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THE STABILITY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY IN AFGHANISTAN: AN EVALUATION OF BEST PRACTICES & A RECOMMENDED METHOD ANALYTICAL REPORT

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THE STABILITY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY IN AFGHANISTAN: AN EVALUATION OF BEST PRACTICES & A RECOMMENDED METHOD

ANALYTICAL REPORT



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Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Project

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
Key Findings.....	5
Summary Of Proposed New Methodology.....	8
INTRODUCTION.....	11
Background.....	11
Purpose, Scope, & Methodologies.....	12
QUESTION: How effective are the concepts and tools for resiliency assessment, relationship building, and community engagement that are currently employed by stabilization programs?	13
Comparison Of The Stability Analysis Methodologies (SAM).....	14
Findings	22
The Afghan Government’s Role.....	22
Working Groups for Stability Planning.....	23
Resonance of Concepts and Methods	23
Organizational Awareness.....	24
Balancing Simplicity and Specificity.....	25
Promoting Open Discussions and Using Outside Information	25
Promoting Transparency and Responding to Needs.....	26
Inclusion of Women	27
Implementation Of The Kandahar Model.....	28
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
General Recommendations	29
Unified Stability Assessment Methodology	31
Conclusion	36
ANNEX 1: District Action Plan Template.....	38
ANNEX 2: List of 14 Common SOIs.....	39
ANNEX 3: SIKA East SAM approach description.....	40
ANNEX 4: SIKA West SAM approach description	42
ANNEX 5: SIKA North SAM approach description	44
ANNEX 6: SIKA South Community forums description.....	46

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, prepared under USAID’s Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) program, presents findings from an evaluation conducted in September 2013 to answer the question on the effectiveness of the concepts and tools for stabilization analysis, resiliency assessment, relationship building, and community engagement currently employed by stabilization programs. This evaluation builds upon a previous evaluation conducted for USAID in December 2012 titled, “Community Outreach And Engagement For Stabilization Activity Planning And Implementation: An Evaluation Of Best Practices,” which attempted to answer a series of questions about the District Stability Framework (DSF), developed in 2009 to support civilian and military stability analysis and planning in Afghanistan and various adaptations of this approach. DSF helped to inform a 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) programs and the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI). In the previous report, 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 sources of instability (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?

However, the team was only able to answer the first 3 questions because the new Stability Analysis Methodology employed by SIKA North, South, East, and West was only beginning implementation at the time of the evaluation. This report is the product of a follow-on assessment of the SAM that incorporates observations and lessons learned from implementing this approach.

Stabilization, in the Afghanistan 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

A key component to effective stabilization programming is a solid understanding of the current sources of stability and instability in the operating environment. The District Stability Framework (DSF) and its predecessor, the Tactical Conflict Assessment & Planning Framework, were attempts to obtain this understanding. While DSF was variously considered useful or onerous by users², a common criticism of the tool was that it was overly complex and time consuming, and often led to “reverse engineering,” or beginning with activity ideas and then writing the requisite justification. With the push to transition the

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

² DSF was seen by many as onerous because the concepts and methods were so analytical that even ISAF military personnel with advanced degrees struggled to understand it. DSF was designed to have the most comprehensive analysis, but for that reason, it ended up much more complicated to execute. It was implemented by a number of PRTs and other dev/stab units with mixed results both because the large quantity of matrices that needed to be filled out (which took much time) and the detailed and sophisticated concepts that were in these matrices. It became challenging enough for highly-educated individuals and even harder for Afghan staff who have never seen these concepts, nevertheless in a foreign language.

lead for planning and implementation to Afghan actors, the SIKA program called for a new streamlined and simplified tool that could be used by Afghans, including Afghan program staff, government officials and community leaders. In response to this guidance, each of the four SIKAs (North, South, East, and West) developed separate tools and processes for stability analysis and planning, which we refer to in this report as the Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM).³ At a minimum, SAM can be defined as a process that includes:

1. The bringing together of key stakeholders both at the community and district government level (if not provincial) to train them on how to analyze sources of instability⁴ and sometimes resiliencies⁵;
2. The process of analyzing the sources of instability⁶ and sometimes resiliencies within the area or district;
3. A process for designing activities that are meant to address those sources of instability which results in a District Project Portfolio (DPP) to guide SIKA's work; and,
4. Review and approval by key stakeholders such as the District Development Assembly (DDA), Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development representative, and/or District Governor.

Although the SAM was intended to be understood and used by Afghans as a tool for analysis and planning, it continues to be centered on approaches that appear to be too complex for many Afghanistan-specific contexts. Despite very time intensive, multi-day workshops, most participants still cannot grasp the key concepts of identifying sources of instability and root causes. In addition to these conceptual issues with the design of the tool, practical concerns emerged over the use of SAM, to include the difficulty of gaining “buy-in” from Afghan officials and local communities. Like many Western users of the DSF, many local users of SAM were often found to reverse engineer the process by claiming security and stability concerns or a specific type of source of instability in order to further their justification for specific types of infrastructure projects.

Despite these concerns, there are many valid methods and tools used in the various iterations of SAM including the extensive and various community engagement processes used. The intention of this assessment is to draw from those strengths and present a SAM 2.0 that incorporates all of those lessons learned and could hopefully be approved and adopted by Afghan Government counterparts.

Key Findings

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.

³ While we refer to each of the SIKA approaches as SAM for simplicity, in fact, SIKA South does not use the term in reference to its process, which it calls “community forums.” For SIKA North and West the acronym SAM stands for “Stability Analysis Mechanism” rather than “Stability Analysis Methodology.”

⁴ The SIKAs use different definitions of stability. SIKA North defines stability as “a reduction in the means and motivations for violent conflict, increased capacity to resist sudden change or deterioration of society's function”. SIKA East uses the definition of a stable community as one that lives under conditions where 1) There is a low level of violence; 2) There are functioning economic social, and governing institutions; and 3) Adherence to the rule of law, social norms and behaviors are such that the population views the situation as acceptably normal. SIKA South defines stability as things or conditions that create peace. SIKA West does not appear to have an official definition but defines factors that contribute to stability as those that bolster social cohesion and governance, reduce the ability of negative actors to function, and do not disrupt the normal functioning of society.

⁵ A resiliency is generally something that helps to “mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth”. “Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance.” December 2012

⁶ Sometimes SAM facilitators would not speak directly to the term “sources of instability” but rather used references such as “major issues” because either instability was too difficult a concept to grasp or because the term “instability” was seen as being related to military operations which would reduce citizen engagement in conversations. However, regardless of the terms they used in the workshops, the content was still directly related to sources of instability.

- Each of the SIKAs has done a very good job of adapting to their local environment. For example, where SIKA implements projects in insecure areas, they adjust the language in the SAM process to be more sensitive to using such language as “stabilization”. The SAM process and how it is implemented has been adjusted to meet the requests, requirements, processes, and capacities of their local government counterparts. And in some areas where inclusion of women is more challenging than others, the SIKAs have sought out different and appropriate methods of engaging women (such as through separate processes or where inclusion of women is more acceptable, they are mainstreamed into traditional community consultation). The multiple methods of implementing SAM allow for us to learn from different approaches. The SAM approach for each of the SIKAs has been well thought out and generally appears to be implemented as intended.
- Each of the SIKA teams has worked diligently to incorporate input from various levels and types of Afghan Government officials and the community (including pressing for the inclusion of women), per the vision of the Kandahar Model⁷. In some regions, women are just beginning to be included in sizable numbers, which will certainly lead to more lessons learned and best practices in the coming months.
- The objectives of SIKA are presented differently by each of the SIKAs, sometimes within the same SIKA project, although on paper they have the same objectives. Staff across the SIKAs would describe the objectives of the program as ranging from promoting development, building government capacity, increasing stability, and instilling greater public confidence in government at various levels and through different government bodies. These are not necessarily always mutually exclusive of each other, but it can mean different emphases within a project, and it can be a challenge if trying to balance development objectives versus stabilization objectives. It appears that this is because the SIKA programs, partially in response to differing political, geographic and security contexts, have interpreted and prioritized these objectives differently. The result is that programs have developed in different directions and they use the SAM for slightly different purposes. This variation causes confusion for USAID, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) at the national level while at the same time makes it exceptionally challenging to achieve one SAM process that each of the SIKAs would agree is appropriate for them.
- Many of the participants interviewed across all four SIKA areas and particularly in the South still did not really understand what a source of instability was, let alone a root cause. Low capacity in the South is seen as being the reason for seeing this more in the South. While it is easy to engage communities in listing grievances, getting to root causes of instability remains difficult for Afghans. It is challenging for Afghan participants in stability working groups to shift from the usual discussions of development needs to thinking of sources of instability and solutions to the sources of instability.
- Even when root causes can be identified, discussing them publically can be a sensitive exercise, particularly when sources of instability stem from power relations between stakeholders. Thus, the topic might need to be approached from multiple angles, and in settings that encourage frank discussion. International actors are less equipped to understand such dynamics or assess the validity of a locally derived assessment than Afghans, but it also cannot be assumed that Afghan staff and officials have a full and deep understanding of such dynamics across a district in which they work. Sometimes those individuals are not from that district, and even if they are, they may

⁷ The Kandahar Model is an approach sanctioned by the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development where community members provide their input on what projects are important to them, and these projects are directly funded through the Community Development Councils.

not know the dynamics as well in one part of a district as in another. If they are from that district, they might have a natural bias in their analysis. Providing neutral and complete analysis of one's own home town or district is challenging for anyone across the world. Therefore, some local level analysis will be incomplete and is something to be aware of as projects are proposed as a result of the analysis.

- Prepared and experienced facilitators 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 facilitators. If all the components of SIKA are meant to address the issues discussed in the SAM sessions, then it is essential that all SIKA staff working in a district have a coherent understanding of the result of the SAM, not just the staff that conduct the initial SAM sessions. For example, SIKA South is addressing this issue through continuing training of trainers and joint monthly team meetings.
- In most of the regions, SIKA facilitators already use a list of common SOIs. MISTI's analysis of the SOIs identified in approved DPPs shows that the majority can be represented in a list of 14 SOIs (see Annex 2). SIKA would benefit from a consolidated SOI list which would allow stakeholders to understand what the major problems SIKA is addressing across districts. A common list should not prevent other problems from being identified; it should merely provide some guidance in the field to begin the SAM process.
- SAM has generated sophisticated analysis and program activities, particularly in the North, East, and, in a majority of the West. Part of the reasons for the more sophisticated analysis appears to come from a combination of local capacity and the fact that the SIKA teams themselves incorporate some of their own analysis rather than using only the analysis generated by the community sessions (which is the case for the South where they have chosen to prioritize analysis that is only driven by the community and is using different tools to help improve their capacity to do so).
- At this stage, it appears that one of the most important criteria for a successful SAM 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 Afghan Government and, in some cases, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) presence, and – perhaps more important in future program iterations – limited resources to fund such sessions.
- Each SIKA devotes time in the SAM to discussing community strengths and resiliencies so that communities can appreciate and utilize the resources they do have – a skill that is necessary for sustainability. However, few participants or local SIKA staff mentioned how these strengths are incorporated into or reinforced in project design. The disconnect may lie with the process – from what the team could see, only SIKA East considers strengths/resiliencies in addition to sources of instability in the formal activity design process – or it could lie with an organizational disconnect between staff who facilitate SAM and staff who actually implement activities. It might be incorporated in other conversations but resiliencies should be directly correlated to program design.
- Future planning of programming activities should continue its existing approach that carefully considers the needs of local communities in order to receive the buy-in of local leaders and community members.

- Despite the fact that stabilization programming approaches generally can result in resources being allocated based on strategy versus need, the SIKAs should distribute their development projects equally wherever possible. Afghans expect to be treated fairly and equally by the government. If one group is receiving more resources than another from the government, it could be a destabilizing factor in itself. Unless there is an overwhelming rationale that can be effectively communicated to the public, what is developed through the SAM process should be provided to all groups equally across a district. Each SIKa can determine the correct way to do this. For example, it could be an equal number of projects or an equal amount of money allocated to each community or Community Development Council (CDC) cluster, which is how it is done by SIKa South.
- Expectation management, both for local-level officials and community leaders, and with Afghan Government 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. Sometimes ideas are filtered or approved separately by District Governors, Governors, and/or USAID. 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.
- MRRD has expressed mixed feelings about the SAM process, including that they think it takes too long, is less of a priority than the activities, and should result in more development activities rather than necessarily stabilization activities. The SAM process could play an important role in facilitating the connection between the Afghan Government and community members and incorporating the points of view from community members.
- To adequately govern in a manner that creates stability in districts, the Afghan government does need a process to help district-level government officials understand the factors of instability and possible solutions. At the sub-national level, this responsibility primarily rests with district and provincial governors, who fall under the IDLG. They have been incorporated into the SAM process, but sometimes as a participant rather than a leader of the process with MRRD or the District Development Assembly (DDA) being more of a decision-maker. (The SIKAs have all actively attempted to obtain District Governor participation). In the future, IDLG will oversee the District Coordination Councils (DCCs), elected bodies that will have related responsibilities.
- The four SIKAs differ in their assessment of community perceptions and grievances. The MISTI project 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, atmospherics, or perception monitoring. For example, SIKa North uses atmospherics reporting to inform their analysis, and SIKa East commissions qualitative research about district dynamics.

Summary of Proposed New Methodology

The ultimate objective of this report is to catalogue the various approaches to SAM, draw from the best practices, and propose a unified stability assessment methodology to be used by all of the SIKAs that would be acceptable and usable by Afghan Government counterparts, particularly the MRRD and IDLG. It was quite challenging to come up with one unified SAM approach given the different environments that the SIKAs work in (different capacities, presence of government officials, and security environments), the fact that the SIKAs see the objectives of their programs and of the SAM process differently, and that there is a recognition that the SIKAs have already been implementing a process, and whatever

recommendations provided must be able to work within the expectations and structures already set by the project.

As a result, the proposed SAM 2.0 is much more simplified in its guidance and approach in order to allow flexibility while creating a common language for understanding across the four approaches. It is characterized by the following:

- A shift away from referring to “sources of instability” and discussions of stability in general to a focus on discussing “major problems” in order to simplify the concepts to match local capacity for understanding them. This should not be a list of problems but rather the facilitator should draw out of the community which problems have the biggest impact on the community. This is followed by the identification of the reasons why major problems exist rather than a discussion of “root causes” which was seen as too complex. Lastly, instead of “projects” or “activities”, the process refers to “solutions” in order to try to shift attention away from physical projects and to open the discussion to other ideas for addressing instability.
- A further emphasis on the need to discuss resiliencies (in this case referred to as “community strengths”) and to identify ways to use or bolster those strengths.
- A movement of the center of gravity for the initial stability analysis to the district level bureaucrats (District Governor and line ministers) and key stakeholders (such as tribal leaders or influential religious leaders rather than at the DDA/CDC level with district government involvement. This places the analysis in the hands of individuals who are more likely to be able to conduct it and who are responsible for conducting this type of analysis as part of their work functions. This does not necessarily exclude the DDA/CDC but rather puts the lead for the process in the hands of the District Governor and his team, with DDA/CDC involvement as appropriate. The District Governor and his team are still responsible for consulting with the DDA/CDC, community members, and key stakeholders to get their ideas, using the District Governor’s team’s initial analysis as starting point for discussion.
- A continued engagement with DDA/CDCs to get their feedback on what their major problems are and what solutions and projects they would like to see prioritized for their implementation.
- A continuous engagement process with a small group of individuals at the district level, which allows for plans and analysis to be adjusted and concepts to be reinforced without a requirement for an investment of large amounts of time up front. However, this small group of individuals at the district level would still be held responsible for receiving input and approval on their analysis and ideas from community members and other key stakeholders.

The process moving forward should include the following phases:

- **Stage 1: Initial Analysis**
 - *Phase 1 - SIKA Staff Pre-Assessment:* SIKA staff should conduct their own internal analysis through research and meetings with contacts to help inform the discussions that they will facilitate with other stakeholders.
 - *Phase 2 – District Action Committee Initial Analysis:* SIKA staff then work with the District Governor (DG) to create a District Action Committee (DAC) composed of the DG, a DDA representative, line ministry officials, SIKA staff, and MRRD social organizers (MRRD representatives at the district level). (The DAC is an entity that

reflects various best practices used by different SIKAs in that it is meant to be inclusive without being too unwieldy in participation and places District Governors in the lead of the process.) They would then facilitate a half-day discussion on their initial thoughts on the major problems, reasons why they exist, what should be done about them, and what they think are the priorities. This information is put into a draft District Action Plan (DAP) (see Annex 1 for a template).

- **Stage 2: Consultations**

- *Phase 1 – DDA Consultations:* The DAC then takes this initial concept to the DDA for consultations on whether they agree with this analysis and what they would change or add. Additional influential individuals can also be invited to these consultations. There should be a separate consultation at this point with women to get their input. Afterwards, the DAP is adjusted accordingly. At all points in this process, either the MRRD social organizers and/or provincial representative for the MRRD advisor is involved.
- *Phase 2 – CDC Cluster Consultations:* The DAC then meets with CDC cluster representatives to get their input on the draft DAP and how they think it should be adjusted.⁸ This includes asking whether there are other major problems that have not been identified and whether the solutions proposed are appropriate and/or adequate. The DAP is then adjusted to incorporate CDC input and approval as appropriate. *(Note: SIKA staff may have to play a role for a while in verifying with those consulted that what they told the DAC is how they truly feel about what the DAC is proposing to ensure that the DAC has built an appropriate level of candor and trust with these stakeholders. If stakeholders do not feel confident in providing their input to the DAC, the SIKA team can help to facilitate providing this information and support the DAC in building their capacity to better engage with stakeholders.)*

- **Stage 3: Finalization & Approval**

After consultations with these stakeholders, the DAC should then meet to conduct a final review and approval of the DAP. Programs may choose to invite CDC cluster leads or the DDA to observe the review and approval of the DAP to ensure that it incorporates their input. The approved DAP is then sent to USAID for a final approval.

- **Stage 4: Rolling Analysis & Review**

The DAC should meet regularly (preferably monthly) to discuss progress against the DAP and whether it needs to be adjusted. The DAC should also set up a timetable for consultations where they repeatedly touch base again with the whole DDA and CDC clusters to get their latest updates and feedback on a rolling basis.

⁸ Preferably, consultations will be held by a representative of the DAC; if not available, SIKA staff can facilitate.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since 2009 with a reintroduction of stabilization programs into the USAID portfolio, USAID Afghanistan stabilization programs have evolved and so have the tools and methods for working with Afghan communities, Afghan Government officials, military partners, and other stakeholders. Stabilization programming differs from long-term development in that it is intended to create a sufficiently stable environment to enable long-term development efforts to succeed. It is politically-driven rather than need-based. Originally, the tools and methods that have emerged to support this distinct type of programming served 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 corroboration and assessment of information to review and revise programming approaches.

One of the first tools was the Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF) that emerged in 2009 and helped to inform the creation of the District Stability Framework (DSF). The DSF was a program management and planning tool that guided users in identifying sources of instability (SOIs) at the district level, identifying resiliencies or sources of stability, developing activities to address SOIs and reinforce resiliencies, and designing metrics for measuring the outputs and impact of programming over time. The DSF was not a radically new tool; it was designed 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 diverse actors in the stabilization arena.⁹

The tools and methods used by each agency changed as the surge and associated campaign evolved. 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) and Stability Analysis Methodology emerged).¹⁰ By late 2012, each of USAID’s four regional Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) programs and the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) program were 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 developed in partnership with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) partners on the ground. Even though the name is the same, the processes they use differ significantly across the regions.
- SIKA South uses the name “Community Forums” to refer to its process for assessing sources of instability. Like other SIKA programs, SIKA South is coordinating with MRRD. Reflecting the historical evolution of stabilization programming in Regional Command – South (RC-S), the SIKA South Governance SOI Workshops incorporates certain elements of RSSA. However, the

⁹ Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Request for Task Order Proposals, Statement of Work.

¹⁰ RSSA is 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 by organizations across the regional command as a tool to assess where a district is on a scale of stability rather than analyzing the reasons behind stability or instability.

SIKA South approach is primarily derived from methods such as SWOT analysis (which charts strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and Participatory Rural Analysis (PRA). These tools are also used by MRRD's National Solidarity Program (NSP) and National Area Based Development Program (NABDP).

Purpose, Scope, & Methodologies

The purpose of this report is to present initial findings from fieldwork conducted by a team from USAID's MISTI project, which sought to follow-on to the evaluation of DSF and other community outreach and stabilization activity planning and implementation practices conducted in late 2012. This evaluation builds upon these findings and examines specifically the Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM) used by the SIKA program. In addition, the assessment team was mandated through this assessment to use the analysis of the best practices and approaches found in the SAM process to develop a common SAM process for all of the SIKAs.

The assessment began with a review of the latest methodologies. The team reviewed the SIKAs' district project portfolios (DPPs) and related matrices, facilitators' guides and presentation materials for the workshops, and any outside assessments of the districts, if used. The DPPs and any supporting matrices were reviewed to understand the depth of information gathered about sources of instability, evidence of the SOI filtering process, linkages between SOI and proposed solutions, and linkages between resiliencies and the proposed solutions.

Afterwards, the MISTI evaluation team conducted a series of interviews with SIKA stakeholders, including MRRD staff at the national and provincial levels, USAID staff, and staff from each of the four SIKAs. One objective of the interviews was to learn how the various program approaches have changed over time and to record the reasons for such adaptations. Another objective was to learn where the approaches have been more and less successful and what external factors might contribute to those results.

To further supplement these interviews, the MISTI expatriate team members met with implementing partner staff in Kunduz, Herat, and Kandahar. At the same time, MISTI's local M&E advisors led teams including the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) regional coordinators, Ministry for Rural Reconstruction & Development (MRRD) regional coordinators, and a representative from MRRD's evaluation unit to conduct interviews and/or observations of a SAM training or community forum in each region of a SAM training or community forum. In summer and September of 2013, teams traveled to the following locations:

- Aliabad District, Kunduz Province;
- Baghlan-e-Jadid District, Baghlan Province;
- Kunduz City, Kunduz Province;
- Kushk-e-Robat Sangi District, Herat Province;
- Arghandab District, Kandahar Province;
- Daman District, Kandahar Province;
- Mohammad Agha District, Logar Province; and,
- Ghazni City, Ghazni Province (to meet with stakeholders from Andar and Deh Yak districts).

In the months leading up to the SAM evaluation, MISTI local M&E advisors observed SAM sessions for the following districts:

- Qadis District, Badghis Province;
- Chaghcharan District, Ghor Province;

- Tirin Kot, Uruzgan Province; and,
- Khanabad District, Kunduz Province.

In addition to observation and interviews with community participants, the team interviewed various other stakeholders. (District Governors, Provincial Governors, Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development [PRRD] representatives, Department of Women’s Affairs representatives, and District Development Assembly members). The purpose of the interviews was to learn about their interest in the workshops, their understanding of the concepts, their perceptions of the process, and how it might be applicable to Afghan Government processes.

This final assessment report will offer a comprehensive description of SAM as a stabilization tool, findings of the assessment, and recommendations for greater uniformity of SAM as a single, but versatile stabilization tool for use by all SIKA programs. The completed report:

- 1) Updates the descriptions of each program’s methodologies,
- 2) Identifies the most effective approaches in context,
- 3) Identifies lessons learned through observations, and
- 4) Proposes a tool or toolbox for use in future programming.

MRRD, IDLG, the SIKA teams, and USAID were invited to provide feedback on initial observations and ideas, as their views and perspectives were central to the successful completion of this assessment.

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

There are many methods of assessing stability and resiliency and engaging with communities. The purpose of this assessment is to find the appropriate one for the Stabilization in Key Areas (SIKA) programs within the Afghanistan context. The Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM) that is used by the SIKA programs has some excellent lessons and best practices. SAM evolved from a need to have a stability analysis tool that is understandable and useful to Afghan audiences. Most of the SIKA programs (North, East, and West) took the District Stability Framework (DSF) and tweaked it in the way that they thought made the most sense for their environments and program methods. Given that each of the SIKAs has different programming environments and perceives the objectives of their program slightly differently, the result is four different models of how to analyze stability and resiliency¹¹ using community inputs in their area. In fact, SIKA South's process bears the least resemblance to DSF and is called “community forums” rather than “SAM”. But for the purposes of this assessment, we will simply refer to SAM with the intention that the audience understands that the SIKA South’s community forums are incorporated as an example of this. Regardless of what one calls them and the confusion that follows from having four projects with varied approaches, the different models do provide the ability to test a variety of approaches. Of course, because of the different contexts within the various parts of Afghanistan, even when one stumbles upon the right approach in one area, another SIKA might have tried the same thing, and found that it was not appropriate. This has made it even more challenging to come up with a common framework.

¹¹ A resiliency is generally something that helps to “mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth”. “Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance.” December 2012.

Comparison of the Stability Analysis Methodologies (SAM)

In order to compare the stability analysis methodologies utilized by SIKA South, East, West, and North, one must first know what SAM is. The description of SAM given to the team was slightly different for each SIKA project. Various explanations for what SAM is include:

- A community engagement tool to explain the program;
- A method for helping individuals to understand their own context and solve their own problems;
- A tool for finding out what the problems are;
- A process for activity design;
- A capacity-building exercise for government stakeholders; and/or
- A means for identifying sources of instability and/or resiliencies.

Drawing off of these descriptions and the team's observations, SAM can be defined as a process that includes (at a minimum):

1. The bringing together of key stakeholders both at the community and district (and sometimes provincial) government officials to train them on how to analyze sources of instability and sometimes resiliencies;
2. The conduct of analysis of the sources of instability (or something similar) and sometimes resiliencies within the area or district;
3. A process for designing activities that are meant to address those sources of instability which results in a District Project Portfolio (DPP) to guide SIKA's work; and,
4. Review and approval by key stakeholders such as the District Development Assembly (DDA), Provincial Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation representative, and/or District Governor.

Note that the SAM process is not meant to actually analyze the level of stability in a district. This is achieved through the MISTI stability survey that is conducted twice a year. Additionally, the SAM process is entirely Afghan-led on the ground. Expatriate and Afghan SIKA staff have designed approaches and conducted internal training for other staff. But in the field, Afghan staff own the process. In some cases such as the North and West, the Afghan government counterparts are held responsible for the process too (This is not to say that government officials are not included in the South and East processes. It is rather that the level of ownership by the Afghan officials themselves seems to be less than in other areas. This could be more an issue of many southern government officials simply having lower capacity or not existing due to security issues, which is also the case in some areas of the East). In ideal cases, these counterparts are introducing the sessions and playing an active role, if not facilitating themselves.

Given this basic understanding of what the Stability Analysis Methodology is, below is a general overview of the different characteristics of the process and where the approaches differ between the projects. A full overview of each of the SAMs' processes can be found in the annexes.

Different Key Terminology

As mentioned previously, each SIKA program uses slightly different terminology within their projects. Internally, all projects use the term "sources of instability" (SOI). However, some cannot use the terms "stability" and "instability" in their conversations on the ground because they are terms seen as being

affiliated with military operations. Instead, they talk about “major problems” or “grievances”. For purposes of this report, identification of SOIs in SIKA South refers to “SOIs”, “Grievances”, or “Major Problems”. Although sometimes they are used interchangeably, in other cases, the terms have different meanings. For example, SIKA East usually discusses sources of instability (or “core problems” where the word stability is problematic), root causes, grievances, and solutions. In looking for root causes, the question is posed, “Why aren’t existing resiliencies effectively mitigating the SOI?”

Additionally, some of the SIKAs promote a real discussion of resiliencies (those people, processes, or characteristics that contribute to stability or keep the situation from getting worse). Others use the term “community strengths” to make it more understandable to local audiences. Factors of stability/resiliencies are identified in the SAM process but not fully analyzed like SOIs. They were not prioritized for direct project interventions, and only SIKA East includes references to resiliencies in the DPP although SIKA-West concept notes that feed into the DPP do include analysis of resiliencies.

Where SAM Is Conducted

SAM processes lead to project identification and later selection. As a result, before SIKA can start conducting SAM in a community, they must first determine where they will implement their program. Some SIKA programs plan to cover whole districts, while others conduct SAM only in areas where they will focus their projects. For example, the SIKA North team did some initial analysis that led them to decide that the inequitable distribution of development projects in one district was a source of instability, and they should focus on areas where development projects had not taken place. All of the programs have had to consider whether certain areas are even secure enough to conduct programming. MISTI visited one SIKA West district in which the elders of three communities were unable to guarantee security for project engineers to visit. Since the district governor and ANSF were also unwilling to assist, those community development councils (CDCs) were not included in SAM. It should be noted that SIKA staff in different SIKA projects mentioned that they had been told by USAID to go into certain areas regardless of whether the SIKA analysis says that stabilization is possible or that stabilization projects are prudent. SIKA East, for example, has been assigned many districts where few government officials are present and CDCs have never been formed. DDA members and elders often insist on meeting in the provincial capital, as they are concerned for their security should they be seen at the district center compound.

How Analysis Is Collected & Compiled

DSF was designed specifically for use at the district level. The SAM methodology continues to focus at the district level, but recognizes that districts can be very different from one part of the country to another. Thus, the SIKAs sought out different ways to bring community or community cluster analysis into the district-level analysis and approval processes. In some cases, the SIKAs (South, North, and East) conduct individual SAM processes at the CDC cluster level and then merge findings into a broader District Project Portfolio. SIKA East found that with so many workshops (at 8 days each), the process was too slow and cumbersome to generate a plan quickly enough. By the time the final clusters had their workshop, the original clusters who participated in the training were growing impatient for projects. This was solved by having one workshop where representatives from all of the clusters would participate, but analysis would be conducted by hawzas (areas) simultaneously.

Working Groups

Each SIKA regional program convenes a group, roughly equivalent to the original concept of the Stability Working Group (SWG) as defined in DSF. The SWG is meant to bring together a variety of individuals from various backgrounds to conduct the analysis. 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,¹² international staff do not attend or directly participate in these groups. 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. In practice, the SWG meetings are led by SIKA staff, although most SIKA programs have attempted to involve the District Governor or MRRD social mobilizers as chairs or co-facilitators.

- SIKA East calls its groups “DDA plus” because it includes the DDA plus the District Governor (DG), Provincial Rural Reconstruction and Development (PRRD) representative, influential leaders in the community, youth groups, parents’ groups, and the Chief of Police and/or Afghan National Security Forces. Women are included through a separate consultation process.
- SIKA North initially conducts SAM by CDC clusters, with 2-4 members of each CDC, and then organizes a local Stability Working Group comprised of DDA members, the DG, elders, and line department officials that meets monthly to consider activities which are identified but not funded through SIKA.
- SIKA West works through District Stabilization Committees (DSCs), which are meant to be chaired by the District Governor and include local Afghan Government representation. DSCs include the District Governor, District Development Assembly (DDA), and district line officers (including Afghan National Security Forces). Elders, religious leaders, maliks, and CDC members are invited to observe. The number of participants can be more than one hundred.
- SIKA South brings together the DDA, line department officials, social mobilizers and CDCs into different parts of the training and planning process. The DG is also invited to participate. The first three 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.

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 train participants on identifying SOIs, analyzing them, and designing activities against them. Despite the fact that the approach and schedule is different, SIKAs North, South and East all run multi-day sessions for working groups on their Stability Assessment Methodology (SAM) or as part of their community forums.

- SIKA North’s training approach retains the closest similarity to the DSF as used by the Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI) East, in part because of staff continuity from ASI East into SIKA North. It originally included two days of stability analysis training and one day to create the local stability plan. Based on lessons learned, it has been revised. Day one includes lectures, presentations, and short discussions with no repetitive content. On the second day, participants are asked to first suggest soft (non–infrastructure) activities on “Local Stability Plan No. 1” (1 per group of 3-5 CDCs, that are geographically close to each other) that can be addressed by means of outreach, communication, political activities, etc. Secondly, they are asked to list soft activities that can target sources of instability that would address both an SOI and a community need/issue. The third day of the SAM training is allocated for discussing and asking follow-up questions on the Local Stability Plans they filled in the day before. This helps to

¹² It has been noted that in the South and in the West, due to the co-location or close location of some district government compounds with military bases or SIKA offices, international observers do sometimes participate. This likelihood is going to diminish with the reduced presence of expatriates outside of Kabul on the SIKA program.

reinforce the analysis and outputs of the discussions and ensure that the participants and the SIKA team are on the same page about in what ways they will move forward together.

- 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 used with District Development Assemblies (DDAs), such as SWOT analysis. In total, there are five (5) forums conducted over eight (8) days. Forums 1 and 2 cover topics of transition, governance tools and the roles and responsibilities of district entities. Forum 3 explains the program parameters according to MRRD policies, Afghanistan law and development funding limitations. Forums 4 & 5 are devoted to identifying and seeking solutions to SOIs as well as generating mitigating activities that result in draft project concept notes (PCNs).
- SIKA West SAM training remains the least formal in its approach with a series of shorter iterative meetings that are more of a working group than a formalized training. SIKA West staff appear keen to allow stability assessment in their area to develop organically through a process of interaction between local communities and the Afghan Government, under the theory that local residents have sufficient knowledge to identify and prioritize sources of instability (SOIs) without much training. The Introductory Meeting is a half-day long where it provides an overview of the program, establishes the District Stability Committee, and introduces the SAM process. The second meeting provides SAM training on how to identify, analyze and prioritize SOIs, root causes, and mitigating actions. The monthly regular meetings continue the SAM process and always include some training on connecting sources of instability to root causes to mitigating actions to mitigation action projects.

SOI Identification

SAM facilitators then leads a brainstorming of sources of instability (SOIs) to kick off the process, resulting in an expansive list of proposed SOIs. These proposed SOIs are then analyzed to determine whether they really are SOIs and/or to make them more specific. The programs do this in different ways, some more formal and some less. Some of the SIKAs accomplish this process according to the degree to which they meet at least two of the following three criteria:

- 1) Does this issue undermine support for Afghan Government/legitimate actors?
- 2) Does this issue increase support for malignant actors?
- 3) Does this issue disrupt the functioning of society?

SIKA South asks the group to consider whether concerns and complaints are 1) a need; 2) a community concern; or 3) a source of instability. Most SIKAs try to ensure that SOIs do not just reflect general needs and grievances (which might be only symptoms) by taking it further to identify the “root causes” of the SOIs. This process explicitly helps to solicit grievances that can be are less physical (e.g. no water, need flood protection walls, etc.) and more about social grievances such as local conflicts, competition among groups to use resources to better their rivals, or attempts by power brokers to capture resources for their own purposes. Facilitators seek to determine and address the underlying conflict rather than the symptoms of that conflict.

Designing Activities Against SOIs

After spending time identifying the appropriate and priority SOIs for the cluster or district, the SIKA team leads the group(s) through a process to identify and design activities that address those SOIs. In some cases, this process is meant to only be to design activities for SIKA to implement. In others such as SIKA East, the Stability Working Group works first to come up with a comprehensive list of activities from which SIKA selects a few projects to implement, designs a project concept note (PCN) for each one of their activities and then shares the document with other stakeholders to fund remaining activities. SIKA South does the same thing and uses a Project Feasibility Matrix to score projects as well as stop the pursuit of projects which MRRD and USAID will not approve. SIKA North has separate discussions on infrastructure and non-infrastructure mitigating actions. Regardless, the activity design session does include a presentation on what the SIKA program can and cannot do. In SIKA West, they present the MRRD and USAID project criteria to guide the discussion.

Additionally, SIKA North and SIKA West have an interim step before activity design. In the North, they create a Local Stability Plan (the equivalent of the DSF coordination matrix) that contains analysis that is used for internal planning. A similar document, called the District Stability Matrix, exists in SIKA West. This helps the SIKA teams to conduct some internal analysis first in order to inform their activity design since the analysis coming out of the stakeholders was not seen as always being sophisticated enough and/or there were sources of instability that were not brought up in the sessions but were understood by the SIKA team to exist.

Capturing the Analysis

After the participants determine what activities they would like to prioritize, each SIKA has methods for capturing the results of the discussions. All of the SIKAs create a District Project Portfolio (DPP) based on the working group's discussions and analyses of SOIs and resiliencies in the community. In some cases, the SIKA teams ensure that the community members themselves sign off on the flipcharts of the discussions to prove that the ideas came from the community because sometimes the ideas that come from the community are questioned by others during the approval process.

- SIKA North's staff analyze local stability plans (LSP), refining terminology and adding information gathered from trainers or supplementary assessment methods. LSPs are then evaluated by the SIKA team and turned into a master LSP, which incorporates all of the analysis of the team or into cluster LSPs. This LSP(s) is then simplified to a single project list to create the District Project Portfolio (DPP). The DPP includes all possible projects to create stability, not just those that could be implemented by SIKA. The DPP is verified and signed by the District Stability Group. CDC members, DDA, DG, PRRD and other key stakeholders, which vary by district. The Stability Working Groups is expected to share this plan with its list of possible activities with other donors and Afghan Government entities for possible consideration by other donors.
- SIKA East includes projects that other donors, including the Afghan Government, can consider for funding. In its DPP, SIKA East identifies resiliencies, sources of instability, root causes, proposed projects, theory of how instability would change as a result of this project, location, beneficiaries, line departments, the responsible SIKA team, and resiliencies. They stakeholders in the DDA+ and the facilitators use this information to create Hawza Stability Plans which are incorporated into the final DPP.
- In SIKA West, once activities are deemed to be feasible, a project prioritization agreement is created and signed by the DG (or the Deputy DG, in his place), the DDA head, the MRRD social organizer, and the SIKA "social organizer". This launches the process of a feasibility assessment of the project. Once it is assessed to be feasible, the project is added into the District Project

Portfolio for approval by the District Rural Rehabilitation and Development officer and USAID. The DPP includes mitigating activities, location, existing services in that location, each of the intermediate results, beneficiaries, value, duration, and beneficiary contribution. SIKAs West also maintains an “Ineligible” list of projects that do not meet its criteria, and staff may add or propose alternative activities to address those SOIs.

- SIKAs South clusters select one to three of their top three projects (depending on how they prioritize using their grant allocation) for the SIKAs South team to develop into a project concept note (PCN). The PCNs are then processed through the provincial entities, the Sector Working Group, and the Provincial Development Council. Afterwards, they are sent to USAID for approval. Once USAID approves the PCN, these activities are added to the DPP.
- 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 made. SIKAs East, West, and North additionally make efforts to train the DDA +/SWG to go to the proper authority or source (either within the Afghan Government or the broader donor community) to request funding for projects that do not fit the SIKAs criteria.

Time Frame

All in all, some SAM processes take longer than others, and it can differ even from district to district depending on circumstances. Some of the SAM processes take a lot longer because they are conducted at the local level first. The East takes longer because there is an intermediary period of a week for consultations. In comparison, the SIKAs West process is more of a rolling process. Also, the amount of approvals required can affect the time frame. SIKAs South is fully integrated into the Provincial Development Council / Stability Working Group approval process which can take more time depending on the group’s meeting schedules. Some meet on an ad hoc basis while others meet as needed.

Re-Review Process

Some SIKAs execute their DPPs once approved and do not re-review them. SIKAs East is planning to look at them again since some are as old as a year. The West reviews their DPPs every month in their Stability Working Group meetings. SIKAs South conducts a Quarterly Stabilization Review with the Monitoring and Evaluation, Stability, Grants, and Provincial Management teams to analyze operational, programmatic, and government partner challenges and to identify adjustments required. SIKAs North does not formally re-review theirs, but they do update them as needed.

TABLE I: KEY ASPECTS OF SIKA APPROACHES

	SIKA East	SIKA North	SIKA West	SIKA South
Working Group Structure	DDA+ at the sub-district level including District Development Assembly (DDA) and CDC members in the hawza (region), PRRD, District Governor, MRRD Social Mobilizers, tribal elders and other key individuals for the area (youth groups, parents groups, Chief of Police, etc.)	At the sub-district level CDC members create a Local Stability Plan (LSP). The Stability Working Group at the district level approves LSPs (DDA, DG, district line officers, elders, officers, and MRRD Social Organizers)	District-level District Stability Committee (DSC) composed of the District Governor (chair), DDA, district line officers, as part of the official group, and invited elders, religious leaders, and other influential individuals as observers	District-level DDA with CDC Executive Members, DG, PRRD, and line department officials.
Training/ Workshop Approach	3 day SAM session including preparation of Hawza Stability Plan (HSP), followed by trainings on a variety of topics, including advocacy and capacity-building. Days 1-3 include an introduction to the concepts and they create SOIs. There is then a break between workshop and workshop 4 to allow for participants to consult with their communities. Following workshops discuss resources in the community and how to leverage those of others.	3 days of stabilization sessions: 1 day of training on SAM, followed by 1 day preparing Local Stability Plan (LSP), and a third day discussing further the analysis and outcomes and preparing to move forward with the project	Monthly meetings which begin with a half day introduction to the concepts around stability followed by two more half day workshops to conduct analysis and then the District Development Portfolio	In total, there are 5 Stability and Governance SOI forums conducted over 8 days. Forums 1 & 2 cover transition and governance. Forum 3 explains the MRRD policies, Afghan law, and funding limitations. Forums 4 & 5 are devoted to identifying and seeking solutions to SOIs, resulting in draft Project Concept Notes that are processed through the provincial entities, the Sector Working Group, and the Provincial Development Council.
Sources Of Instability Identification	Working group filters SOIs, led by facilitator. Grievances must meet 2 of 3 criteria:	Brainstorming, led by facilitator. Added to the list of SOIs are ones which SIKA North identifies	Brainstorming of SOIs and prioritization, lightly led by facilitator and sometimes	Filtering SOIs is accomplished with Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, a participant-

	1) undermine social cohesion and local governance, 2) allow ‘troublemakers’ to promote instability, 3) disrupt the normal functioning of society (Note: These are also the District Stability Framework’s definition of SOIs.)	through supplementary methods	incorporates the SIKA staff’s perspectives	generated definition of peace and conflict, and Participants identify whether something is a need, grievance, or concern. Similarly to the DSF, SOIs are defined as meeting two of three criterion: (1) Undermines support for the government; (2) Increases support for the insurgency; and/or (3) Disrupts the normal functioning of society.
Activity Prioritization & Selection	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	Final project list is a combination of projects proposed in LSPs, and projects proposed by SIKA North staff, based on added SOIs	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. Uses MRRD and USAID project criteria	SIKA South employs eight filters in its project feasibility matrix (PFM), which is completed with CDC and DDA members’ inputs after a participatory SWOT analysis. The matrix process matches SOIs with project solutions and ranks them using a point system for nine factors: 1)SOI / Priority (Meets two or three of three criteria stated above) 2) Project Enhances Unity of Community 3) Project Fairly Produces Benefits for Everyone 4) Project Requires Community Contribution 5) Technical Capacity Available Within Community 6) No Adverse Environmental Impact 7) Reinforces Or Utilizes Strengths (i.e. resiliencies) 8) Sustainability 9) Productivity Each factor is ranked as “low,” “medium” or “high” priority and positive impact for each SOI/solution. The solutions are then ranked based on total points. The top solutions are then processed as project concepts to qualify for possible grant funding.

Findings

The Afghan Government's Role

SIKA was originally designed with the MRRD as the main government partner. The IDLG was later included as an additional partner. As the manager of CDCs and DDAs, MRRD has reach into many communities across the country and experience implementing programs at the local level. One consistent role of DDAs and CDCs in the SAM process, across all regions, is to implement and oversee the development-related activities that are designed. DDAs and CDCs are generally inclined to take on this role, although they may not have implemented activities in a long time and may require refresher training.

However, as MRRD has a development mandate, CDCs and DDAs are frequently uninterested or unprepared to tackle some types of sources of instability that the SAM process identifies, such as disputes, security issues, or the delivery of services by other line ministries. Not only is the mental shift challenging, the incentives to do development work are often much clearer for community leaders. Where non-development issues are involved, it is the District Governor's office, which is the more relevant partner, as the District Governor recognizes these issues as part of his mandate and can mobilize the relevant line departments and DDA, depending on the required response. Therefore, the inclusion of IDLG, which oversees district and provincial governors, should give SIKA better leverage to tackle non-development stability issues. Ideally, the DG should play a pivotal role in the SAM process, and district line ministry representatives and the DDA should understand how their work can contribute to the over-arching objective of stabilization.

All SIKAs share the view that the DG should play an important role in the SAM process, but it is often difficult to get their participation, and that of other key officials. For government officials to play a positive, active role, they must 1) be properly introduced to the program and its objectives, 2) understand what is expected of them, and 3) feel that participation is worthwhile, if not required.

Although the SIKAs generally have made very concerted efforts to coordinate with government officials, it was not unusual to hear MRRD and IDLG district and provincial officials saying that they were not sure of their responsibilities and authorities under SIKA. Often officials could not explain the objectives of SAM, or even SIKA. On the other hand, others understood the program quite well and had taken an active role in SAM. Results across all SIKAs were mixed, but were most consistently positive in the North and more negativity in the South. It is unclear whether the variance is explained by the SIKA approach, how the effort was branded, context, or the individual officials' characteristics.

While SIKA staff are primarily responsible to communicate the SIKA program goals, the MRRD and IDLG should communicate participation expectations to their staff. Unfortunately, it is difficult for the MRRD and IDLG SIKA units in Kabul to understand those expectations since they do not understand the intricacies of the regional variations in the SAM process. This lack of understanding is hardly surprising, given that after weeks of studying SAM, the MISTI evaluation team struggled to master the differences. Even some USAID CORs and implementing partners are not fully aware of the regional differences in terms of procedures, terms, acronyms, and roles. SAM 2.0 may make it possible for the government to better understand its structure and enforce participation and for USAID and implementing partners to better communicate, simply because there is one basic model and set of expectations.

Implementing partner staff reported that often government officials have little interest in taking a lead role in the SAM process. One way to improve interest may be to better align SIKA responsibilities with officials' current job responsibilities (with the DDA to focus on development, for example). Time is

another important factor for busy officials. Requiring attendance at multi-day, or even full day, events may be unrealistic.

The introduction of MRRD regional coordinators over the last year seems to have improved coordination with the PRRD, at least where the coordinators are strong. IDLG regional coordinators, who are just recently in place across all regions, can similarly improve communication with the District and Provincial Governors.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in the future, IDLG will be responsible to run District Coordination Councils (DCCs), community bodies which will have many responsibilities including conflict resolution, oversight of service delivery, and facilitating dialogues between communities and between government and communities, in addition to the development work that DDAs currently oversee. In order to form and develop DCCs, which will be new for all provinces but Helmand, IDLG will need to sensitize bureaucrats to the benefits of engaging the community and acting on their suggestions and feedback. SIKAs should keep this development in mind and look for ways to support this goal.

Working Groups for Stability Planning

In each region, SAM is conducted through a semi-governmental working group structure, with a core group that includes the DDA, and often, community development council (CDC) members, and district line directors. SIKAs West and SIKAs North also include the District Governor (DG) in the working group. All SIKAs attempt to engage the MRRD Social Affairs Organizer (SAO) in SAM. However, SAOs are often not in place in SIKAs districts or may have very low education levels or lack of interest. Other invited members within the working groups may include key elders and religious leaders, who may be invited as observers, rather than active participants. SAM processes of SIKAs North and East are conducted at the CDC cluster level (or in hawzas, where clusters are not designated).¹³ SIKAs South conducts the first two forums with a core group of DDA members, while latter sessions are conducted with DDA/cluster representatives and CDC executive committee representatives in clusters.

The DDA and CDC members have many responsibilities under SIKAs. They are requested to participate in SAM and also implement and oversee the development activities that are approved through SAM. Together, these responsibilities are quite time-consuming. Since DDAs and CDCs are already tasked with development, and asking them to develop strategies about broader issues of stability has not proved to be overwhelmingly successful, it is suggested that SIKAs gather information from the CDCs and DDAs and consult with them on the final product, but leave the initial analysis to government bureaucrats who currently have a stronger mandate to deal with non-development issues. This is also more efficient since the capacity of CDCs differs from region to region and can be quite limited in some cases in regards to conducting analysis. This is not to say that the decisions are top down from the district government officials but that they initiate the analysis and project proposal process for communities to provide input.

Resonance of Concepts and Methods

The relevance of stability in the lives of all Afghans is unquestionable, yet MISTI found that many participants did not absorb much of the content of the SAM training, including basic concepts about what is stability. Whether the SIKAs introduced concepts of resilience, transition, governance or stability, the evaluation team found that participants, and even some facilitators, tend to focus on project identification. While not limited to SIKAs South, almost no participants of Kandahar community forums were able to tell the evaluation team any of the topics that were covered; several explained that the forums were to plan projects, “like NSP.” (Part of this might be because of delays in programming that led them to forget the original content of the training months later.) Just knowing that SAM will generate activities seems to

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.

affect the discussion of sources of instability and root causes. For this reason, it may be useful to separate discussions of sources of instability and causes from discussions of activities.

While all SIKAs incorporate some discussion of resiliencies or community strengths in their SAM process, participants did not mention this element when relating the content. Only SIKA East lists resiliencies on the DPP, although SIKA West does include resiliencies in their project concept notes and also considers them in the design process. SIKA South facilitators find it difficult to facilitate lists of opportunities and strengths, as part of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. Nevertheless, the justification for discussing strengths and resiliencies is powerful: SIKA encourages communities to find their own solutions and to advocate for resources, rather than to focus on problems and “typical” development activities. These concepts as they are presented are likely new for the audience and are key for the success of the program, so it is worth continuing to discuss strengths and resiliencies. Finding ways to use this information throughout the sessions may help to make it more relevant for participants.

Lastly, the use of the term DPP (District Project Portfolio) which sounds so close to the DDP (District Development Portfolio) created additional confusion around the process and what the intended product was out of the process.

Stakeholders consistently emphasize the importance of strong facilitators. MISTI’s local evaluation team encountered at least some strong facilitators in each region and noted that in addition to being competent in the material, the best facilitators used good eye contact, engaged participants with direct questions, and listened carefully to participants. One major problem noted at least once in the West was the use of language, which is too formal for participants to comprehend. Another common problem was that facilitators may be so focused on meeting the timelines of the training and forget to actively check for comprehension before moving to new topics.

Facilitators employ various methods including PowerPoint presentations, brainstorming with flip charts, group work, and sharing examples. The MISTI evaluation team noted that participants who were actively involved through group work tended to gain more from sessions than those who spent more time in lectures. Including too many terms, definitions and unnecessary detail also tended to confuse the audience, particularly when many members are illiterate. If PowerPoint or handouts are used, it is important to keep the sentences very simple and limited to the key concepts. SIKA South provides participants with laminated cards with their CDC responsibilities listed. While this may seem strange for a mostly illiterate group, participants explained that when they return to their village there is always someone – usually a mullah – who can read the card for them.

Regardless of the method, an important principle is to keep the terms and concepts as simple as possible. Elaborate explanations or unnecessary facts are unlikely to stick, whereas key, short message and local examples are more likely to be retained.

Finally, one technique to ensure that the SAM material and methods are working is to involve monitoring and evaluation staff in collecting feedback. SIKA South monitoring and evaluation staff collect information from participants which is then integrated into Quarterly Stabilization Reviews, which highlights issues and challenges for all stakeholders to understand.

Organizational Awareness

The MISTI evaluation team noted that SIKAs East, West and South have had a fairly compartmentalized approach to programming which can stifle the use of SAM across all IRs (SIKA East is in the process of breaking down some of these compartments). The SAM process should do more than just generate activities for other IRs to implement – rather, it should spark creativity and awareness about *how* such

activities can be done to achieve the stability goal. For the SAM process to have maximum effect, the implementation team must work with a shared understanding of SOIs and resiliencies in a district. Some SIKA programs may not involve staff from other IRs in the SAM process; others may be involved, but not sensitized to how they could use the information generated. SIKA North seemed to employ a more coherent approach to programming, and more of its staff understood how their work connected to the DPP and SAM process.

Balancing Simplicity and Specificity

The SAM process should generate legitimate solutions to sources of instability (SOIs) in the simplest way possible. This section, once again, underscores the effects of time constraints. The District Project Portfolio (DPP) can be almost endlessly improved with new information or by applying new analytical lenses, but specificity must be weighed against the desire for Afghan participants to generate the DPP themselves and the time available to them and SIKA. Two central challenges for SAM, noted throughout this report, are the low capacity of participants and a “development mindset” which leads to a focus on activities rather than an analysis of what would improve stability. These challenges, and others, are not insurmountable; however, repetition over time is needed. Therefore, the questions are: 1) What can be achieved in the timeframe available? and 2) What is the priority for SIKA?

The process of developing the DPP should strengthen Afghan government capacity, yet it need not be entirely done by the government to build their capacity. Some SIKAs include their own analysis in addition to that generated in the SAM. As long as the process is transparent and explained to participants, this additional analysis may help participants understand strategies available to them.

The SAM product should be accurate, but it need not be comprehensive to be effective. Noting that repetition and practical work is a key way to convey skills, the MISTI team examined the SIKA West model of holding monthly DSC sessions. Each SIKA West DSC meeting requires only 3 – 4 hours of officials’ time. While other SIKAs complete the DPP in one set of workshops, SIKA West take a more iterative approach. The advantage of such an iterative approach is that it requires a more acceptable time commitment from government officials, and it allows for some work to begin quickly, while the actual exercise of root cause analysis and activity design can be practiced over time. In the beginning, SIKA staff might heavily facilitate analysis while over time encouraging greater leadership of the DG. The result is a DPP that is always being updated and may not be “complete” during the SIKA program, but program objectives are nevertheless being met.

Even if the SAM process can be done in an iterative fashion, the process must be streamlined to allow for some analysis to be completed in a single session. Most SIKAs have developed a list of SOIs to assist facilitators in guiding brainstorming and filtering of SOIs. MISTI analysis of approved DPPs found that most SOIs could be categorized as one of 14 SOIs (see Annex 2). Starting with an SOI list may truncate the SOI discussion, but in any district, many SOIs from a standard list are likely to be relevant. By guiding participants to select relevant SOIs from a list, without having to explain the definition of an SOI and filter them according to criteria, the facilitator can focus the discussion on the specific reasons for the SOI. The technique of using standard SOIs may affect the comprehensiveness of DPPs but does not necessarily affect the validity. Additionally, the programs could start with the fourteen SOIs and always create a new one if there are unique circumstances that cannot be captured in the existing SOIs.

Promoting Open Discussions and Using Outside Information

The SAM facilitators have a challenge of both eliciting information about sensitive topics such as government corruption or the influence of power brokers and introducing such information to the government so that it might be addressed, or at a minimum recognized. They have balanced this relatively well. Participants are unlikely to discuss government corruption or incompetence in front of

government officials. Similarly, they may be reluctant to speak about tribal tension or bad behavior of powerbrokers in any public venue. SIKA needs a system for capturing both types of sensitive information and documenting it to the extent possible. Some SIKAs do have internal deliberation processes that are captured in an internal version of the DDP, and this could continue to be the case in the future. They also need to conduct their own internal deliberation because some stakeholders assumed that Afghan officials would automatically know their district, but experience shows that this is not always the case, particularly as officials are often not from the district. Some officials cannot even leave the district compound due to insecurity. Gathering outside information is important when SOIs are sensitive to discuss in public and to complete the analysis.

SIKAs South, North, and East conduct the SAM process in geographic clusters, which may allow more open discussion compared to that which can be discussed in the large district-wide forums held in the West. In particular, SIKA North SAM is done by clusters of CDCs with no district government presence other than MRRD social mobilizers. Such information generated through cluster discussions might be useful for beginning DPP facilitation.

SIKA East and SIKA North have systems for collecting outside information. In the East, they collect information through commissioning focus groups and district profiles and conducting stakeholder interviews. SIKA North collects information through atmospherics and conducting individual interviews with SAM participants. The primary purpose of such information gathering appears to be to inform SIKA staff rather than to feed into the DPPs.

As noted above, when SAM sessions focus on both problems and activities, participants can easily get distracted. Having a process to gather information, which is divorced from any project expectations, can be very useful. In particular, SIKA East's district stakeholder analysis offers one way to consult with key leaders prior to holding the SAM. SIKA North individual participant interviews conducted during SAM is another best practice that can be easily implemented.

Promoting Transparency and Responding to Needs

Through SAM, SIKA hopes to support the Afghan government in determining and acting on strategic priorities. Sometimes this objective can be challenged when the project also has to incorporate community expectations into its program decisions.

Across the regions that MISTI visited, the Afghan public strongly expects that resources be distributed equally and fairly in this project by the government. The government understands its role to be the same. This phenomenon explains why the NSP program, where funding is based on population, is embraced by the government and public alike. In contrast, stabilization programs are not usually supposed to be needs- or equity-based. The SAM process may lead to recommendations that certain communities require more attention than others, based on long-standing grievances or particularly poor relationships with the government. If the government gives unequal tangible resources to similar groups, this "solution" is likely to be unacceptable to the larger community and may result in greater dissatisfaction with the government and instability, although sometimes this can be mitigated through good communications to those who did not receive the resources.

MISTI found several examples of these expectations at work in SIKA. In one SIKA East district, even though the SAM process identified different concerns in different geographic areas, the three main tribes had an agreement about how resources should be fairly distributed and rejected the idea that projects be distributed in any other way. In another SIKA East district, the targeting of certain hawzas for projects, although justified through the SAM process, was similarly unacceptable to the people. To resolve the conflict, each hawza was given a project. In one SIKA West district visited, CDCs within a cluster decided to draw village names randomly to see which would be the recipient of a SIKA project – a process

that was undeniably fair, if not technically equitable. There are two examples where MISTI found resource targeting seemed to work. One was in Aliabad district of SIK North, where the two halves of the district had a much different history of relations with the government and the District Governor was willing to stand by and communicate his decision to focus projects in the underserved half. The other is in SIK South where they distribute resources equitably within a district but do not distribute resources equitably across all districts in a province.

SIK's community engagement is meant to showcase the government responding to concerns. This has two practical implications. First, in addressing some SOIs, particularly ones that concern service delivery, it is legitimate to solicit community preferences – and even needs or wants. If the government addresses these needs or wants, they will address the SOI in the process. Project selection is familiar for CDCs and DDAs, and therefore, it is appropriate that they do so according to accepted values of equity. Second, if the government has solicited ideas about projects from the community, they should act on those ideas. If the proposals do not meet certain criteria, that decision must be communicated clearly. Some SIKAs have reported that community-generated ideas have later been rejected by USAID or MRRD with the explanation that they do not really address stability or they do not believe those to be the best development projects. Again, considering that the source of instability may be the poor response of the government to the desires of the community (regardless of what those are), acting on requests is itself addressing a source of instability. At the same time, not providing what it is that the community desires may diminish relations between the community and the government.

Finally, it is important to point out that communities are primarily concerned with the distribution of “hard” projects, such as infrastructure, rather than “soft” projects, such as trainings, facilitated engagements to solve problems, advocacy support, etc. Where decisions about hard projects are concerned, SIK should consider a distribution of resources that is seen as fair and equitable across stakeholders, unless their analysis provides a strong justification for otherwise, and the government is willing to communicate that message. However, clusters or villages that need particular attention could receive additional soft activities to complement the hard activities, with less threat of creating a conflict.

Inclusion of Women

Past stabilization programs in Afghanistan have generally excluded women, with the rationale that women are not directly involved in creating instability and forgetting that women can be a factor for stability. SIK has appropriately defied this pattern, since it must represent the long- and short-term interests of its Afghan government partners in the community. All SIKAs are now actively working to engage women in the SAM process, even though some regional programs started serious efforts later than others.

When women have been engaged in stabilization programs in Afghanistan in the past, it was often by participating in ad hoc activities for women that had little connection to the stabilization objectives. Thanks to the hiring of gender advisors in the regional SIK programs, inclusion appears to be more meaningful. Two main approaches have been used to include women in SAM – sex-segregated or integrated SAM sessions. SIK East has been running separate SAM sessions for women, with much of the same content, to arrive at a women's DPP that can then be merged with the men's for a complete DPP. The approach they use to engage women is different in each district. Where they are in place, female staff have been able to lead the process when trained to do so. In other cases, male facilitators have been granted permission to lead the process for female participants. In the final part of the SIK East stability planning process, the men are presented with the final DPP, including the women's contribution, for approval.

SIK North faces less barriers than some other regions, since at least some districts already have female DDA members. Similar to SIK East, men and women typically meet separately, with the result being an

all-inclusive DPP. Although in many cases the sessions could be held together, SIKA North has recognized that an advantage of separate sessions is that women feel more free to speak. The approach to facilitation has also required adaptation from district to district. In some districts, such as Imam Sahib and Puli Khumri, it was acceptable for male facilitators to train groups of women, while in other districts, such as Khanabad and Dasht-e-Archi, female trainers were hired.

The SIKA West team has utilized two methods for engaging women. In more conservative Farah province, separate trainings are held for men and women, while in other provinces women participate directly in the full DSC meetings. SIKA West has recently hired more female employees in order to improve female mobilization and has seen dramatic improvement in the participation of women.

SIKA South undoubtedly faces the most severe limitations in including women, as the southern provinces are known to be extremely conservative on gender matters. SIKA South's guiding principle is to work through existing government structures. To date, this has meant little possibility for engaging women, since the Women's Advisory Committees, which are supposed to exist alongside DDAs across the country, are absent in the districts where SIKA South has worked. Last month, SIKA South held a forum in Kabul, including the PRRDs, DDA representatives, IDLG gender team and Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA) representatives, where a strategy for each province was developed. Those strategies are already in the process of being implemented, including a Gender Action Plan in which four districts have projects identified to address women's issue and inclusion in society.

For all SIKAs, hiring female stabilization officers (rather than gender officers) is important to success. Female staff, just like male staff, should understand the purpose of SIKA and how the SAM process should feed into all other activities. Women currently hired as gender officers are playing similar roles to the male stabilization officers. By reframing them as stabilization officers, SIKA's gender efforts would be more mainstreamed rather than be perceived as a separate objective. Even if the SIKAs do not hire gender officers, some SIKAs have few women staff of any status, which if they existed, they could provide some ideas on women's engagement and contribute to analysis. SIKA South is now in the process of having just hired or hiring women at the provincial and district level who work on the main program and/or the gender initiative.

Promoting participation of women, particularly influential women, is just the first goal. Stakeholders mentioned that the DOWA offices and female Provincial Council members are both potential sources of guidance when trying to form a women's group. Both integrated and sex-segregated SAM sessions appear to be valid choices, depending upon the local context, but it important to examine the quality of participation. In some areas of the country (such as the South and parts of the East in particular), women will not feel comfortable enough to speak at all. In all parts of the country, training can be provided to the women to bolster their confidence in participating in sessions with both men and women.

Now that the SIKAs have begun to increase women's participation, the next step is to improve the quality of participation. Are female participants understanding the concepts and generating a sound DPP? Finally, we must look to how women's input factors into decision-making. Are women's concerns met? Are the solutions they suggest implemented? Do the project designs sufficiently incorporate gender elements within themselves. These questions were difficult for MISTI to evaluate as there were no Afghan female team members who could observe sessions or interview female participants. However, MISTI's mid-term performance evaluations will attempt to address the issue more thoroughly.

Implementation of The Kandahar Model

The Kandahar Model is defined by the MRRD as a process by which CDCs are fully engaged to identify what it is that they want and/or need from programs, and the programs then support the CDC directly in their management and implementation of that project. The key aspect of this model is the preferred

approach of financing the CDCs directly, unless the project is very complicated. In that case, the program would work with the CDC to identify a sub-contractor who would be provided in-kind to do the work for the CDC on that project. From the examination of the SAM processes, all of the SIKAs engage in an extensive consultative process with CDCs and other stakeholders as desired by the Kandahar Model, and the projects that come out of that process do appear to reflect community requests. In addition, all of the SIKAs appear to be financing the grand majority of their projects directly with the CDCs, unless it is a project of technical complexity, which is beyond the capacity of the CDC. In that case, a subcontract is created, and the CDC is fully involved in overseeing and managing that project in accordance with National Area Based Development Program operational guidelines and similar to how the National Solidary Program functions. Although the assessment team was not able to physically verify the direct financing of the CDC, the resounding theme of community engagement and CDC financing was heard regardless of what level or position we spoke to on the SIKA projects. Since the scope of work of the SAM evaluation was not sufficient for a full evaluation of how the Kandahar Model is implemented by each of the SIKAs, the upcoming SIKA performance evaluations will examine specifically how the Kandahar Model is implemented by each of the SIKAs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

- All SIKA staff, not just the facilitators, should be trained on SAM and understand its relevance to their work. All activities done through SIKA, whether communications or infrastructure, can be better designed and implemented when the team understands how they relate to the analysis and stability objectives set out in the DPP and related matrices. Furthermore, staff interactions with the community and government are opportunities to further those stability goals. Staff members who do not holistically understand the program will miss many opportunities or, worse, work counter to the stabilization objectives.
- When carried out in sessions over time, as opposed to one multi-day workshop, SAM can instill learning better by doing and repetition over time rather than learning by concentrated lectures. This method works better in low literacy and capacity environments while also constantly reinforcing what should be the principles and objectives of the SIKA program and its Afghan government counterparts.
- Conducting SAM over time also allows participants to reflect on changes in their environment and to incorporate observations and lessons from how earlier activities are working.
- SAM sessions could also incorporate analysis of the overall level of stability as captured by the MISTI survey or MRRD security classifications.
- Given that comprehension of much of the SAM content was found to be very low, SIKAs should simplify any material presented. Terms and definitions should be minimized. Discussions of stability are too complicated for most audiences and too sensitive for many. While the term “SOI” is accurate and used by all SIKAs internally, when facilitating SAM the term “major problem” should be used to simplify the discussion while still obtaining the basic information needed for analysis. It is important that they be “major problems” to avoid a laundry list of general problems. A discussion of why those major problems exist can then lead to root causes without having to define what a root cause is.
- SIKA would benefit from a consolidated SOI list which would allow stakeholders to understand what the major problems SIKA is addressing across districts. MISTIS’s analysis of the SOIs listed in approved DPPs shows that the majority can be captured in a list of approximately 14

SOIs (see Annex 2).¹⁴ Facilitators should use a consolidated list as a guide, but should not feel constrained by it. Other SOIs can be simply written in. MISTI will use the list in Annex 2 as a basis for a final discussion of SOIs, conducted with the regional SIKAs program representatives at the November MISTI Summit.

- SAM should continue to include discussions of resiliencies, but framed as “community strengths”, and, as is done in SIKAs East, the process must then link strengths to solutions.
- When brainstorming solutions, separate discussions may need to be had around “hard” and then “soft” activities to encourage participants to think about both possibilities. Also, the terminology “solutions” should be used instead of “projects” or “activities” to try to encourage participants to think broader about the options for solving these problems.
- PowerPoint can be used with more educated audiences, but in a typical SIKAs setting, local examples, role play and visual aids may be more appropriate.
- Simple handouts with key concepts explained in simple language can be useful even for illiterate participants, since almost all villages have a mullah or another educated person who can read.
- The SIKAs should collect information to analyze stability outside of the SAM process for multiple reasons. It cannot be assumed that key government officials, or even DDA members, have a thorough understanding of the district. They may need information, particularly on different areas of the district. Also, attempts to “reverse engineer” SAM can affect the SOIs prioritized. Lastly, some topics are too sensitive for open discussion. SIKAs can gather information from separate community forums or through other means such as stakeholder interviews, atmospherics, and focus groups discussion. Perspectives from men, women, and youth in particular should be collected. This information should be presented to SAM participants, as appropriate, to help inform their level of analysis. Information gathered by SIKAs can be used to select major problems in a district, at least to begin the SAM process. A standard list of major problems (aka SOIs) can be used as a guide since many are common to different regions. As participants gain experience, other major problems could be introduced.
- Except in rare cases, DDAs and CDCs are not usually equipped or interested to make the politically strategic decisions required in SAM (They tend to be focused more on development decisions, which makes sense given their mandate and is more the mandate of the District Governor and his line ministry representatives). DDAs and CDCs should be engaged in the design, implementation and oversight of the hard projects that are chosen through SAM and provide feedback on the original analysis rather than being in charge of creating the analysis themselves. However, DDA leadership could be involved both to ensure buy-in and also to build their capacity to conduct this type of analysis.
- The District Governor is the logical center point in a strategic planning process like SAM, but he should work in collaboration with line ministry representatives and the head of the DDA, all of whom should be called upon to consider how their work relates to stability.
- Strong SAM facilitators are critical to the success of the process. Facilitators should be trained on facilitation skills as well as the content and should have the opportunity to meet with other SAM facilitators from across the country to share tips and content and to discuss shared challenges.
- The product of SAM should be presented to the DDA and the women’s advisory committee (or, in its absence, a similar convened group of women) for consultation.
- Periodic consultations with the DDA and the women’s advisory committee allow the government to communicate SIKAs’s progress and challenges, and ask for community assistance. Expectations management should be a key part of such forums.
- Since the government and the Afghan public expects equitable distribution of resources, all clusters of a district should be covered, at least where hard projects are concerned unless there is a

¹⁴ MISTI’s analysis was meant to identify common SOIs across the regional DPPs. By including SOIs in the list, MISTI does not suggest that these SOIs meet certain criteria or that they are endorsed in any way. The finalization of a consolidated list should be an activity of the November MISTI SIKAs Summit.

strong stabilization rationale that can be communicated and owned by the government leadership. Resources could be distributed equally by giving the same amount to each family, community, or CDC, providing the same amount of projects to each community or CDC cluster, or through some other method that would be seen locally as an appropriate and fair way to distribute resources. Additional support could be provided to key areas through the addition or concentration of soft activities.

- The SAM process should encourage Social Affairs Officers (SAOs) to lead or co-lead consultations of the DDA or CDCs or sessions where the DDA/CDCs discuss grant implementation. Training and guidance will likely be required.
- Having female staff is crucial to encouraging substantial participation of women. The role of female staff is similar to that of male staff, and therefore, it may be more accurate to also call them “Stabilization Officers” (or whatever their male counterparts are called) rather than “Gender Officers” in order to mainstream their activities into the project as a whole.
- More effort is required to convey to government officials, including DGs, SAOs, and line department heads, the expectations for their participation in SAM. SIKA has some responsibility, but MRRD and IDLG partners are best-placed to communicate this message to their staff.
- To facilitate the above recommendation, SIKA and its government partners should discuss and agree upon the responsibilities and time required for government officials participating in SAM.
- The SIKAs will need to continue reinforcing to participants how their input will or will not be made anonymous and who it will be shared with. They should continue to explore alternative venues for receiving input in the case that certain information is too sensitive.
- As IDLG and MRRD begin to plan the roll-out of District Coordination Councils (DCCs), which are to replace DDAs in the next 18 months, SIKA should consider how its tools and experiences can support this effort. SAM should at least sensitize government bureaucrats to the importance of community communication about major issues, and likely include the DCC head and others as appropriate in SAM discussions. These in themselves may pave the way to smoother DCC implementation in the future.

Unified Stability Assessment Methodology

A unified SAM that all of the SIKAs would use offers many benefits, such as allowing easier communication between SIKA implementing partners and a better understanding on the part of government partners. It is particularly important that Afghan government counterparts understand the intricacies of the process so they can better understand and communicate expectations to their staff while also finding ways to link SAM with other government processes. In addition to incorporating best practices from across the four programs, the unified SAM – which we refer to as SAM 2.0 – includes new features designed to address common challenges.

Designing a unified SAM was difficult for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that the SIKA programs actually see their objectives differently. While SIKA South describes itself as a stabilization through a focus on governance and development program, SIKA North sees itself as a stabilization program, and the East and West are somewhere in between. The result is that each program expects different things from SAM. The new methodology could be a process to build relationships between the community and government, increase government capacity, facilitate community discussions on stability, design projects which communities want, or increase awareness about governance and social responsibility. A unified SAM might even guide analysis of sources of instability – an aim that was rarely mentioned by the SIKAs. To make matters more complicated, SIKA’s two government partners expect different types of activities designed through SAM, with MRRD more interested in seeing hard

development projects, and IDLG more interested in seeing community dialogues and conflict resolution. These are all valid uses of SAM. But especially given the time limitations of SIKA and participants, MISTI had to prioritize different objectives.

Another major challenge of unifying SAM was to create a process that could be adapted for the extremely varied environments in which SIKA works. Some SIKA districts are highly insecure, with the government controlling little more than the district center and having minimal staff presence; other districts are fairly secure and fully staffed. Some districts, particularly in the South, have very low levels of education – in these areas, government officials and participants are often illiterate. In other districts, particularly in the North and some provinces in the East, literacy is fairly high. Another important difference has to do with key district government figures, including the District Governors and MRRD Social Affairs Officers. Where officials are interested and capable, they may easily see the benefit of SIKA and participate actively. Where officials are unmotivated, their participation in SIKA may be lacking or ineffective. The differences described are sometimes found even within one region since districts can vary in the same region.

Finally, the evaluation team recognized that SIKA has been running for more than a year and each regional program has established processes and expectations around their version of SAM. Especially given that SAM 2.0 would only go into effect for new areas, primarily the last 18 – 24 months of program, it was designed to be as minimally disruptive as possible, while still incorporating key improvements.

Criteria for Designing the Unified Methodology

Given the challenges described above, designing and presenting a suggested unified SAM is not a simple task. In order to guide the design process, the assessment team concluded that the following criteria would need to be used for designing the methodology:

- It should as simple as possible to understand and to execute in order to allow for flexibility, speed in execution of projects, to consider for competing demands on Afghan government officials' time, and for it to be easily repeated and updated on a regular basis.
- Given that rigorous analysis is time consuming and extremely challenging in Afghanistan, this tool should be accurate, but does not have to be overly comprehensive and detailed.
- Key Afghan district and provincial staff should be able to identify strengths and sources of instability in the districts that they cover and identify actions for reinforcing strengths and addressing sources of instability.
- District Development Assemblies are able to understand how the Afghan government is trying to address their concerns. Ideally, they can learn how they themselves could address sources of instability.
- It assumes a low level of capacity of participants to understand abstract concepts around analyzing instability.
- It should incorporate as many points of view as possible from the community, the program teams, and the various ministries, particularly those of women.
- It should help to foster inter and intra ministerial decision-making and planning at a district level.
- It should be able to be used as a management and planning tool.
- It should be flexible enough to adjust to different contexts (security, capacity, political will, etc.).

- It should provide a clear rationale for anything other than equitable distribution of project benefits.
- It should be able to be easily replicable.
- It should be minimally disruptive of current SIKA program operations.

After considering these criteria, the assessment team came up with the below recommendation on what SAM 2.0 should look like for the SIKAs. Key components of this approach is a move away from using the terminology “sources of instability” and elevating the center of stability analysis to the district level officials while still maintaining engagement with CDCs on what they think are the problems and their priorities for projects and actions to solve them.

STABILITY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY 2.0 PROCESS
Note: Due to misunderstandings and political sensitivities around using the term “stability”, the below process minimizes the use of the word stability but instead focuses on using other terminologies and processes that will still produce the content required to understand stability in the district.
STAGE 1 - INITIAL ANALYSIS
Phase 1 – SIKA Program Staff’s Initial Analysis
<p>Once SIKA staff have introduced themselves to the District Governor and MRRD Social Organizers, SIKA program staff should spend time talking to knowledgeable individuals about the district including individuals such as mullahs, tribal leaders, respected elders, other programs on the ground in that area, etc.</p> <p>Key Messages: Program staff should explain that they are working with the government to help to identify community strengths and find ways to solve major problems in the district.</p> <p>Goal: To obtain initial information on community strengths and the major problems and reasons why they persist so that they can use this information to help to frame and facilitate further analysis with Afghan government and community stakeholders.</p> <p>Time Frame: This phase can take as long as they feel necessary to get a basic foundational understanding of the district, but it does not need to be a detailed assessment.</p>
Phase 2 - District Action Committee Initial Analysis
<p>Once SIKA staff have decent working knowledge of the issues in the district, they should work with the District Governor to constitute a District Action Committee (DAC). The DAC should be a small working group of the key individuals in the district who are responsible for solving the district’s problems. At a minimum, it must be chaired by the District Governor and include SIKA staff, MRRD’s social organizers, the chair of the District Development Assembly (DDA), and line ministry representatives. If possible, available, or appropriate, the Chief of Police, head of the Afghanistan National Army, or PRRD. If the DDA has higher capacity or a DCC exists, they can also be included. But the goal is to keep a small group of key stakeholders so that the amount of time required is minimal.</p> <p>Key Messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DAC’s job is to work together to find ways for the government to address major problems in the district. • The first place to look for answer is to think of what the community and/or the government can do on its own. What are the community strengths that can be mobilized to solve problems? • The SIKA team will help the DAC to do this by thinking 1) The major problems in the district, 2) Why they exist, and 3) What actions could be done to resolve them.

Goals:

- To start building the capacity of district government officials to think through how to address major problems that can cause instability. The consolidated SOI list can be used give examples of major problems that can be addressed through SIKA.
- Produce a draft District Action Plan (DAP) which outlines:
 - The major problems in the district,
 - Why they exist,
 - What actions could be taken to resolve them,
 - Who would be responsible for doing them, and
 - Which ones will be the initial priorities.

Time Frame: Approximately four to six hours for the first meeting. It could be split across a few days. It does not need to be overly extensive since the DAP is just a draft which will be adjusted and further completed after consultations with others.

STAGE 2 - CONSULTATIONS**Phase 1 – District Development Assembly (DDA)**

Once a draft DAP is completed, the SIKA team, preferably led by the DG and with the social mobilizers, should meet with the DDA to get their input. It can also include key influential individuals in the district (tribal leaders, mullahs, youth leaders, etc.). This process includes having a separate meeting with the Women’s Advisory Committee of the DDA for consultations. If a Women’s Advisory Committee does not exist, then the project should work with the Department of Women’s Affairs representative to bring together women from as many parts of the district as possible and as diverse backgrounds to provide their input.

Key Messages:

- The government has been trying to find ways to address major problems in the district. They have some initial ideas that they would like to share with this group to get their input.
- The DAC will revise the DAP according to their input and will appreciate their support in consulting with the community development clusters (CDCs).
- The DAC will continue to consult with you on this in the future.
- Does the DDA think these major problems and suggested actions are correct? What would they add, remove or deprioritize?
- What actions can the DDA take to address these problems?

Goals:

- Inform the DDA on general concepts about how to frame analysis of the problems in the district.
- Get the DDA’s input on the draft DAP and reconfirm what they will prioritize as their responsibilities.
- Prepare the DDA for assisting with consultations with the Community Development Council (CDC) clusters (groups of CDCs).
- Update the DAP with additional input as appropriate.

Time Frame: The program should keep this to four hours maximum. If the DDA would like to meet for longer, that can be arranged.

Phase 2 – Community Development Council Clusters

The program then will need to consult the Community Development Councils (CDCs). Meetings could be organized by clusters, with a few representatives from each CDC. Preferably, the Social Mobilizers and/or the District Governor would lead these meetings.

Key Messages:

- We are here to meet with CDCs because the government is working to identify ways in which it can support the communities in the best way possible.
- The government has attempted to identify what they see as the major problems, why they exist, and possible actions that can help to solve them.
- Do the CDCs agree that these reflect their major problems? If not, what would they change? Do they think that the solutions identified are correct? What would they add? What can they do themselves to address these problems? What do they think are the priorities?

Goals:

- Improve upon and then update the DAP with additional information obtained about the communities' major problems and what the CDC thinks the government should prioritize as solutions, including projects that they can fund to help them.
- Facilitate relations between the government and community members.
- Train government workers on how to engage with community representatives.
- Encourage CDCs to find solutions that they can conduct themselves.
- Receive CDC feedback on what the government should be prioritizing in order to help them with their problems

Time Frame: It will depend on how many clusters there are but this consultative meeting should not take more than a day. Follow-up will continue as the activity implementation teams continue to work with the CDCs.

STAGE 3 - DISTRICT ACTION PLAN FINALIZATION & APPROVAL

After consulting with the various CDCs, the program team should update the DAP for final review and approval by the members on the District Action Committee. DDA and/or DCC members (if not already a member of the DAC) and other influential individuals can be present as observers to the presentation to ensure that their input has been incorporated. After the DAP is approved, then it is sent to USAID for approval. Note: The preferred model is to empower the District Action Committee and particularly the District Governor to provide final approvals. The District Governor and district line department officials are expected to sensitize and clear activities through their normal approval processes, rather than through an official DAP approval process at the provincial level. This will help to ensure that the approval processes move forward quickly enough to allow for the rapid implementation of projects.

Goal:

- Further inform key government officials on what the major problems are in the district and what might be able to be done to do it.
- Secure DAC agreement on what actions each member will take to address the problems, including what projects should be prioritized for SIKA support.
- Receive the DG and MRRD social mobilizers' final approval on the DAP so that the program can obtain USAID approval and begin program implementation.

Time Frame: This should be a relatively short meeting with a maximum of four hours.

STAGE 4 - ROLLING ANALYSIS & REVIEWS

All program staff should be continuously talking informally to key stakeholders about the status of stability in the district and what might be causing instability. The program should meet every month with the District Action Committee to review whether the District Action Plan still reflects the major problems and whether there are additional actions that should be taken or are no longer valid. They may analyze problems that were not addressed in previous sessions and review the status of priorities and whether they still are priorities.

Goals:

- Ensure that different actors' interventions are still relevant to the environment.
- Provide an opportunity for the program and other actors' to add new interventions
- Build the capacity of the DAC to conduct an analysis of their environment and to design appropriate interventions

Time Frame: The District Action Committee should meet and update the DAP monthly.

It is important to note that just because the District Action Committee is responsible for coming up with the initial analysis and project ideas, this does not mean that community consultation has diminished. Instead, community and key stakeholder consultation will continue but efforts will be focused on receiving their analysis and project ideas by using the analysis and proposed project ideas as a starting point for discussion rather than teaching the community members and key stakeholders how to come up with the analysis themselves.

To further clarify, please find below a general terms of reference for each actor:

- 1) **District Governor:** Responsible for leading the analytical process and ensuring that the CDC, communities and key stakeholders such as MRRD representatives are properly consulted and provide input into and approve the District Action Plan such that it reflects the priorities of all key stakeholders across a district. The DG must approve the District Action Plan.
- 2) **District Action Committee:** The core analytical unit, led by the DG. The District Action Committee is responsible for coming up with the draft District Action Plan and then leading the consultations with the DDA, community members, and other key stakeholders to receive input on that plan.
- 3) **DDA:** Responsible for representing the points of view of the community and for providing input into the District Action Plan. In some cases, the DDA or the head of the DDA will sit and/or observe the District Action Committee's deliberations on their analysis of the situation.
- 4) **MRRD Social Organizers:** Responsible for sitting on the DACs and helping to facilitate the consultations with the DDA, key stakeholders, and community members to receive input on the District Action Plan. They will be one of the approvers of the District Action Plan.
- 5) **Line Ministry Members:** Responsible for ensuring that activities in their purview are properly considered, communicated to their line department, and supported by their department
- 6) **PRRD:** Can participate as an observer to the analytical discussions around the District Action Plan.

- 7) **SIKA Staff:** Responsible for facilitating the process and verifying whether community input is reflected in the District Action Plan. They are also responsible for coaching the DAC on community consultation processes.

CONCLUSION

All four of the SIKA programs have made a sincere and well-informed effort to engage communities and various stakeholders on stability analysis and project prioritization, and each of their approaches provides the opportunity to test different methodologies. They all have their strengths and weaknesses, but they share a common strength in a commitment to receive input from multiple perspectives and respecting and being responsive to the requests of the CDCs on the ground. The common weakness is that no matter the length or content of the SAM process, the capacity of many local communities to quickly understand this content is limited. However, this problem is easily rectified by simplifying the language and drawing the level of analysis up to be centered within a smaller group at the district level that includes the key government stakeholders and DDA representative. This group is more likely to have the capacity to undertake this analysis, and conducting this type of analysis should be a normal part of their job responsibilities. Additionally, by keeping the group to discuss analysis small, the amount of time required to train and hold discussions is shortened. Lastly, an iterative process of consultations and analysis will help to ensure that the analysis is current and that there are multiple opportunities for stakeholder input to be incorporated. By keeping this framework simple, it should provide each of the SIKAs with the opportunity to adjust the specifics of their process to the environment in which they work. In order to implement SAM 2.0, it is suggested that the facilitators from each of the SIKAs get together and share content from their training in order to come up with one facilitator's manual for all of the SIKAs. In addition, it would be good to have a workshop with SIKA, MRRD, IDLG, and USAID representatives to determine how best to manage the roll-out of this new version and what messages will need to be provided from MRRD and IDLG to their staff at the district level, including clarifying what responsibilities they will have.

ANNEX I: DISTRICT ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

District Action Plan

Date:
Version #:

Community Strengths	Why are they strengths?	In general, how might the strengths be used to solve problems?				
Priority Problems/ Select Standard SOIs*	What has caused this? Why is it not already resolved?	Actions to address the problem	How will the action help?	Action location	Who is responsible?	Status
<i>District wide</i>						
<i>Cluster X</i>						
<i>Cluster X</i>						

ANNEX 2: LIST OF 14 COMMON SOIS

This list of 14 sources of instability (SOIs) shows the most common SOIs found on approved DPPs, color coded by frequency (the darker the shade, the more frequently DPPs listed the SOI). It should be noted that certain listed SOIs can also serve as root causes and are not always easily differentiated by SAM participants or facilitators. The matrix shows how certain SOIs are more frequently listed in one SIKA region rather than in another. Differences may be explained by differences in context or in program approach.

MISTI’s analysis simply identifies common SOIs across the regional DPPs. By including SOIs in the list, MISTI does not suggest that these SOIs meet certain criteria or that they are endorsed by MISTI in any substantive way. The finalization of a consolidated list is suggested as an activity of the November MISTI SIKA Summit.

		N	E	W	S
	SOIs				
1	Corruption in the government		Some occurrences		
2	Lack of economic opportunities	Few occurrences	Some occurrences	Some occurrences	Frequent occurrences
3	Insecurity/Presence of insurgent groups	Frequent occurrences	Few occurrences	Some occurrences	
4	Lack of trust between govt & people/govt not legitimate	Some occurrences	Frequent occurrences		
5	Lack of water for irrigation	Few occurrences	Few occurrences		Frequent occurrences
6	Lack of quality educational opportunities	Frequent occurrences	Some occurrences	Some occurrences	Few occurrences
7	Poor service delivery	Few occurrences	Frequent occurrences	Few occurrences	
8	Marginalization of women and lack of women's health		Few occurrences		Few occurrences
9	Justice: land disputes, other disputes		Few occurrences		
10	Lack of unity/tribal disputes		Few occurrences		
11	Perception of unfair resource distribution		Few occurrences		
12	Frustrated/disenfranchised youth		Few occurrences		
13	Lack of Access to potable Water	Few occurrences	Few occurrences		Few occurrences
14	Inadequate transportation network that worsens during the rains (lack of culverts)	Few occurrences	Few occurrences	Few occurrences	Frequent occurrences

Not found	
Few occurrences	
Some occurrences	
Frequent occurrences	

ANNEX 3: SIKA EAST SAM APPROACH DESCRIPTION

Background: SIKA East was the first program to be contracted. As a result, 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). The SAM was created through the efforts of experienced Afghan and expatriate stabilization practitioners with key input from MRRD.

Key Acronyms	<p>SAM = Stability Analysis Methodology</p> <p>HSP = Hawza Stability Plan</p> <p>DPP = District Project Portfolio</p> <p>DCC = District Community Council</p> <p>SPP = Stability Planning Process</p> <p>PAP = Project action Plan</p> <p>SoI = Source of Instability</p> <p>RC= Root Causes</p> <p>DE = District Entity</p> <p>DSU = District Support Unit</p> <p>PE = Provincial Entity</p> <p>PMU = Provincial Management Unit</p>
Unit of Planning	Sub-district (Community Development Council (CDC) cluster, or Hawza or region where clusters not present)
Participants	District Development Assembly (DDA), District Community Council (DCC) and CDC members in the Hawza, tribal elders and other invitees
MRRD/IDLG Role	MRRD’s district-level Social Organizers currently attend stabilization sessions and pre-session training.
Key Concepts	Sources of instability or priority grievances / problems, root causes, stability, social responsibility, resiliencies.
Process	3 day SAM session, followed by a break for consultations back in their communities and then five days of trainings on a variety of topics, including advocacy and related to capacity building
Identifying Priority	Each cluster working group takes their sources of instability and they must meet at least 2 of the following criteria: 1) Undermines social cohesion and local governance, 2) Allows ‘troublemakers’ to promote instability, 3) Disrupts the normal functioning of society

Filtering Projects	<p>The working group filters projects by ensuring they meet the 2 out of 3 stability criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Reinforces social cohesion and local governance; 2) Strengthens resiliencies in the community; 3) Helps to restore the normal functioning of society. <p>These projects should also 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.</p>
Key Matrices	Hawza Stability Plan (HSP)
Path To DPP	District-level plenary session considers HSPs and consolidates them into one District Project Portfolio (DPP)
Inclusion Of Women:	A separate SAM workshop is conducted with women to create their own District Project Portfolio which is merged with the DPP created for the men.
Top 3 Challenges	It is challenging to get a core team of community representatives to participate throughout all 8 days of training and the subsequent activities. It is also challenging to get Afghan government officials' participation
Changes From Dec '12/Jan '13	There is now a break after the first three days of consultation to allow for participants to return to their communities for consultation on what they came up with in the training. The Afghan Government now officially endorses the District Project Portfolio.
Feature To Watch	SIKA East conducts SAM sessions with women in each district.
Context To Consider	SIKA East works in some of the most insecure districts. In many districts, CDC clusters are not functional. It is frequently too dangerous to talk about instability or stability.

ANNEX 4: SIKA WEST SAM APPROACH DESCRIPTION

Background: SIKA West has taken a more iterative, less formalized approach to teaching stability analysis than the other SIKAs. Rather than conducting standardized training sessions, SIKA West staff convene a 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.

Key Acronym	<i>List the acronyms associated with the process.</i> District Stabilization Committee (DSC) District Governor (DG) District Development Assembly (DDA) Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD) Provincial Support Team (PST) District Support Team (DST) Stability Analysis Mechanism (SAM) Sources of Instability (SOI) Root Causes (RC) Mitigation Activities (MA) Project Prioritization Agreement (PPA)
Unit Of Planning	District Stability Committee (DSC) Meetings are held at the district level in the DG Compound
Participants	The District Governor (DG), District Development Assembly members, and district line officers, including Afghan National Security Forces, form the official DSC. Elders, religious leaders and other community members are invited as observers. DSC members from other districts are also invited as part of the inter-DSC program.
MRRD/IDLG Role	The DG is the Chairman of the DSC and the primary IDLG representative. The DG approves the agenda. The DRRD staff are invited, occasionally the DRRD Provincial Director participates in the meeting and regularly the DRRD District Social Organizer attends the meeting. The Provincial DRRD Director review the DSC agenda. The SIKA-West HQ, PST and DST Staff try to appear to be DRRD staff in the DSC meetings and make no reference to USAID and SIKA-West.
Key Concepts	Stability, sources of instability and their root causes, mitigating activities and mitigation activity projects.
Process	The DSC meetings are a continuous monthly process of engagement between the DG, DEs and the community members. There are three types of meetings, the first is an Introductory Meeting, the second is the First Regular and all subsequent meetings are Regular Meetings. The Introductory Meeting provides an overview of the program, establishes the DSC and introduces the SAM. The second meeting provides SAM training on how to identify, analyze and prioritize SOIs, root causes and mitigating actions. The monthly regular meetings continue

the SAM process and always include some training on connecting sources of instability, root causes, and mitigating actions of projects.

Filtering SOIs	Brainstorming, led by the Facilitator. SOIs are screened by the criteria of whether or not they undermine local governance, increase support for negative actors and disrupt the normal functioning of the society.
Filtering Projects	Brainstorming, led by the Facilitator. SIKA West uses MRRD and USAID project criteria for vetting and filtering MA projects for small community infrastructure. DSC members are repeatedly informed during the DSC meetings of criteria the MA projects must meet before they are considered for funding. MA projects that meet the criteria are then prioritized by the DSC members and ranked according to their priority on the PPA. The PPA is signed by the DG and DDA members and these projects are entered into the DSM with their corresponding SOIs, RCs and MAs. The Facilitator encourages DSC members to consider soft MA Projects like advocacy campaigns and trainings, which follow the same process.
Key Matrices	District Stabilization Matrix (DSM) and the Project Database.
Path To DPP	The DSC members identify and prioritize MA Projects that meet the criteria and our within the DSC's budget allocation. These projects are listed in the PPA and SIKA-West conducts a feasibility survey for each project and then groups them into DPP submissions for approval by DRRD and USAID.
Inclusion of women	Women participate in the DSC process either directly in the meetings with the men or in separate meetings with the women's analysis being later included in the full DSC meeting. Over the last two months women's participation has significantly increased in terms of presence and participation across all western provinces except Ghor where currently SIKA-West has no female employees who can work with women. SIKA-West recognizes that women are as important to stabilization activities as men and is working to ensure they are fully included in the stabilization process.
Top 3 challenges	Security, remote locations, and the high expectation of the DSC members on projects.
Changes from Dec '12/Jan '13	The process is the same, however SIKA-West has expanded into one new province (Ghor) and added three new key districts (Khake Safid, Chaghcharan and Shahrak). SIKA-West continues to transition its key leading positions from expat to Afghan staff.

ANNEX 5: SIKA NORTH SAM APPROACH DESCRIPTION

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 Stability Working Group: Community Development Council (CDC)/District Development Assembly (DDA) members, District Governor, district line department representatives, influential elders and MRRD Social Organizers.
MRRD/IDLG Role	The District Governor is meant to take a lead role. MRRD Social Organizers assist in inviting participants and taking attendance at workshops.
Key Concepts	Stability, Sources of instability and their root causes, mitigating activities
Process	Three days of stabilization sessions: 2 days of training on SAM, followed by 1 day preparing Local Stability Plans (LSPs)
Filtering SOIs	They use brainstorming led by a facilitator. SOIs are refined to use a common lexicon across SAM training groups and districts. SOIs are verified through atmospherics, interviews, and staff who reside in the districts.
Filtering Projects	A final project list is a combination of projects proposed in LSPs and by Stability Working Groups, based on SOIs identified in SAM trainings.
Key Matrix	Local Stability Plan (LSP) which informs the District Project Portfolio
Path To The DPP	Staff analyze Local Stability Plans (LSPs) and compile them to create either one LSP for the district or one per cluster, refining terminology and adding information gathered from trainers or supplementary assessment methods. LSPs are simplified to a single project list to create the DPP. The DPP is verified and signed by the CDC members, DDA, DG, PRRD and other key stakeholders as appropriate for that district.
Inclusion Of Women	Participation of women in the SAM process depends on the cultural, environmental, security and other factors in each district. In the districts where women are more active and take part in decision-making processes along with the men, the SIKA North team invites them to the same SAM training as the men. The DDA and the PRRD social organizers help to extend the invitation. Women from Imam Sahib, Baghlan-e-Jadid, Puli Khumri and Gul Tepa districts were trained on the SAM directly by SIKA, but for other districts, the process was different. In Aliabad district, they hired an NGO which allowed women to be trained by women trainers. In Khanabad and Dasht-e-Archi districts, SIKA hired

two female trainers who coordinated inviting the women with the DDA and conducted the training for female CDC members in the districts.

Top 3 Challenges

1. Low participant capacity
2. Large number of slides and lack of time to train each group
3. Training all CDC members of the district while working in unstable clusters

Changes from Dec '12/Jan '13

Previously two days were allocated for the SAM presentation and the last day was allocated for LSPs but since MISTI's first evaluation, the SAM process has been revised as follows:

- One day of lecture and presentation including short discussions. No repetitive content.
- In the second day, participants are asked to first suggest soft (non-infrastructure) activities on "LSP No. 1" (1 per group of 3-5 CDCs, that are geographically close to each other) that would target SOIs that can be addressed by means of outreach, communication, political activities, etc. Secondly, they are asked to list hard activities (mostly infrastructure) on "LSP No. 2" (1 per group of 3-5 CDCs, that are geographically close to each other) that would address both an SOI and a community need / issue.
- The third day of the SAM training is allocated for discussing and asking follow-up questions on the LSPs they created the day before. This way, our District Implementation Teams get a clearer understanding of what was meant by things written on the LSPs, why they were written, and what the underlying causes ("systemic causes") are.

ANNEX 6: SIKA SOUTH COMMUNITY FORUMS DESCRIPTION

Background: SIKA South has most recently begun stabilization sessions in pilot districts. SIKA South’s approach to stabilization analysis and planning is the furthest from the District Stability Framework (DSF) in that it revolves around SWOT analysis – a tool that other MRRD programs use. It addresses transition issues of district entities and exercises governance at both district and provincial levels. It works only with existing processes and has a policy of not creating new structures.

Key Acronyms	CF1, 2, 3, 4 and 5: Community Forums 1 through 5, PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal, G3: Government, Governance and Good governance, SDBD: Sub-District-Based-Development, CBA: Complaint Based-Assessment, SWOT: Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis, SOI: Source of Instability, PFM: Project Feasibility Matrix, SAO: Social Affairs Officer, DLO: District Line Officer(s)
Unit of Planning	District and sub-district (groups of CDC).
Participants	Executive Councilmen from CDCs and their DDA or District Coordinating Committee (DCC) village representatives.
MRRD/IDLG Role	Social Affairs Officers (SAOs) for MRRD. IDLG District Line Officers (DLOs).
Key Concepts	Transition, good governance, stability/strengths, instability/weaknesses, roles and responsibilities and district goals, and sources of instability
Process	<p>In total, there are five (5) Stability and Governance SOI forums conducted over eight (8) days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forums 1 and 2 cover topics of transition, governance tools and the roles and responsibilities of district entities (CDCs and DDA / DCC).• Forum 3 explains the program parameters according to MRRD policies, Afghanistan law and development funding limitations.• Forums 4 & 5 are devoted to identifying and seeking solutions to SOIs as well as generating mitigating activities that result in draft project concept notes (PCNs). These PCNs will be processed through the provincial entities, the Sector Working Group (SWG) and the Provincial Development Council (PDC). The SIKA grants and provincial management unit personnel will assist these entities as needed.
Filtering SOIs	Within the group of CDCs, facilitators ask the group to consider whether concerns and complaints are: 1) a need; 2) a community concern; or 3) a source of instability. SOIs are defined as meeting two of three criteria: (1) Undermines support for the government; (2) Increases support for the insurgency; and/or (3) Disrupts the normal functioning of society. SWOT analysis and community representative discussions are conducted to prioritize SOIs.
Filtering Projects	Projects are scored based on a set of standard criteria and community representative discussions on what must be the priorities for the CDC group or sub-district. District team officers from stability, community development, grants

development and capacity building teams assist the CDC and DDA representatives in this process.

Key Matrices

The Project Feasibility Matrix is used to score projects as well as stop the pursuit of projects that MRRD and USAID will not approve. The factors scored for each SOI solution are: SOI / Priority (Meets two or three of three criteria stated above); Project Enhances Unity of Community; Project Fairly Produces Benefits for Everyone; Project Requires Community Contribution; Technical Capacity; Available within Community; No Adverse Environmental Impact; Uses Or Reinforces Strengths (i.e. resiliencies); Sustainability; and Productivity. These are used to create individual Project Concept Notes (PCNs) which once approved are added to the District Project Portfolio. A Quarterly Stabilization Review (QSR) is conducted by the Monitoring and Evaluation, stability, and grants teams. It will soon also include the provincial management unit to analyze operational, programmatic and government partner challenges, record adjustments made to the DPP, and identify adjustments needed.

Path to DPP

When PCNs are approved at the provincial level by the PRRD, the SWG and then the PDC, the projects enter the grant approval process and, once approved by USAID, become part of the DPP.

Inclusion Of Women

There is a forum session on *Missing Advisory Committees* for the DDA that focuses heavily on the benefits of including women's perspectives on development activities. However, this results in too few gender-related PCNs. At present, SIKA South is developing several designs and curriculum for integration of women to the SOI identification and solution processes.

Top 3 challenges

- 1) Low provincial government capacity at PRRDs
 - Slow district elections and election results delivery.
 - Poorly maintained or developed CDC cluster data that slows community forum preparations.
 - Slow or no delivery of CDC registration documentation for grants awards. Without this documentation no project grants can be awarded.
 - PRRD SAOs unwilling to train and fully participate with district entities. SAOs not hired and assigned to districts negate SAM sustainability for MRRD.
 - MRRD policies on women's inclusion not enforced by PRRDs
- 2) Sector Working Groups meeting only once a month (or sporadically) to review and approve projects submitted by District Entities
- 3) District Line Officers rarely present in district offices

Changes from

To manage expectations, there is now a formal program limitations and capabilities forum repeated for each round/cycle of forum participants. More emphasis will be given to explaining that when district entities have finished forum work, the provincial entities and SIKA district teams have work to complete before development grants can be awarded.