

District Stability Framework Quick Reference Guide

To increase the effectiveness of stability assistance, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Counterinsurgency Training Center-Afghanistan (CTC-A) developed the District Stability Framework (DSF), a program management framework that utilizes a range of situational awareness and planning tools to inform stability programming. DSF supports collaborative planning within Stability Working Groups and assists stability practitioners in identifying sources of instability (SOIs), developing activities to diminish or mitigate the causes, and monitoring and evaluating the impact of programming against stability objectives in a particular area. DSF is based on the following premises:

- Instability results when the factors fostering instability overwhelm the ability of the host nation to mitigate these factors
- A program management framework is necessary for a strategic, targeted and iterative approach
- Comprehensive situational awareness is required to identify true sources of instability
- Monitoring and evaluating impacts against stability objectives and the change in overall stability within an area are the only way to measure success



DSF Situational Awareness Tools

DSF requires population-centric and stability oriented situational awareness. There are four filters that help ensure you have holistic situational awareness in stability operations:

1. Operating environment
2. Cultural environment
3. Perception dynamics
4. Stability/instability dynamics

Unlike many traditional operational assessments, stability assistance programming requires assessments informed by local-level (tactical) conditions and perceptions. For example, knowing the number of security forces present in an area is not as important as knowing if the locals in that area are happy with and trust those security forces.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

One model for describing the operational environment is ASCOPE – PMESII. Each letter stands for an aspect of the operational environment. The six ASCOPE areas of civil considerations are used to inform the six PMESII operational variables:

Areas **S**tructures **C**apabilities **O**rganizations **P**eople **E**vents

Political/Governance

Mmilitary/Security

Economic

Social

Infrastructure

Information

ASCOPE – PMESII is population-focused rather than enemy-focused.

In contrast to a traditional area assessment, ASCOPE-PMESII organizes and examines strategic and operational factors for their relevance to local stability.

ASCOPE-PMESII		
Description	Factors	Relevance
Political/Governance: Political actors, agendas, government capability and capacity	Key elements of the formal, informal, and shadow systems of government which significantly influence the local population	Why is a factor relevant to the local population? How does it affect stability?
Military/Security: Capabilities in the AO (equipment, mission, resource constraints)	Key elements that could influence the security situation	Why is a factor relevant to the local population? How does it affect stability?
Economic Trade, development, finance, institutional capabilities, geography, regulation	Key elements that influence economic activity in the area	Why is a factor relevant to the local population? How does it affect stability?
Social: Demographics, migration trends, urbanization, living standards, literacy/education level, etc.	Key elements that describe or could influence traditional social dynamics in an area.	Why is a factor relevant to the local population? How does it affect stability?
Infrastructure: Basic facilities, services and installations	Effects on the physical infrastructure: sewage, water, electricity, educational facilities, health facilities, and transportation	Why is a factor relevant to the local population? How does it affect stability?
Information: Means of communication, media, telecommunications, word of mouth	Key elements that facilitate the transfer of information to and among the local population.	Why is a factor relevant to the local population? How does it affect stability?

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The cultural environment is the second aspect of DSF situational awareness. This awareness starts with a thorough understanding of the organization, history and interests of local groups.

In depth knowledge of cultural factors is essential to the development of stability-focused situational awareness. In particular, understanding how traditional conflict resolution mechanisms function or how stabilizing or destabilizing actors can leverage these factors for negative and positive effects is critical. Six key factors to analyze include:

- Major cultural groups and their interests
- Cultural codes, traditions, and values
- Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms
- Traditional authorities
- Disruptions to traditional authorities
- Ways destabilizing elements take advantage of these factors

 Cultural Matrix			
1) Major Cultural Groups	2) Their Interests	3) Cultural Codes, Traditions, and Values	4) Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms
Identify the major cultural and/or tribal groups in your AO	Identify the interests, and driving factors of the major groups in your AO	Identify cultural codes, traditions, and values of the major cultural groups	Identify how and what establishments perform conflict resolution within your AO
5) Traditional Authorities	6) Disruptions to These Mechanisms/Authorities	7) How Spoilers/Stabilizing Forces Leverage These Factors	
Identify the relevant traditional authorities that interact with the population within your AO	Describe the limits of influence and power the existing traditional authorities have within your AO	Describe how AGEs can leverage and/or exploit the existing cultural and tribal dynamics within your AO	

PERCEPTION DYNAMICS

Local perception data is the third filter of situational awareness and is important for the following reasons:

- Popular support is the key to success
- Population’s perceptions—not our assumptions—must be the focus of our operations
- Stability programming must address the root causes of instability that have been identified at the local level
- Changes in perceptions over time have an impact on stability

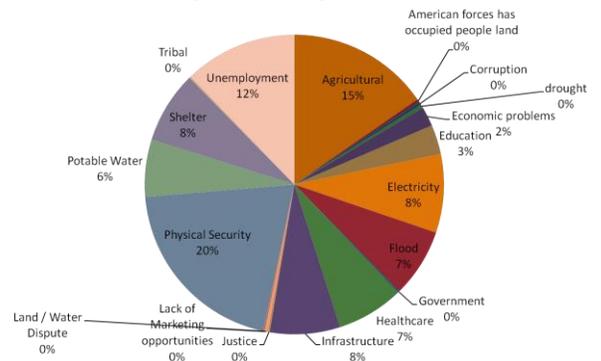
Perception data can be obtained through a variety of sources, some of which are listed below:

- APAS from IJC
- Tactical Conflict Survey
- Human Terrain Team Reports (HTT)
- Key Leader Engagements (KLEs)
- Stability Operations Information Cell Reports (SOIC)
- ANSF Reports
- Local Organization Assessments
- Shuras and Jirgas

The Tactical Conflict Survey is one way of obtaining local perceptions in which surveyors ask the following four questions. Understanding the “why” for each question is critical.

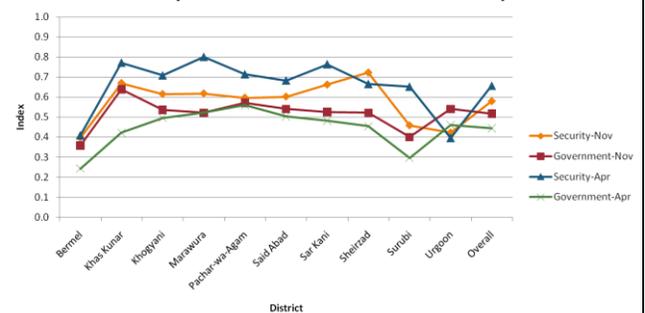
1. Has the number of people in the village population changed in the last year? WHY?
2. What is the most important problem facing the village/town/neighborhood? WHY?
3. Who do you believe can solve your problems? WHY?
4. What should be done first to help the village/town/neighborhood? WHY?

Tactical Conflict Survey
What is the most important problem facing the village/town/neighborhood?



APAS

Security & Government Index: November to April



STABILITY/INSTABILITY DYNAMICS

Stability/Instability Dynamics is the last filter of situational awareness. It allows you to synthesize information from ALL situational awareness tools to identify factors of instability and stability.

INSTABILITY

There are three main factors of instability to consider:

1. Community grievances
2. Events with the potential to be destabilizing (windows of vulnerability)
3. Individuals with the means and motivations to exploit grievances and windows of vulnerability

Although there can be many grievances, they do not all necessarily foster instability unless key actors with both the motivation and the means to translate these grievances into widespread instability emerge. Windows of vulnerability are often precipitated by a specific event that key actors can capitalize on.

STABILITY

Parallel to factors of instability are mitigating forces such as:

1. Resiliencies or the processes, relationships, and institutions that can reduce the effects of grievances
2. Events with the potential to mitigate conflict and foster stability (windows of opportunity)
3. Individuals with the means and motivations to foster stability

Factors of Instability		
Grievances	Events (Windows of Vulnerability)	Actors' Means and Motivations
What are the core grievances identified from local perception data?	Potential situations that could contribute to an increase in instability?	Who are the actors and what are their means and motivations that enable them to contribute to an increase of instability?
Factors of Stability		
Resiliencies	Events (Windows of Opportunity)	Actors' Means and Motivations
What are the processes, relationships, and institutions that can reduce the effect of grievances?	Potential situations that might offer opportunities for mitigating violent conflict and promoting stability?	Who are the actors and what are their means and motivations that enable them to contribute to an increase of stability?

DSF Analysis Tools

Once comprehensive situational awareness is completed, DSF provides tools for the analysis of potential sources of instability, their causes, desired impacts and objectives. These steps are captured in two worksheets: the SOI Analysis and the Tactical Stability Matrix (TSM).

SOI ANALYSIS

Acknowledged problems in a community are not necessarily underlying sources of instability. Effective stability programming relies on careful assessment of potential SOIs against the Stability Criteria:

1. Does the potential instability factor increase support for Anti-Government Elements?
2. Does the potential instability factor decrease support for the government?
3. Does the potential instability factor undermine the normal functioning of society?

The SOI Analysis tool takes factors of instability identified during Situational Awareness and applies the 3 Stability Criteria. Not all grievances are destabilizing. If you have perception data to support your identified SOIs, it can be used to assist with prioritization.

SOI Analysis					
Potential Source of Instability	Criteria for Sources of Instability (SOI)			SOI	Priority Grievance
	Does this potential instability factor decrease support for G/RoA? Explain.	Does this potential instability factor increase support for Anti-Government Elements (AGEs)? Explain.	Does this potential instability factor disrupt the normal functioning of society? Explain.		
List all potential Sources of Instability (SOIs)	If yes, explain how the potential SOI decreases support for G/RoA	If yes, explain how the potential SOI increases support for Anti-Government Elements (AGEs)	If yes, explain how the potential SOI disrupts the normal functioning of society	Based on the stability criteria, is this a source of instability?	If it is a source of instability, is it also a priority grievance?
Definitions					
Priority Grievances refer to issues that a significant percentage of locals, not outside experts, identify as priorities for their community. Examples: health care, education, infrastructure, security, etc. Sources of Instability are issues locals identify which undermine government support, increase support for insurgents, and/or disrupts the normal functions of society. Examples: ethnic cleansing, setting blood feud, corrupt police shake-down a locals, etc.					

TACTICAL STABILITY MATRIX – ANALYSIS

The Tactical Stability Matrix (TSM) guides stability assistance programming and takes you from the analysis phase to the design phase. Sources of instability are taken directly from the SOI Analysis.

Analysis Components of the TSM:

- **Source of Instability (SOI)** – A very brief description of the problem or issue, often just a couple of words, as identified through the analysis of all available operational, cultural, tribal, and local perception data on a given area.
- **Cause (Perception)** – The perceived cause of a source of instability (i.e. priority grievances commonly cited by the local population).
- **Cause (Systemic)** – The root causes of the problem that relate to the perceived causes. To identify systemic causes, ask yourself what circumstances led to community perceptions? What circumstances allow the problem to continue? What conditions prevent the problem from being fixed?
- **Objective** – A statement of the conditions that will diminish the identified SOI. Often it is simply the opposite of the source of instability and its associated conditions. Keep in mind the 3 Stability Criteria when developing the objective statement.
- **Impact Indicators** – Also called “Measures of Effect,” impact indicators measure the effectiveness of your activities against the predetermined objective and systemic causes. To identify impact indicators, ask: How will I know if the objective has been achieved?
 - Example:** If “police abuse” is the source of instability, impact indicators might include:
 - Increased popular support for the police
 - Population provides more actionable intelligence to the police
 - Police presence in previously no-go areas
- **Impact Data Sources** – Methods to obtain the information identified in your impact indicators.

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

Tactical Stability Matrix								
Analysis					Design			
Source of Instability	Causes – Perception	Causes – Systemic	Objective	Impact Indicators	Impact Data Sources	Activities	Output Indicators	Output Data Sources

DSF Design Tools

The next phase of DSF is designing stability activities that address the objective identified on the TSM and target systemic causes of instability. All potential activities should be screened against the 3 stability criteria, the 7 design principles and resource availability. Activities should then be coordinated among the actors involved in the Stability Working Group.

TACTICAL STABILITY MATRIX – DESIGN

The Tactical Stability Matrix (TSM) is used during the design phase to identify potential activities addressing the objective and systemic causes, as well as to identify output indicators and data sources to monitor those activities.

Design Components of the TSM:

- **Activities** – The things you will do to mitigate the systemic causes of instability and achieve the identified objective.
- **Output Indicators** – Also called “Measures of Performance,” output indicators determine whether an activity has been completed. To identify output indicators, ask yourself: How can I confirm that the proposed activity is progressing as planned or has been completed?
 - # of projects completed

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

- # of police trained
- # of road miles completed
- # of dollars spent

Example: If “police training” were an activity, an output indicator would be the # of police trained.

- **Output Data Sources** – Methods to obtain the information identified in your output indicators.

ACTIVITY DESIGN WORKSHEET

The Activity Design Worksheet is a tool to assist with filtering activities against the stability criteria, design principles and resource availability. It should be used while completing the TSM.

Stability Criteria: “Does the activity...”

1. Increase support for GfRoA?
2. Decrease support for Anti-Government Elements (AGEs)?
3. Increase institutional and societal capacity and capability?

Design Principles: “Is the activity...”

1. Sustainable by the local government and/or local institutions?
2. Promoting local ownership putting local institutions in the lead?
3. Fostering long-term vs. short-term results?
4. Leveraging support from other organizations?
5. Politically and culturally appropriate?
6. Strengthening accountability and transparency?
7. Flexible?

Resource Availability: “Do you have the required...”

1. Money?
2. Personnel?
3. Expertise?
4. Time?

Brainstorm Possible Activities	Stability Design Criteria			Design Principles							Resources	Is Activity Feasible?
	Does the activity increase support for GfRoA? Explain.	Does the activity decrease support for Anti Government Elements? Explain.	Does the activity build GfRoA capacity? Explain.	Can it be sustained by the System?	Local ownership	Short vs. Long Term results	Local vs. Foreign	Local vs. International	Local vs. National	Local vs. Regional		
List all potential activities that address the objective and systemic causes of a given SOI	Explain how the activity will increase support for GfRoA.	Explain how the activity will decrease support for Anti Government Elements.	Explain how the activity will build GfRoA capacity.	Does the activity meet the 7 design principles? Check all that apply.							Do you, or your partners in the SWG, have the resources to complete the activity? Check all that apply.	Based on the stability criteria, design principles and resource availability, is the activity realistic?

ACTIVITY SYNCHRONIZATION MATRIX

When designing and implementing activities, it is critical to coordinate with other actors working in the same district. The Synchronization Matrix helps actors in a Stability Working Group with the following:

- Plan a logical sequence for activities
- Coordinate along multiple lines of operation
- Address multiple causes of instability
- Maximize impact and minimize effort/cost

		SOI #1: List Source of Instability being targeted															
		January		February		March		April		May		June					
Timeframe		Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4
Operations		Shaping Ops (list specific)				Clearing Ops (list specific)				Holding Ops (list specific)				Building Ops (list specific)			
Key Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events		List Specific Events	
Potential Actors		List Activity #1				List Activity #2				List Activity #3				List Activity #4			
List Systemic Cause #1	example: Debt	List Activity #1	List Activity #2	List Activity #3	List Activity #4	List Activity #5	List Activity #6	List Activity #7	List Activity #8	List Activity #9	List Activity #10	List Activity #11	List Activity #12	List Activity #13	List Activity #14	List Activity #15	List Activity #16
	example: Military	List Activity #1	List Activity #2	List Activity #3	List Activity #4	List Activity #5	List Activity #6	List Activity #7	List Activity #8	List Activity #9	List Activity #10	List Activity #11	List Activity #12	List Activity #13	List Activity #14	List Activity #15	List Activity #16
	example: USDA	List Activity #1	List Activity #2	List Activity #3	List Activity #4	List Activity #5	List Activity #6	List Activity #7	List Activity #8	List Activity #9	List Activity #10	List Activity #11	List Activity #12	List Activity #13	List Activity #14	List Activity #15	List Activity #16
List Systemic Cause #2	Actor #1																
	Actor #2																
	Actor #3																
	Actor #4																

DSF Monitoring & Evaluation Tools

Effective stability programming relies on the ability to understand and measure change in the stability environment with respect to specific SOIs as well as overall stability trends. The DSF looks at three different levels of M&E:

- Level 1 – Output (Measures of Performance)
- Level 2 – Impact (Measures of Effect)
- Level 3 – Overall Stability

M&E MATRIX

The M&E Matrix is a program management and reporting tool that measures activity output and impact. It tracks progress against a baseline to assess the impact activities are having. The M&E Matrix focuses on the first two levels of M&E.

Level 1, activity output, focuses on:

- Have your activities been completed?
- Are your activities being implemented successfully?
- Are there external factors affecting the implementation of your activities?
- Are your indicators measuring the appropriate outputs? If not, should you identify new indicators?
- Are your data sources providing the correct indicator data? If not, do you need new data sources?

Level 2, impact, focuses on:

- Are you seeing the intended impact/change in your environment?
- Does this change represent progress towards the objective and a diminishment of a root cause?
- How are external factors influencing and/or causing the changes you are observing?
- Are the activities contributing to the expected impact and the overall objective? If not, consider alternative activities.
- Are your indicators measuring the impact appropriately? If not, consider new adopting new indicators.
- Are your data sources providing the correct indicator data? If not, consider adopting new data sources and/or new means to collect them.

M&E Matrix								
SOI	Activity	Measure of Performance		Measure of Effect			Obj	
		Output Indicator Data	Output Data Sources	Impact Indicator	Baseline	Change		Impact Data Sources
Taken from the TSM	Taken from the TSM	Data for Output Indicator identified on the TSM	Taken from the TSM	Taken from the TSM	Baseline Data for Impact Indicator identified on the TSM	Change in Baseline Data	Taken from the TSM	Taken from the TSM

OVERALL STABILITY

Measuring the change in overall stability is a key component of the DSF process, and the third level of M&E. By measuring a common basket of stability-focused indicators, it is possible to track the change in stability for a given district. Seven recommended overall stability indicators are listed below; however, they can be modified as needed for adaptation to a specific operating environment. The overall stability indicators are not linked to activities. When aggregated, they can provide a measurement of overall changes in stability over time for a given district. The seven indicators were selected to provide a picture of what life is like in a district and how it is changing for the local population.

- 1) District Government Recognition
- 2) Afghan on Afghan Violence
- 3) Bazaar Activity
- 4) ANSF Presence
- 5) Afghan Freedom of Movement
- 6) Governance Perceptions
- 7) Security Perceptions

