Based on these observations and experiences under ASI, CCI developed eight commonly identified SOIs¹¹, which it uses as the basis for a standardized set of district objectives (roughly equivalent to the Stability Objectives developed through the TSM process under DSF). After a thorough but rapid initial assessment, district teams select those district objectives that are most relevant to the stability dynamics in their area. This evolution from the DSF allows the CCI program to streamline programming and M&E approaches while still reflecting district variation.

Evolution of the DSF Approach

As noted already, DSF was a significant improvement upon what had come before it, not only because it introduced much-needed rigor and structure in stabilization programming, but also because it emphasized a more local (district-level) unit of analysis, and created a common vocabulary and language across agencies and implementing partners. In practice, the DSF encountered several challenges and criticisms from users. The commonest criticism surrounded the perceived complexity of the DSF process. Training lasted multiple days, and functional SWGs required close coordination among multiple organizations. Even after training was completed, users' capacity to understand and use the concepts varied widely across agencies and regions. High turnover of staff, along with the military rotation processes and lack of data transfer noted above, exacerbated this problem. Many expatriate staff members interviewed during the MISTI team's assessment felt that the burden of this complexity outweighed the acknowledged usefulness of the DSF process, while most (though by no means all) Afghan participants in DSF generally expressed even less interest. Afghans often objected to what they perceived as the military targeting nature of the DSF framework, along with the perceived tendency of some DSF users to ignore repeated expressions of community priorities and concerns, and instead program against foreigners' own priorities. In this sense, the value of DSF's focus on systemic SOIs, which resided mainly in its ability to allow planners to "read between the lines" of community expressions of concern, could be taken too far or could become an excuse for unilateral stabilization programming that took little account of community preferences. Additionally, some key DSF concepts (including, at the most basic level, the notions of a source of instability and resiliency) did not translate well from English into Dari or Pashto, while international actors' emphasis on extending the reach and capability of the Afghan government did not necessarily hold the same importance for Afghan audiences.

¹¹ The eight SOI include: ineffective government (issues with legitimacy, inclusiveness, responsiveness, capacity, or reach); weak civil society; weak customary leadership; weak overall economic situation and [job] opportunities; ineffective use of the media by GIRoA; lack of opportunities for youth; poor linkages between disconnected/disenfranchised communities; and, weak community-based dispute resolution mechanisms and/or bodies.

A related criticism of the DSF, expressed by both expatriate DSF users and Afghan participants in the DSF process, was that eschewing discussions of local community needs and requiring participants to think only of stability issues overlooked the necessity to gain buy-in from communities and elders. While local partners, with some training, could see the value in pursuing SOIs, their immediate interests lay (and continue to lie) in bringing services and goods to their communities, and in cementing their own positions and those of their communities vis-à-vis potential rivals. Therefore, in practice, stabilization teams often found that they needed to begin the DSF process by suggesting already identified activities which they felt would help to gain the necessary buy-in from the community, and then subsequently “reverse engineer” the DSF process to fill in the required matrices after the fact. This practice was commonly reported, both by civilian implementing partners and military users of DSF.

While DSF facilitated a district-specific process for analysis and design of stabilization programs, many similarities were also found among districts. As noted, OTI used this observation to design a follow-on program (CCI) that streamlined the DSF process by using eight standardized SOIs, allowing district teams to focus on those most relevant. On the other hand, the situation within a district often varied from village to village, cluster to cluster, or valley to valley. Thus, over time, DSF users began to realize that they needed to consider smaller units of analysis than the district level.

Most users appreciated the intent behind the incorporation of M&E in the DSF. However, many found that it was often not practical to collect information on the large number of unique indicators that had been identified and written into TSMs in the course of the analysis process. For the various reasons discussed above, use of the four-question TCAPF survey was discontinued. Baseline data was rarely available, and such data was risky and time-consuming to collect in the field, a fact that sometimes delayed its use for decision-making.

Data collection in such dangerous environments was difficult; reliable vendors for survey sampling were hard to find. Programs were sometimes forced to rely on single sources of information, or on internal sources such as team members, rather than being able to triangulate from a wide variety of sources. Over time, OTI’s programs tended to adopt quicker, lighter approaches to data collection, such as atmospherics and the use of qualitative rather than quantitative survey data, as ways to boost situational awareness and assess program impact. Currently, all SIKAs and CCI intend to use the data generated by MISTI surveys as a means of tracking changes in local perceptions over time, and some also fund their own atmospherics, survey sampling, or other data collection activities in order to gain an understanding of local perceptions.

OTI’s experiment in measuring overall stability in its districts was seen to be onerous for one program. The expense and complexity of designing and implementing district level data collection for a relatively small number of districts, and the challenge of disseminating the information to the appropriate stakeholders led OTI to consider this as a task better suited to a higher level within USAID Mission Kabul. These considerations ultimately led the Mission to develop the MISTI program, which was designed to accomplish the task of collecting information for the entire stabilization portfolio, and thereby achieving economies of scale, greater independence, and better positioning for dissemination of data. Thus, in part, the current M&E approach using MISTI grew from the experience of DSF users with the burdensome requirements of project-level M&E under DSF in 2009-2011.

While all current stabilization programs implement some form of M&E, the design of metrics and indicators is no longer integrated into stability assessment tools themselves (as it was in the case of DSF). Monitoring of project execution is sometimes discussed within working groups, but a detailed M&E plan does not form part of the DPP or Local Stability Plan (LSP) as currently used.

For current stabilization programs, the transition from DSF to SAM was driven in part by limitations in the DSF toolkit, but it was also driven in large part by the growing emphasis on transition to Afghan

security and government partners. In fact, as noted already, many of the key concepts and analytical approaches that were pioneered under DSF have proven useful for current programs. Most users interviewed agreed that the TSM remains a very useful tool to map the relationship between SOIs and planned activities. For some, the use of a common tool (in the form of the TSM worksheet) helped improve coordination among partners and facilitated agreement on objectives and approaches. Several respondents who admitted to “reverse engineering” SOIs to fit already-determined programming priorities also said that they appreciated the process for forcing them to consider the linkages between SOIs and their activities. These steps may have helped them design processes for addressing SOIs through activities, even though these activities may have been pre-determined.

QUESTION 3. WHAT ARE THE CORE PRINCIPLES, CONCEPTS, AND PROCESSES OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH FOR STABILITY ANALYSIS?

Going Beyond First Impressions

Moving beyond surface grievances—“reading between the lines” to understand the dynamics that drive violent conflict and instability in Afghanistan—continues to be extremely difficult due to the complex nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, and the variation across districts and communities. This was the initial reasoning behind DSF’s focus on moving beyond needs and grievances, to elicit perceived SOIs from working groups. It also lay behind DSF’s attempt to prompt planners to consider “systemic SOIs”. DSF had some success in doing this, and any future system of community outreach for stability analysis should seek to build on this success, while moving beyond the limitations—dominance by outside actors, observer effects, data collection challenges, complexity of tools, and so on—that have been noted as problems with DSF.

The training effort that is currently being conducted by SIKA East, led by a group of experienced trainers, combines discussions on social responsibility, resiliencies, and SOIs, with vivid examples. SIKA East—largely due to its specific mandate to tailor the DSF approach to a local audience and its planned longer period of operation—has much of value to share with other stabilization programs across the country. Each SIKA’s approach to training is one key area that will be further explored in future assessments.

Likewise, SIKA North’s approach to SWGs, with a combination of local SWGs and a coordinating SWG that includes expatriate and donor staff, is worth examining further and could be studied by other programs as a potential way of mitigating the problems experienced under DSF with expat domination on the one hand, versus elite capture and local manipulation of programming on the other. Since the SIKAs vary widely in their approach to SWGs, this will be a particularly valuable topic for analysis during the planned mid-to-late 2013 follow-up assessment. According to interviews with program staff, SIKA North has collected several important lessons learned in implementing SAM. Staff described several challenges, in the face of which they are testing new solutions. These experiments will be discussed in the next assessment phase.

The teams at SIKA West and South have had less time working with standardized approaches. SIKA South has just completed stabilization sessions in its first pilot district, but was aided by a detailed curriculum that is currently being revised based on pilot experiences. SIKA West is also working to standardize its approach, which centers around focused activities, rather than comprehensive training, that are completed during monthly meetings.

The more recent attention paid to resilience by the Mission, and by some SIKA teams and CCI, provides an opportunity to broaden the discussion within communities and emphasize the strengths that exist at the local level. It remains to be seen, however, given the early stage of the programming process for most SIKAs, whether the degree of instability in some key districts will allow stabilization teams to successfully identify, foster and leverage resiliencies. Some local government officials within MRRD (notably in Kandahar and Herat) were optimistic about identifying, reinforcing and leveraging resiliencies in their areas.

Channeling Needs-Based Requests

As part of the SIKA program design, each SIKA team is currently seeking to direct communities toward already-existing resources—whether provided by GIRoA, NGOs, other donors, or communities themselves—before seeking to design or fund a new program or activity. This is one way of reducing duplication, minimizing the negative impact of forum-shopping by local communities, and ensuring effective use of current resources before additional funds are spent. It is also a means of forcing the Afghan local governance system to actually perform its function, and hold local officials accountable. In addition, this approach potentially represents a way in which both community needs (normally the issues that are consciously in the forefront of community leaders’ minds) can be balanced with systemic SOIs—which are often, by definition, underlying issues that may be less of an obvious priority for individuals in the community. Finding mechanisms to address community needs, without diverting stabilization funds away from SOIs, could potentially alleviate the need (noted above) to “reverse engineer” community needs into SOIs.

Based on its initial experience, SIKA North has considered an approach to this problem in which SIKA trainers conduct an early training session during which “hard” (infrastructure) activities and needs can be discussed, thereby clearing the way for subsequent trainings and working group sessions to focus on “soft” governance and stabilization activities. Likewise, SIKA South, as a key part of its program has instituted advocacy training activities for members of the working group, so that participants can better understand the responsibilities of GIRoA and how to access and leverage GIRoA resources. SIKA East has taken a proactive approach in linking localities with the central government via consolidated lists of services and GIRoA points of contact for needs-based programming. Whatever the mechanism adopted, some means of capturing, addressing and prioritizing needs-based or grievance-based programming priorities, without thereby distorting stabilization priorities or diverting funds from stabilization to general economic development, appears to be a central requirement for effective community outreach in stabilization programming.

Focus on Transparency

Whatever decisions are made about access to resources, all SIKAs and CCI need to consider transparency. Communities want to see a programming process that is fair and open, leading to increased confidence both within local communities, among community leaders, and between communities and local GIRoA officials. This is especially important in stabilization programming, because stabilization programs are based on strategic priorities rather than needs-based or equity-based programs. Thus, lack of transparency or lack of community consensus on the reasoning behind activities can create tensions and conflicts within the community that may cancel out positive stability effects.

Another key aspect of transparency is the dialogue with local government officials (especially MRRD and IDLG) is. Notably, no local officials claimed that SIKA efforts stood at cross-purposes with GIRoA’s own initiatives (including, for example, longstanding programs under the National Solidarity Program [NSP]).

MRRD officials did, however, make clear that there remained competing priorities between their own programs and SIKA, and expressed an overall desire to bring all programming under their purview. This is not necessarily a problem since USAID is pursuing efforts to transition the bulk of assistance to on-budget programs over the next several years. However, there may be an underlying difference of opinion on the appropriate timeframe within which this transfer of responsibility should occur plus about the ability to absorb and execute these funds through GIRoA mechanisms.

Afghans Only at Community Engagement Events

All SIKA programs and CCI pursue a policy of only having Afghan staff present at community engagement events, training sessions, and working group meetings.¹² We consider this to be a best practice for this kind of engagement. Security limitations on expats make it necessary for Afghan staff to be in the lead. Also, efforts to work through the framework of local Afghan institutions wherever possible are likely to increase community buy-in and sense of local ownership over both programming decisions, and the activities that result from them. International staff members in each SIKA regional program and CCI have made various efforts to ensure they remain fully informed of discussions at these Afghan-only events, and that they are able to monitor progress effectively from a position of remote observation rather than direct participation. This is another area that will potentially be a fruitful topic of analysis in the planned follow-up assessment

Working Groups for Stability Planning

As noted above, each SIKA regional program conducts its stability analysis and planning process through a semi-governmental working group structure, with a core group that includes DDA, and often, CDC members, and district line directors. SIKA West and SIKA North also include the District Governor (DG) in the working group. The other two SIKA programs either do not include the DGs or may request their participation as a guest speaker. Other invited members within the working groups may include key elders and religious leaders, who may be invited as observers, rather than active participants. Village clusters (as constituted under NSP) include CDC members who are important interlocutors for SIKA North and South, and are directly included in working groups; however, in some areas (parts of SIKA East, West and North, for example), clusters are not well delineated or functional, and alternative solutions may be needed. In the case of SIKA East, which operates in some of the more insecure districts of Afghanistan, CDCs are sometimes not in place, so programming decisions are made at the hawza level.¹³

Stabilization Sessions

The SIKA programs appear to have achieved some significant success with trainings and workshops on Sources of Instability. This process has been systematically designed and implemented in SIKA East and North. SIKA South, which had a late start, has also designed and begun to pilot workshops in its districts. SIKA West has opted for a simpler approach, which is less focused on training, and more focused on brainstorming SOIs and relevant projects.

Expectation Management

One very significant issue in community outreach for stabilization planning is the question—*noted above in the criticisms of DSF*—of expectation management, and in particular the extent to which community expectations may be raised, and possibly disappointed, by the process of airing grievances, discussing needs and concerns and prioritizing activities. Frustration among the communities is to be expected in the cases where representatives from across a district are gathered for trainings or workshops, but projects are only approved for the more unstable areas, even when differences in stability are widely accepted. SIKA East trainers noted a degree of skepticism among local populations in their districts, some of whom said they had felt inhibited because of their negative experiences with prior community outreach efforts. In those instances, the presence of U.S. military personnel (not the current practice) and openly corrupt

¹² As noted earlier, one exception is at SIKA South, where district government compounds are often co-located with military bases and DST members have observed the Governance SOI workshops.

¹³ In some parts of Afghanistan, the term “hawza” is used to refer to natural clusters of villages, which would be found at the sub-district level.

GIRoA officials blunted community members' willingness to cite the activities of U.S. troops, or corruption and abuse by Afghan officials, as key sources of instability. These communities felt that in fact, U.S. troops and Afghan government presence had previously been part of the problem, not part of the solution. Thorough trainings may offer an opportunity to manage expectations, while SIKa North's establishment of an expat/donor SWG to coordinate with local community SWGs may also help mitigate and disaggregate similar problems.

The deputy minister of the MRRD, during a meeting with the MISTI field assessment team, argued strongly for proper expectation management among the people, as well as pushing for a more needs-based approach to programming, in which resources would be distributed more equitably across districts. His thinking may reflect how the central government in general, and MRRD in particular, will perceive the role of stabilization after the end of independent international community assistance programming, and once the majority of assistance occurs through on-budget programs.

MRRD Role

As noted, MRRD is the lead GIRoA partner for SIKa. It is important to MRRD, and to the success of the program, that SIKa remain in a supportive role, rather than garnering the attention usually attracted by large US-funded programs. The SIKAs have all integrated MRRD into their program in slightly different ways, with most relying on local MRRD Social Mobilizers to play a role in conducting workshops or trainings. Current practices may shift given the addition of regional MRRD staff hired to coordinate with each of the SIKAs. The design of SIKa South Governance SOI workshops is probably most closely aligned with current MRRD practices, as these are developed from current MRRD tools.

QUESTION 4. HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE CONCEPTS AND TOOLS FOR RESILIENCY ASSESSMENT, RELATIONSHIP BUILDING, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THAT ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY STABILIZATION PROGRAMS?

At the time this report was written, it was too early to determine how effective the various SAM approaches will be in engaging communities and district entities in stability analysis for program planning. Few SIKAs had been implemented, and SIKAs South was finishing the first series of workshops in its pilot district. Most programs continue to respond to their experiences in pilot districts by honing processes and tools. Thus, the final component of the assessment will be completed in mid-to-late 2013, when programs are expected to have progressed sufficiently to allow for a meaningful examination of their processes and the resultant plans. This section outlines the plan for assessing effectiveness and generating recommendations in the final assessment phase.

While the idea of eventually implementing a standard approach across all the SIKAs has appeal for some stakeholders, the fact that each SIKAs is currently testing a different approach is advantageous in many ways. Through a systematic study of the four approaches, MISTI expects to uncover a multitude of lessons learned and best practices, and encourage a productive dialogue by articulating common challenges. The challenge of facilitating community-level discussions about stability is further complicated by Afghanistan's diversity. Differing levels of security, government presence, education, and ethnic homogeneity affect implementation of a program like SIKAs. Some differences are found regionally, but many differences can be found within regions. The next phase of the assessment seeks to examine these approaches in context, in order to create context-specific recommendations.

Key Criteria and Questions

The following set of guiding criteria will be used in the final assessment phase to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches.

Balancing Simplicity and Specificity: Possibly the most important criterion will be the ability of the approach to lead to activities that are legitimate solutions to valid SOIs, while remaining as simple as possible. Time, as well as the attention span and capacity of participants, may be limited.

Resonance of Concepts: Programs discuss stability, resiliencies, transition and other concepts with differing emphasis. Were the concepts discussed relevant for the participants? Did some resonate more than others, and lead to better understanding or more productive discussions?

Resonance of Methods: Programs use different methods of engagement, including PowerPoint, storytelling, and various types of charts and matrices. Were some methods better received than others?

Integration with MRRD: Does the approach fit with MRRD structure and objectives?

Inclusion: Is the participating group at workshops or trainings representative of the community, including groups such as women, youth, and those who do not support the government? If not, what mechanisms are in place to consider the views of these groups?

Channeling Needs and Concerns: Does the approach gain the buy-in of those who have needs-based concerns and grievances, either by channeling them or making a case for including them in the focus on stability?

Promoting Transparency: Can participants understand how the final DPP was created? Do they understand the rationale for project selection?

Promoting Open Discussions: How does the process promote the frank discussions of SOIs, particularly ones which center around government or elders? If such issues are not openly discussed, what mechanisms are in place to account for concerns?

Generating Solutions to SOIs: The ultimate test of effectiveness is whether the process led to solutions for priority SOIs. Although it may be too early to tell, the evaluation team will look for evidence that the identified SOIs were indeed priority SOIs, and that the proposed solutions were indeed reasonable and logical responses to those SOIs.

In addition to the criteria outlined above, the following key questions will be asked of staff and stakeholders.

Context: All findings must be considered in light of context. What is the context in which your program operates, or do you work in differing contexts? Differing levels of insecurity? Government presence? With participants of differing educational backgrounds? With participants from differing tribal or ethnic backgrounds, or with differing political ties? How have results depended on context?

Lessons Learned: What lessons did the program learn from the pilot implementation phase until now? What challenges have been solved, and what challenges remain?

DPP: Thinking of the most recent DPP, from the gathering of participants to the current stage of implementation, what part of the process is the strongest? What part of the process do you think could be strengthened? How?

Workplan for 2013

The final phase of this assessment will include fieldwork in each of the four regions and interviews with key stakeholders, which will lead to completion of this report. The completed report will 1) update the descriptions of each program's methodologies, 2) identify most effective approaches in context, 3) identify lessons learned, and 4) propose a tool or toolbox for use in future programming. MRRD will be invited to take part in many of the proposed observations or regional interviews, as their views and perspectives are central to the successful completion of this assessment.

In mid-to-late 2013, a MISTI local M&E Specialist will conduct at least one observation in each region of a SAM training or Governance SOI Workshop. Where possible, the observation will be scheduled to coincide with the SOI identification and solutions filtering sessions.¹⁴ In addition to observation, the M&E Specialist will interview District Entities and any other participants to learn about their interest in the workshops, their understanding of concepts, and their perceptions of the process.

At the same time, MISTI will request that the SIKAs provide finalized DPPs, and related matrices and charts used during the trainings/workshops, along with any outside assessments of the district, if used. The DPPs will be reviewed to understand the depth of information gathered about sources of instability,

¹⁴ This will require two days of observation, in the case of SIKAs North, East and South.

evidence of the filtering process, linkages between SOI and proposed solutions, and linkages between resiliencies and the proposed solutions.

Next, the MISTI evaluation team will conduct a series of interviews with SIKA stakeholders, including MRRD staff at the national and provincial levels, USAID staff, and Implementing Partner staff. One objective of the interviews will be to learn how the various program approaches have changed over time, and to record the reasons for such adaptations. Another objective is to learn where the approaches have been more and less successful, and what external factors might contribute to those results. The MISTI team will use the most recent DPP as an example for discussing the process with staff, from training/workshop to Project Concept Note and implementation stages.

The final assessment report will be compiled in mid to late 2013, compiling the best, most updated responses to assessment questions 1 – 4, and including a recommended tool or set of tools for future consideration by SIKA programs.

ANNEX I: DSF MATRICES

FIGURE 4: CULTURAL MATRIX

1) Major Cultural Groups	2) Their Interests	3) Cultural Codes, Traditions, and Values	4) Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms
Identify the major cultural and/or tribal groups in your AO	Identify the things these groups' care about or consider to be valuable – both material and intangible	Identify cultural codes, traditions, and values that the major cultural groups live by	Identify how conflicts between individuals and groups have traditionally been resolved
5) Traditional Authorities	6) Disruptions to These Mechanisms/Authorities	7) How Spoilers/Stabilizing Forces Leverage These Factors	
Identify the traditional authorities to whom the locals respect and/or normally turn to for assistance	Describe what new actors or conditions may have disrupted the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and/or undermined the influence of traditional authorities	Describe how malign actors leverage and/or exploit these cultural factors to their advantage. Consider also how stabilizing forces do or could leverage these factors.	

FIGURE 5: FACTORS OF INSTABILITY MATRIX

Grievances	Events	Key Actors: Means, Motives and Actions
What issues or problems are the local populace concerned or upset about? Whom do they blame for these conditions, and how severe are they?	What potential or anticipated future situations could create an opening for key actors and their followers to further undermine stability?	Which individuals or institutions are leveraging popular grievances and events to create instability? What means do they possess, what are their motives, and what actions are they taking?

FIGURE 6: FACTORS OF STABILITY MATRIX

Resiliencies	Events	Key Actors: Means, Motives, and Actions
<p>What processes, relationships, or institutions enable the society to function normally and peacefully? Are there any previous resiliencies that have been or are being undermined?</p>	<p>What potential or anticipated future situations could create an opening for key actors and their followers to further reinforce stability?</p>	<p>Which individuals or institutions in the society are attempting to preserve and strengthen stability? What means do they possess, what are their motives, and what actions are they taking?</p>

FIGURE 7: SOI ANALYSIS MATRIX

Potential Sources of Instability	Instability Criteria			SOI?	Prioritization
	Does this issue decrease support for the <u>Govt</u> / legit governance? Explain.	Does this issue increase support for malign actors? Explain.	Does this issue disrupt the normal functioning of society? Explain.	Does the issue meet 2 of the 3 Instability criteria?	Is the SOI a Priority Grievance for the local populace?
<p>Drawing from the four Situational Awareness lenses, list all potential Sources of Instability (SOIs)</p>	<p>This determination must be based on known public perceptions – not outsider assumptions!</p> <p>If yes, explain how the potential SOI decreases support for the <u>Govt</u> / legitimate governance institutions</p>	<p>This determination must be based on known public perceptions or behavior – not outsider assumptions!</p> <p>If yes, explain how the potential SOI increases support for malign actors</p>	<p>This determination must be based on local definitions of “normal” – not those of outsiders!</p> <p>If yes, explain how the potential SOI disrupts the normal functioning of society</p>	<p>If the issue meets at least 2 of the 3 instability criteria, it is considered a Source of Instability</p>	<p>For those issues that are SOIs, prioritize them based on whether the SOI is also a priority grievance for the local populace</p>
<p>Priority Grievances: issues or problems that a significant percentage of Locals identify as a priority for their community.</p>					

FIGURE 8: TACTICAL STABILITY MATRIX

Analysis						Design		
Source of Instability	Perceived Causes	Systemic Causes	Objective	Impact Indicators	Impact Data Sources	Activities	Output Indicators	Output Data Sources
Taken from SOI Analysis	The population's perception of this situation and why it exists	The root causes of the SOI; the conditions that led to the problem or allow it to continue	A statement of the conditions that will diminish or eliminate the SOI.	Also called "Measures of Effect," impact indicators reflect measurable changes in the environment that will occur if the systemic causes of the SOI are addressed and the objective is achieved	Information sources that will allow you to track the impact indicators	The things you will do to mitigate the systemic causes of instability and achieve the identified objective	Also called "Measures of Performance," output indicators simply measure progress toward the completion of an activity	Information sources that will allow you to track the output indicators

FIGURE 9: ACTIVITY DESIGN MATRIX

Brainstorm Possible Activities	Stability Criteria (must meet 2 of 3)			Design Principles							Resources	Select		
	Does the activity increase support for Govt / legit governance? Explain.	Does the activity decrease support for malign actors? Explain.	Does the activity increase institutional and societal capacity and capability? Explain.	Sustainability	Local Ownership	Short-term vs. Long Term Results	Leverage Support from other Org.	Culturally/Politically Appropriate	Accountability/Transparency	Flexibility	Money	Personnel	Expertise	Time
Generate a list of potential activities that will address the systemic causes and contribute to achieving the objective for a given SOI.	Explain how the activity will increase support for the Govt and/or legitimate governance institutions.	Explain how the activity will decrease support for malign actors	Explain how the activity will increase institutional and societal capacity and capability.	For each potential activity that meets at least 2 of the 3 Stability Criteria, refine the proposed activity to make it meet as many as possible of the 7 Design Principles.							Do you, or your partners, have the resources to complete the activity? If not, eliminate the proposed activity.			Based on the stability criteria, design principles and resource availability, should the activity be implemented?

FIGURE 10: SYNCHRONIZATION MATRIX

SOI #1: List Source of Instability being targeted																													
Timeframe		January				February				March				April				May				June							
		Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4				
Operations		Shaping Ops (list specific)								Clearing Ops (list specific)								Holding Ops (list specific)				Building Ops (list specific)							
Key Events		List Specific Events				List Specific Events				List Specific Events				List Specific Events				List Specific Events											
List Systemic Cause #1	Example: USAID	List Activity #1				List Activity #2				List Activity #3				List Activity #4				List Activity #5											
	Example: DoS	List Activity #1	List Activity #2				List Activity #3				List Activity #4				List Activity #5														
	Example: Military	List Activity #1	List Activity #2	List Activity #3				List Activity #4																					
	Example: USDA	List Activity #1				List Activity #2								List Activity #3															
List Systemic Cause #2	Actor #1																												
	Actor #2																												
	Actor #3																												

FIGURE 11: MONITORING & EVALUATION MATRIX

SOI	Activity	Measure of Performance		Measure of Effect			Objective	
		Output Indicator Data	Output Data Sources	Impact Indicator	Baseline	Change		Impact Data Sources
Taken from the TSM	Taken from the TSM	Data for Output Indicators identified on the TSM	Taken from the TSM	Taken from the TSM	Baseline Data for Impact Indicator identified on the TSM	Change in Baseline Data	Taken from the TSM	Taken from the TSM

ANNEX 2: SIKA EAST SAM APPROACH DESCRIPTION AND KEY MATRIX¹⁵

Background: As the first regional program to be contracted, SIKA East was given an explicit mandate to develop a localized version of DSF to anchor its stability assessment and planning. Thus, compared to the other SIKAs, SIKA East has devoted the most time and resources to developing what they termed the Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM), which was created through the efforts of experienced Afghan and expatriate stabilization practitioners with key input from MRRD.

Unit of Planning	Sub-district (CDC cluster, or hawza where clusters not present)
Participants	DDA and CDC members in the hawza, tribal elders and other invitees
MRRD Role	Social Organizers currently they attend stabilization sessions and pre-session training
Key Concepts	Sources of instability, priority grievances, stability, social responsibility, resiliencies
Process	3 day SAM session, followed by trainings on a variety of topics, including advocacy
Filtering SOIs	Working group filters SOIs, led by facilitator. Grievances must meet 2 of 3 criteria: 1) undermine social cohesion and local governance, 2) allow ‘troublemakers’ to promote instability, 3) disrupt the normal functioning of society
Filtering Projects	Working group filters projects, led by facilitator. Should meet 8 design principles: sustainability, local ownership, long-term vs. short-term results, integration with other programs and organizations, cultural acceptability, accountability and transparency, strengthen existing resiliencies, and flexibility
Key Matrix	Hawza Stability Plan (HSP)
Path to DPP	District level plenary session considers HSPs and consolidates into one DPP
Feature to watch	SIKA East conducts SAM sessions with women in each district, which MISTI will take a closer look at in the next assessment phase
Context to consider	SIKA East works in some of the most insecure districts; in many districts CDC clusters are not functional

¹⁵ It is important to note that the information collected on each of the SIKAs processes reflects the process as of December, 2012 - January, 2013 when data was collected. In response to initial experiences, most SIKAs have made some process adjustments which will be captured in the subsequent phase of evaluation.

FIGURE 12: HAWZA STABILITY PLAN - SIKA EAST (TRUNCATED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES)

				Barki Rajan Howza Stability Plan				
SCI Identification								
Source of Instability	Does this issue undermine social cohesion/local governance? Explain.	Does this issue increase the influence of troublemakers? Explain.	Does this issue undermine the normal functioning of society? Explain.	Root Causes (Why does this condition exist? What is allowing this condition to continue? What prevents it from being addressed? What prevents community strengths from addressing it?)	Proposed Solutions	Does this proposed solution reinforce social cohesion and local governance? Explain.	Does this proposed solution reinforce existing resiliencies in the community? Explain.	Does this proposed solution build local capacity and capability? Explain.
SCI #1: District authorities failing to provide essential services	Yes - As the local authorities repeatedly failed to respond to community concerns and address their priority needs, the population lost confidence in their local leadership	Yes - rival groups are using the weak governance and vulnerabilities in the community to gain support	Yes - the community does not have any input in or control over the decision-making process in the district and feels deceived by the authorities who are perceived as corrupt, unresponsive and inefficient	Widespread corruption in government and other authorities is not being addressed	Coordination meetings among government agencies and the public aimed at preventing corruption	Such meetings provide the opportunity for community elders and government authorities to establish relationships and work with each other in the future to address the problems helping to reduce corruption and increase people's trust towards their elders	Propagations by anti-government elements against the government that had created a gap between the community and the government can be eliminated resulting in trust towards community elders and support to public organizations	
					Public awareness workshop on fight against corruption	People bear low level of awareness paving the way for corruption. Sometimes people offer the government authorities gifts on their own will which also creates chances for corruption	Such workshops help community elders and government officials to know about the harms of corruption enabling them to provide better services to people in the future resulting in people's support to community elders and government authorities	Such programs increase people's awareness thereby enabling them to differentiate between their own social responsibilities and those of the government authorities
					Public campaigns on fight against corruption	People bear low level of awareness paving the way for corruption. Sometimes people offer the government authorities gifts on their own will which also creates chances for corruption		

ANNEX 3: SIKA WEST SAM APPROACH DESCRIPTION AND KEY MATRIX¹⁶

Background: SIKA West has taken a much lighter approach to stability analysis than the other SIKAs. Rather than conducting standardized training sessions, SIKA West staff convene a district working group they call the District Stabilization Committee (DSC) and empower them to identify and prioritize SOIs, root causes of each SOI, and possible mitigating activities. Training is delivered on a demand-driven basis.

Unit of Planning	District
Participants	DG (chair), DDA, district line officers, as part of the official group, and invited elders and religious leaders as observers
MRRD/IDLG Role	The DG chairs the DSC. MRRD Social Organizers and other DRRD staff are invited but sometimes don't attend due to security concerns or other pressing responsibilities. The PRRD Director approves the DSC agenda.
Key Concepts	Stability, sources of instability and their root causes, mitigating activities
Process	Monthly meetings
Filtering SOIs	Brainstorming of SOIs and root causes, and prioritization, lightly led by facilitator
Filtering Projects	Brainstorming, led by facilitator. If a proposed project does not meet project criteria, SIKA West facilitators help the group think of how to advance it through other means. Soft projects may be suggested if appropriate for the identified SOIs.
Key Matrix	District Stabilization Matrix (DSM)
Path to DPP	Staff analyze DSM for feasibility to produce the DPP of eligible projects for further approval by the DSC, DG and DRRD.
Feature to watch	SIKA West does not conduct standardized training during stabilization sessions, as it believes that local residents have sufficient understanding of the local stability dynamics. Does this lighter approach result in sufficiently descriptive and soundly prioritized SOIs? Are the resulting mitigating activities effective in tackling SOIs?
Context to consider	SIKA West is transitioning to an almost 100% Afghan staff; some districts are extremely remote

¹⁶ It is important to note that the information collected on each of the SIKAs processes reflects the process as of December, 2012 - January, 2013 when data was collected. In response to initial experiences, most SIKAs have made some process adjustments which will be captured in the subsequent phase of evaluation.

FIGURE 13: SAMPLE DISTRICT STABILIZATION MATRIX - SIKa WEST (TRUNCATED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES)

SOI	Root Cause	Mitigation Activities (DSC Proposed)	Mitigating Activity Eligibility
SOI#1 Insecurity	1 Corruption of Afghan Official	MA1: Government to recruit qualified staff and reform the administrative system.	Tabled - SIKa does not have influence over GIROA recruitment
		MA3: anti-corruption trainings to be conducted for government staff & anti-corruption campaign for local community including in five blogs of shindand (Zirkoh, Kohezoor, Zawol, Psucht-e-Koh and That-e- Qasabah.	Eligible : SIKa CPOD will conduct advocacy campaign
	2 Unemployment	MA5: Construction of Kadanak Dam and Wakhar Dam.	Tabled -SIK a cannot construct "Water Dams, if exceeds 3 Metres" Point 21 However, we could conduct advocacy campaign? (INSERT ON feedback table)
		MA15: Recruitment of qualified school's teachers in key areas of the district	Tabled - SIKa does not have influence over GIROA-MoE recruitment
		MA16: Tailoring courses.	Eligible
	3 Presence of Insurgent Groups	MA20: Implementation of Justice in the Communities (key areas).	Tabled - SIKa does not have influence over GIROA–Judiciary organs
		MA 22: Implementation of Long Term Projects in key areas (Improving Agriculture Animal Husbandry and Livestock)	Further discussion/clarification required
		MA 23: Construction of Water Dams.	Tabled -SIK a cannot construct "Water Dams, if exceeds 3 Metres" Point 21
	4 Illiteracy and Lack of Education	MA 24: Solving Economical Problems of Teachers and Students.	Tabled -SIK a cannot do anything
		MA 25: Provision of Public Awareness on importance of Literacy Benefits according to ISLAM Religion.	Eligible : SIKa CPOD will conduct awareness campaign on importance of literacy according ISLAM
		MA 26: Implementation of Training Programs, Literacy Courses and Building Schools in Key Areas.	Eligible : but needs specification on schools require refurbishment with clear location

ANNEX 4: SIKA NORTH SAM APPROACH DESCRIPTION AND KEY MATRICES¹⁷

Background: SIKA North’s approach is closest to DSF, although greatly simplified and conducted with a very local audience – members of CDCs in a particular CDC cluster. SIKA North supplements the open cluster discussions with additional data gathering methods in order to verify SOIs, document dynamics which participants may be reluctant to share publicly, and add to project lists where warranted. After plans are developed, the DG is engaged to meet with members of the cluster or DDA and form a Stability Working Group.

Unit of Planning	Sub-district (CDC cluster) and District levels
Participants	Local stabilization sessions: 2 – 4 members of each CDC <i>(Post-stabilization sessions)</i> Local Stability Working Group: DDA members, DG, district line officers, influential elders and MRRD Social Organizers District-level Donor Working Group: representatives from other donor organizations
MRRD/IDLG Role	DG is meant to take a key role, along with PRRD. Social Organizers assist in inviting participants and taking attendance at workshops.
Key Concepts	Stability, Sources of instability and their root causes, mitigating activities
Process	3 days of stabilization sessions: 2 days of training on SAM, followed by 1 day preparing LSPs
Filtering SOIs	Brainstorming, led by facilitator. Added to the list of SOIs are ones which SIKA North identifies through supplementary methods
Filtering Projects	Final project list is a combination of projects proposed in LSPs, and projects proposed by SIKA North staff, based on added SOIs
Key Matrix	Local Stability Plan (LSP)
Path to DPP	Staff analyze LSPs and create either one LSP for the district or cluster, adding information gathered from trainers or supplementary assessment methods. Local Stability Working Groups are formed and presented with LSPs to finalize the DPP, which is shared with District-level Donor Working Group (where functional) for potential funding.
Feature to watch	Results from SIKA North latest ideas to increase transparency of the DPP finalization
Context to consider	Some of SIKA North’s districts contain different ethnic groups, and areas which are considerably different in terms of stability

¹⁷ It is important to note that the information collected on each of the SIKA processes reflects the process as of December, 2012 - January, 2013 when data was collected. In response to initial experiences, most SIKAs have made some process adjustments which will be captured in the subsequent phase of evaluation.

FIGURE 14: SAMPLE LOCAL STABILITY PLAN - SIKA NORTH (TRUNCATED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES)

LSP: (Cluster 5th) Gul Tapa				
Analysis		Design		
Source of Instability	What has caused this instability?	What should be done to eliminate this source of instability?	Proposed activity	What are the benefits of this activity?
Poor condition of Gul Tapa main road	Lack of government attention for rehabilitation of Gul Tapa main road	Rehabilitation of Gul Tapa main road.	Rehabilitation of Gul Tapa main road for the solution of all Gul Tapa people problem	Rehabilitation of this road will encourage Gul Tapa people to support government and they will know that government is really for people
Bad Security	Lack of government attention, Bad behavior of police with local people, arresting of Mula's and arresting of those people who they fit as real	Government should respect to elders, to Mula's and to CDC members	Construction of community centers for community, where they can solve their problems	Community elders will share their problems with each other and local people can pass their problems to government through these elders
Corruption in government departments	Lack of government control, government entities are asking money from those who they have issue in government which caused lack of trust on them	Corruptions should be stoped	Construction of Schools and community centers, also provide capacity building trainings for government entities and stop corruptions	People will refer all their disputes to government and will trust on them
Unemployment & Poverty	District entities do not have the capacity to provide job opportunities for people	Support the provincial entities to build factories in Spinzar land	Building of factories in pinzar land.	There will be job opportunity for about 500 people in Gul Tapa

FIGURE 15: SAMPLE DISTRICT PROJECT PORTFOLIO - SIKA NORTH (TRUNCATED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES)

Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) - North											
Aliabad Cluster 1 District Project Portfolio (DPP)			DE = District Entity ADG = Aliabad Donor Group Joint = Jointly funded or cooperative activity								
Cluster 1 (9 CDCs)											
Analysis			Funding								
Source of Instability	Perceived causes / Vulnerabilities	Systemic causes	Proposed activity	Location	Leading DE*	Est. Costing	SIKA-North			MRRD	ADG*
							Sub k	Grant	Direct		
'Residents vulnerability to the influence of destabilizing actors	"We have no information on what the DEs are doing"	Communication surveys shows that the DEs do not have practical communication system in place	Capacity building and support for District Entities in the field of communication and establishment of communication strategy and systems	District centre	Various						
		Lack of people's access to local information	Support to the local media in order to disseminate DEs' messages	Kabuli Hayi Markaz/ District wide	DGO						
	"Lack of access to potable water"	DEs do not have the capacity to dig wells in every village	Support the DEs to construct a water reservoir and plumbing system	Cheap Bala; Kesa Toopak; Zangi Payen	DGO						
	"Seasonal floods destroy farms and properties"	People cannot afford to protect their land and property and the DEs lacks capacity to support them	Support the DEs to identify funding for flood protection walls and gabions	Kabuli Hayi Markaz	MRRD						
	"Lack of education"	Low capacity of teachers due to lack of incentives, nepotism in recruitment, poor quality of teacher training and lack of DoE resources	Encourage youth and community interest in the teaching profession through various means (essay competition, award, radio promotion, newspaper articles) through the DEs	District wide	DoE, DG						
District level educational workshop to encourage dialogue between community elders, teachers and DoE officials			District wide	DoE							

ANNEX 4: SIKA SOUTH GOVERNANCE SOI WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION AND KEY MATRIX¹⁸

Background: Of all the regional programs, the South has most recently begun stabilization sessions in pilot districts. SIKA South’s approach to stabilization analysis and planning is the furthest from DSF, in that it revolves around SWOT analysis – a tool that other MRRD programs use.

Unit of Planning	District and sub-district (CDC cluster).
Participants	First two workshops: DDA members. The DG gives introductory remarks. Stabilization sessions (final two workshops): CDC Executive Members and their DDA representative.
MRRD Role	MRRD Social Organizers are invited to take a key role and participate in practice sessions so they can assist with facilitation.
Key Concepts	Transition, good governance, stability/strengths, instability/weaknesses, government’s roles and responsibilities, and district goals.
Process	In total, there are 4 Governance SOI workshops conducted over 8 days; workshops 2 & 3 are devoted to SOIs and mitigating activity generation. The intro workshop and workshop 1 cover topics including government’s responsibilities (CDCs and DDAs), transition, communication between district and provincial entities, and addressing local conflict.
Filtering SOIs	Filtering SOIs is accomplished with SWOT analysis, a participant-generated definition of peace and conflict, and the DSF definition of an SOI.
Filtering Projects	Projects are scored based a set of standard criteria and participants’ discussions of cluster priorities.
Key Matrix	Project Feasibility Matrix (PFM)
Path to DPP	Each cluster suggests 3 SOIs and 3 proposed solutions. Some may not meet funding criteria, but it is expected that each cluster will have 2 projects in each DPP (DPPs are completed on a rolling basis)
Feature to watch	SIKA South emphasizes transition more than other SIKAs. Is this a concept which resonates with participants?
Context to consider	Southern Afghanistan has particular challenges, including a rapid drawdown of Coalition Forces, a history of receiving large aid programs, insecurity, low literacy and low educational levels. RSSA, the tool being used by the military and USAID to plan transition, has some influence.

¹⁸ It is important to note that the information collected on each of the SIKAs processes reflects the process as of December, 2012 - January, 2013 when data was collected. In response to initial experiences, most SIKAs have made some process adjustments which will be captured in the subsequent phase of evaluation.

FIGURE 16: PROJECT FEASIBILITY MATRIX - SIKA SOUTH

Source of Instability	District Line Officers absent from work Fail to communicate district issues to ministries, do not visit communities	No clean drinking water for families. Irrigation is poor across the cluster. Not enough water for crops	Unemployment	Children do not have a pedestrian bridge over the busy road that they need to cross to get to school	DDA staff incomplete: No Advisory Committees	No O&M at district schools and clinics
Suggested Solutions	DDA Audit & DLO Field Visit Training & Community Integration	RuWatSip to be engaged for clean drinking water Irrigation from river development	Vocational Trainings Mechanical, Welding, Carpentry, Road Repair, Karez Repair	Build pedestrian bridge	DOWA & NGO Civil Society Dev, Budget Planning	O&M trainings for selected local staff to be hired
SOI / Initial Rating	Yes / 3	Yes / 3	Yes / 3	Yes / 2	No / 2	No / 2
Project Enhances Unity of Community	3	3	3	3	2	3
Project Fairly Produces Benefits for Everyone	3	3	1	2	3	2
Project Requires Community Contribution	3	3	3	1	3	1
Technical Capacity Available within Community	1	1	1	1	1	1
Good for Environment	3	2	2	3	3	3
Exercise Cluster Strengths	3	3	2	1	2	2
Sustainability	2	2	2	2	2	2
Productivity/Economic Benefit	1	2	3	1	2	1
Development Activity Score	22	22	20	14	20	17