

CONFLICT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK APPLICATION GUIDE

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ACRONYMS

ADS USAID Automated Directives System CAF Conflict Assessment Framework

CDCS Country Development and Cooperation Strategy CMC Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation (USAID)

CMM Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (USAID)

COTR Contracting Officer's Technical Representative

CSO State Department Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations

DAC Development Assistance Committee of the OECD

DCHA Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Affairs (USAID)

DCM Deputy Chief of Mission

DRG Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (USAID)

EADS USAID Economic Analysis and Data Services

FSN Foreign Service National

ICAF Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework ICRP Instability, Crisis and Recovery Programming

IQC Indefinite Quantity Contract
KSC USAID Knowledge Service Center

LOE Level of Effort

MOU Memorandum of Understanding (between DCHA/CMM and Mission)

OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

POC Point of Contact

RSO Regional Security Officer SBU Sensitive but Unclassified

S/CRS Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (see CSO)

SOW Scope of Work (a USAID-contractor agreement)

SOW Statement of Work (more appropriately referred to as MOU)

USAID U. S. Agency for International Development

USG United States Government

SECTION I: ORIENTATION

I.I OVERVIEW

A conflict assessment is a systematic process to analyze and prioritize the dynamics of peace, conflict, stability, and instability in a given country context. Conflict assessment is the first step in formulating strategies, developing policies, and designing programs that effectively prevent, mitigate, and manage conflict dynamics. Working in close cooperation with Missions, the USAID Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (DCHA/CMM) conducts assessments on the basis of its *Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF 2.0)*, which is described in detail in a companion document by that name.

Both the Conflict Assessment Framework and this Application Guide are key resources for those who will take part in the assessment process. These resources also guide headquarters and Mission personnel who will be participating in defining the purpose and desired outputs from an assessment process.

A conflict assessment consists of two stages: diagnosis and response. During the *diagnosis phase*, the assessment team gathers information about the country's internal conflict dynamics. This data gathering involves both a preparatory literature review, as well as field work. After examining the conflict dynamics, the assessment team uses its findings to identify likely future scenarios that could alter a country's risk of violent conflict.

During the **response stage**, the assessment team draws on its rich diagnostic analysis and consults with the client Mission, or operating unit, to formulate actionable responses. These recommendations can inform strategic planning, as well as program design and management. Assessments only rarely lead to the design of stand-alone programs targeting specific conflicts; more often, the analysis enables USAID Missions to apply development resources across sectors and in a conflict-sensitive fashion.

To conduct a field-based conflict assessment is challenging. It involves applying a set of rigorous analytical tasks in a dynamic process, which must be sensitive to issues ranging from policy positions and organizational interests to interpersonal and intercultural dynamics to language and logistical constraints.

This document provides guidance to ease those challenges. It describes the basic steps needed to organize and implement an assessment. The first of the guide's four parts discusses the collection, sorting, analysis, synthesis, and application of data and information. The second part provides information for the remainder of the assessment process, which includes recommended responses and reporting requirements.

1.2 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE

There are five distinct tasks to complete in any assessment:

- I. Collect data.
- 2. Sort data into the assessment framework categories.
- 3. Synthesize data in each category.
- 4. Draw connections between categories.
- 5. Develop an analytical narrative (a story) that captures the data and connections.

These tasks are not purely linear in nature, nor do they directly correspond to the assessment phases. Nevertheless, there is a trajectory to the tasks and the overall analytical process. Data collection—in the form of a literature review, field work, interviews, observations, etc.—is particularly important. Analysis of flawed or incomplete data is unlikely to produce useful conclusions. Hence, those conducting an assessment must pay particular attention to collecting good data while ensuring that data collection does not come at the expense of the other four tasks, or analyzing the meaning of the data.

I.2.I The Analytical Framework in Brief

The starting point for data collection is the conflict assessment framework (Figure 1).

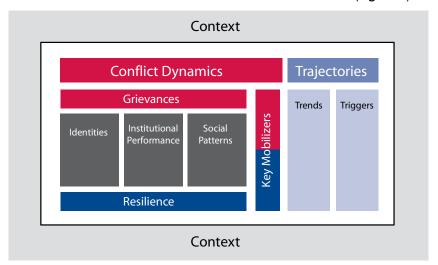


Figure 1: Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0

As noted above, a USAID conflict assessment consists of two stages: a **diagnosis** of the situation and recommendations for an appropriate **response**. (These stages, and the terms below, are explained in more detail in Chapter 3 of the Conflict Assessment Framework. A brief summary is offered below.)

Diagnosis consists of identifying the current **conflict dynamics** and determining likely future **trajectories**. These two parts occur within a specific **context** and may be likened to taking a snapshot, then turning it into a movie.

Conflict dynamics describe the interplay between latent **grievances** and **resiliencies**, and the **key actors** who **mobilize** people and resources based upon them. Mobilized grievances are often the **drivers** of a given conflict.

Context here refers to a range of factors, including the country's history, geography, fundamental social and political institutions, economic structures, demographics, and international and external connections. Grievance and resilience emerge from an interaction between **identity groups** and **institutional performance** that produce enduring **social patterns**.

Trajectories refer to **trends** and **triggers** that may lead to greater stability or instability, conflict or reconciliation.

Generating **response** recommendations is the last component of the conflict assessment. This step is based on identifying options with technical **merit**, determining their empirical grounding and likely impact, and then **prioritizing** those options based on practical considerations of timing, resources, and interests.

Data collected through assessment essentially fall into three basic types: facts, feelings, and forecasts, or "the three Fs" for short. These are not hard-and-fast categories, but rather helpful concepts for sorting data.

Facts are objectively measureable or verifiable pieces of information. If different people working with different methods were to examine the same question and provide the same answer, then that answer is probably a fact. Typical facts compiled for an assessment include economic growth rates, population size, level of income inequality, proven oil reserves, the size of the armed forces, or the types of projects that are currently being funded by donors.

Feelings refer to perceptions, attitudes, and judgments. Different people examining the same question or issue may have different feelings about it. Feelings may or may not correspond to widely observed facts or dominant narratives. Examples of feelings include group perceptions or shared narratives about historical events, economic patterns such as the distribution of wealth, or how effectively sectors like education or health are performing. Although opinion polling data may be quite reliable, it is still considered to fall under the banner of feelings.

Forecasts represent a combination of facts and judgments by knowledgeable people to produce an estimate of how the future may unfold. For example, expecting a coming oil windfall, anticipating a stolen election in an undemocratic state, or noting the possibility of an epidemic of avian flu would all be considered forecasts.

Setting the three Fs against the ten lines of inquiry produces the following matrix:

Framework Component		Lines of Inquiry	Facts	Feelings	Forecasts
	Context	History			
		Physical and Geographic Characteristics			
		Institutions			
		Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics			
		External Influences			
Diagnosis		Grievances			
		Resilience			
	Dynamics	Key Mobilizers			
		Identities			
		Institutional Performance			
		Societal Patterns			
	Trajectories	Trends			
	,	Triggers			
	Analytical Approaches	Analytic Dimensions of Theories of Change			
Response	r ippi ouelies	Bright Spots			
	Practical Prioritization	Mission Priorities and Time Horizon			
		Financial/Human Resources of Mission			
		Mission Partners and Partnerships			
		Other Donors and Agencies			

Depending upon the area of analysis, only one or two of the three data types is likely to be most salient. For example, most of the data collected on context will be factual, but, when it comes to institutional performance, both facts and feelings will be important. For potential trends and triggers, meanwhile, the assessment team will be most interested in forecasts.

During the field work phase, the assessment team should place the highest priority on feelings and forecasts. Generally speaking, the team can obtain access to facts through a desk study that is done prior to, or following, the team's deployment. Thus, the primary goal of meetings during the field phase will be to elicit feelings—perceptions, attitudes, and judgments—about both current conditions and future expectations. Understanding these feelings will be particularly important with respect to analyzing the role which institutions, social patterns, and key mobilizers all play.

The assessment team should seek to understand why people involved in the conflict feel the way that they do, or what aspects of the conflict dynamics shape the feelings of the communities being assessed. Similarly, it is not enough just to collect forecasts. Rather, the team should seek to examine what is behind those forecasts and, ideally, what future signs would indicate whether the forecast is accurate or inaccurate.

Of course, both individuals and groups may have feelings and forecasts that differ in profoundly important ways, and there may be deep divisions of opinion even on one "side" of a conflict. When USAID acts in ways that privilege—purposefully or inadvertently—the perspective and interests of some parties in a conflict over others, it becomes, for better or worse, an actor in that conflict. Of course, the U.S. Government (USG) adopts policy positions in its foreign affairs, but it is essential that the assessment team be allowed to develop an objective view of the conflict based on independent, critical thought. To be successful, therefore, assessment teams—and those who work with them—should adopt sound procedures and structures to uphold intellectual honesty and integrity throughout the process, should maintain transparency in the methodology, and should protect sensitive information when it is disclosed.

Assessment teams should also take care to seek out a wide range of sources in their data collection process, including those who disagree with the policies of the USG or its allies.

SECTION 2: DIAGNOSIS

This section describes the assessment process—in roughly chronological order—from inception to conclusion. While each assessment is tailored to meet the needs of the client (usually a USAID Mission), and is therefore unique, the overall process unfolds according to the following timeline:

- I. Preliminary Activities
- 2. Preparation
- 3. Orientation
- 4. Field Work: Data Collection and Analysis
- 5. Synthesis
- 6. Response
- 7. Reporting

The remainder of Section 2 describes the activities associated with each of the seven phases.

2.1 PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

Conducting a conflict assessment can add value to strategic and program planning processes in all circumstances and country contexts. By helping to develop **conflict response strategies**, as well as by

helping to ensure that development projects are at minimum *conflict-sensitive*, assessments give Missions an opportunity to leverage the effectiveness and efficiency of U.S. foreign assistance.

In addition to being recommended in situations of escalating violence, outright war, or post-conflict reconstruction, conflict assessments can also shed light on the underlying conditions that support radical or extremist movements or that fuel pervasive instability short of full-scale conflict. In this regard, conflict assessments can complement large-scale program design or evaluation processes.

Even if a country has not experienced violent conflict in the past, conflict assessments will highlight potential areas of concern and can help development programs begin to address destabilizing trends before they reach a stage of crisis. Similarly, the factors leading to the outbreak of violence do not disappear once a peace agreement has been signed; in fact, in many cases, levels of violence have actually increased following the official termination of hostilities. By helping to prevent conflicts and ensure conflict-sensitive aid, this is one area where assessment can help USAID to exert the greatest leverage in terms of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of U.S. foreign assistance.

Key preliminary activities to conflict assessment include:

- I. Moving from idea to invitation;
- 2. Establishing a timeline;
- 3. Identifying key stakeholders;
- 4. Assembling an assessment team; and
- 5. Formalizing the plan in a memorandum of understanding.

2.1.1 Idea to Invitation

The impetus for conducting a conflict assessment can originate from the field or from Washington. The preferred process is for assessment requests to originate with, and be driven by, USAID Missions. In some cases, however, DCHA/CMM or a Regional Bureau may initiate conversation about conducting an assessment.

There are two related questions that must be answered at the outset of any assessment process. First, is a conflict assessment the most appropriate activity to meet USAID's needs and objectives? Second, if a conflict assessment is appropriate, what are the expected outputs and outcomes of the assessment activity?

As noted above, conflict assessments are generally used to inform high-level strategy and the understanding of USAID personnel, and consequently are most frequently conducted as part of a strategic planning process, in anticipation of a new program with key conflict dimensions, or in the lead-up to or wake of a potential trigger event like a major election, referendum, outbreak of violence, change in government, or similar event. Interest in conducting an assessment may also arise from a general perception or early warning indication that a country is "at risk" of becoming more unstable, fragile, or violent.

Conflict assessments yield response recommendations based on the diagnosis, but these are not substitutes for program designs or evaluations. Similarly, assessments can help personnel to better understand dynamics of conflict in a country, but often the final briefing is short and directed to the key personnel of a Mission. If the goal is to engage the broader organization in a discussion about conflict, training could be an appropriate substitute or complementary activity. Refer to the box below on CMM Support Services for more information on available technical assistance, or contact DCHA/CMM directly.

¹ For more information on distinctions among conflict response and conflict-sensitive development, refer to the main Conflict Assessment Framework publication.

If an assessment does appear to be the most appropriate activity, then the Mission and CMM should discuss in more detail its various aspects, such as its fundamental purpose, primary audience, key primary and secondary deliverables, and related considerations. This information will inform planning for the assessment and will eventually be documented in the Memorandum of Understanding and the Scope of Work.

Maintaining the integrity and value of the assessment process depends on careful attention to the framework and methodology, but not all assessments are the same. In some cases, and as part of their strategic planning process, Missions undertake conflict assessments in close coordination with other development initiatives—related, for example, to democracy and governance, youth, or economic growth. In other cases, particularly in countries experiencing or recovering from conflict or severe instability, conflict assessments may be conducted à la carte. For instance, they may be done to help ensure that current programming is sensitive to the conflict dynamics and "does no harm." An optimal time to conduct a conflict assessment is in conjunction with a major portfolio review or planning period, such as for a Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

CMM Mission Support Services

CMM provides the following services and products to Missions to better understand and respond to regional or country conflict dynamics:

Early Warning and At-Risk Country Backstopping: CMM staff track conflict trends in at-risk countries and compile the annual Alerts Lists of fragility and instability, which provides Missions and Regional Bureaus with nuanced early warning information.

Assessments: Utilizing the Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF), CMM staff analyzes the conflict drivers, mitigators, and actors in a country context. The CAF provides recommendations for strategic planning processes and conflict-sensitive responses.

Program Design: CMM publications are reference tools that Missions and bureaus can use to incorporate conflict assessment into program design, monitoring, and evaluation. CMM staff may assist in designing peacebuilding or conflict-sensitive programming for Missions.

Strategy Support: The office may tailor workshops, in country or in Washington, to facilitate a Mission's strategic planning as it considers responses to crisis issues. CMM provides conflict-sensitive guidance through the CDCS process.

Reconciliation Fund Support: Missions in at-risk countries may opt to be included in the people-to-people annual program statement, a global competition for targeted grants in reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Instability, Crisis and Recovery Programming (ICRP): CMM maintains an Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) focusing on crisis-related programming including prevention, peacebuilding, peace processes, and recovery.

Training: CMM offers several overseas and Washington-based trainings every year in conflict analysis and programming.

Once the involved parties have decided to conduct an assessment, they must make a number of preliminary decisions related to the scope of the assessment and its type, location, financing, and timing. These might include asking questions like the following:

- Is the primary purpose to help craft future strategies, programs or policies, or to sensitize and inform existing ones?
- What forms of recommendations or analysis would be most useful? For example, would the Mission prefer recommendations tied to particular scenarios, or would they prefer a set of high-level strategic inputs, program ideas/options, or some other deliverable?

- Who is the primary audience? Is it likely that the assessment will be classified, or will it be shared with implementers?
- Will the assessment be national or focused on a particular sub-region?
- Will it focus on particular sectors or programs?
- When will it be feasible to conduct the roughly two weeks of preparation, three weeks of field work, and three weeks of analysis and writing?

Another question for the key parties to pose and answer early on pertains to what degree other agencies within the U.S. Government should be involved in the assessment. If substantial interagency interest is anticipated, then it will be necessary to involve the State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (S/CSO)² and potentially to use an alternate methodology like the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF). Other bilateral and multilateral donors—or the government of the host country itself in some cases—may have shared assessment needs such that a jointly-conducted conflict or fragility assessment could add value to all. One advantage of joint assessments is that they leverage resources and limit demands on the host country government and, thus, advance good international standards of aid effectiveness and international engagement. A disadvantage of joint assessments, on the other hand, is that they are more difficult to coordinate and tend to impose greater burdens of coordination and administrative for donors.

It is critical that the USAID Mission identify one point of contact (POC) as early as possible that will correspond with a DCHA/CMM. The USAID Mission may need to develop an informal committee to support the Mission POC. Frequently, but certainly not always, a staff member within the Mission's Democracy and Governance team serves as the main POC. The Mission may also wish to appoint a POC to handle logistics, as the assessment team will need support for housing, transportation (including possibly Mission vehicles), and related items.

2.1.2 Timing

A typical assessment requires a minimum of eight weeks from start to finish, including one week of preparation, one week to prepare a desk study, three weeks of field work, and, finally, three weeks for final analysis and writing.

Setting dates early is critical.

While it is not realistic to plan the full assessment schedule prior to departure, the overall dates should be agreed upon as early as possible.

In planning and selecting a time for the assessment, it is important to pay particular attention to the external forces that could affect scheduling, such as weather (e.g. rainy seasons), national and religious holidays, school schedules, and so forth. With proper foresight, the team may be in a position to shorten the duration of the assessment and increase its efficiency. Finally, thinking about team structure early on will allow team members to plan their schedules accordingly, including fitting in time for preliminary readings (see section 2.1.4 in this document).

Plan for approximately three weeks of field work.

It typically takes several months from receiving the invitation letter to submitting the final report. Field work for a country-wide assessment takes approximately three weeks, and the final report is typically issued shortly after the team's return. Experience has shown that assessments that take less than three weeks to complete have rarely been able to sufficiently address all aspects of the assessment and, therefore, are of less value to all involved.

² CSO was formerly the Coordinator for Stabilization and Reconstruction (S/CRS).

In addition to conducting field work along the lines of inquiry listed on page 3, it is imperative that the team schedule time at the front and back ends of the field work for the full range of necessary activities. For example, of the three weeks set aside for field work, approximately 20 percent will focus on "getting started" with planning, teambuilding and orientation, 60 percent will focus on direct data gathering, and 20 percent will focus on analysis, synthesis, and documentation/reporting.

Of course, not all assessments are three weeks in duration. If a relatively large team is conducting the assessment, it may take longer. A country's geography, and related logistical considerations, may also affect the timeframe. It is possible to reduce the time somewhat if the assessment covers only specific regions and not the entire country. Finally, if the team wants to integrate findings from the assessment into Mission programs, it may be necessary to add additional days at the end of the field work.

2.1.3 Stakeholders

Any conflict assessment will necessarily involve the participation and cooperation of many individuals and organizations. Similarly, there will be a number of parties with a direct or indirect interest in the outcome of the assessment and in the final report. Thus, once the Mission has received and accepted an assessment invitation, it is important to begin identifying the stakeholders that should be involved. The immediate audience for the conflict assessment report, as well as DCHA/CMM and the team members themselves are the most central stakeholders to the assessment process.³

Washington-Based Stakeholders

The number and identity of participants and stakeholders in Washington, D.C. will vary, but will almost always include, at minimum, DCHA/CMM and the Country Desk Officer, as well as selected country backstops. If technical issues are included in the assessment, then technical experts in Washington may also be involved. In some cases, it may also be desirable to involve representatives from the State Department and Department of Defense. In these situations, staff from the Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation (USAID/DCHA/CMC) and S/CSO may also be invited to meetings and to share their input.

Field-Based Stakeholders

As noted earlier, it is essential for the Field Mission to identify a POC for the assessment. This individual is often the Democracy and Governance Officer, but could also be from a number of other functions at the Mission, including the Program Office. If a Regional Conflict Advisor has been deployed nearby, that individual may be involved as a key stakeholder as well. The assessment team lead should encourage the Mission POC to notify the Embassy and alert the Ambassador and others of the intention to conduct an assessment. It is extremely important to receive *clear approval from the Ambassador* early on in the assessment process.

2.1.4 Assessment Team Composition

The assessment team is comprised of those individuals who will conduct the assessment. In general, a USAID conflict assessment team consists of roughly four to six individuals, including one or more representatives of DCHA/CMM, one or more representatives from the USAID Mission (including, where possible, a Foreign Service National, or FSN), a consultant, and a translator.⁴ Benefits of this structure include:

³ In circumstances when the assessment team is particularly large or when there is considerable interagency involvement, it may make sense to distinguish between a "core team" and "extended team" to describe different individuals involved in conducting the assessment.

⁴ There can, of course, be limitations to USG involvement including the following: inability to travel to less secure areas of a country, perceived bias or conflict of interest of USAID personnel in talking to some interviewees or recommending programs, and the ability to commit and participate as a full team member. In these select cases, making greater use of external consultants, or working through civil society partners, may be a preferable approach to conducting an assessment.

- 1. Increased opportunity for learning among all parties, especially for the Mission;
- 2. *Increased ease* with which the participating Mission will take "ownership" of the findings once the assessment is complete; and
- 3. Increased sensitivity on the part of the assessment team to handle and convey delicate conflict-related questions, particularly among Mission personnel and within the U.S. Government.

Broadly speaking, there are important comparative advantages to including personnel from each of the three backgrounds, as outlined in the following table.

Representation	Comparative Advantage			
	This table is not intended to be a "job description," but rather a suggestive catalogue of unique skills and perspectives that is needed for an assessment team.			
Mission Personnel	As Missions are typically the primary end-user of the assessment's findings and final report, including Mission staff matters a great deal. Key stakeholders from the Mission must be included on the assessment team in order for it to achieve the overall aims of a conflict assessment. Mission personnel and FSNs in particular bring knowledge of local culture and cultural sensitivity. USAID Missions and Embassies are also the proper liaisons to host country governments and the USG interagency.			
CMM Staff	The role of the CMM representative, when present, is to be the lead expert on technical and methodological issues surrounding the CAF. This individual also manages the analytical process and synthesis of findings, as described later in this report. CMM staff brings technical expertise in conflict issues, as well as knowledge of how different USG operating units in different countries have utilized assessments effectively.			
Consultants	Consultants often play a lead role in drafting the final report, and they can provide immediate technical and logistical support to fill gaps in personnel or to meet tight deadlines. National security classification systems, however, can present barriers to a consultant's full participation. There can also be limitations to USG involvement, such as restrictions on travel, potential perceptions of bias, and simple staffing constraints.			

When conducting large scale or interagency assessments, certain adjustments to the team structure and approach may be necessary. For example, as more team members are added, the facilitation and management tasks will increase. Hiring a dedicated facilitator for meetings is one option. Establishing "core" and "extended" teams, or other such groupings, is another option. One approach to consider is to divide the role of lead writer. One individual can primarily focus on the technical content of the work while the team leader/manager handles the increased logistical work and financial management that will be required for a larger assessment team. No matter how large the group of stakeholders is, core team members, and at least two report writers, should be fully involved for the entire duration of the assessment.

When there are six or more team members, it is advisable to divide them into sub-teams. The team leader will negotiate with the team members and POC to assign roles and divide up responsibilities. Ideally, there should be at least one person per sub-team with strong technical knowledge of conflict issues and the CAF methodology. With this in mind, the team can be subdivided either geographically or thematically.

Regardless of the team size and the way it is structured, all assessment teams should have capacity in certain skill sets. These skills are listed in the **chart below**. It may be possible to find a single team

member with two or more of these skills and, therefore, each skill identified in the table below is not necessarily filled by a separate person.

Requisite Skills for Conflict Assessments				
Skill Type	Description			
Conflict Expertise	It is essential that the team include someone who has experience in conflict settings and is familiar with the literature surrounding the causes and consequences of violent conflict. This person should be familiar with the Conflict Assessment Framework, be committed to its implementation in the field, and be able to include the methodology in the report itself.			
Country Expertise	The team should include at least one individual with deep knowledge of the country and/or region. Ideally a local, the country expert(s) should also have a strong understanding of USAID programs and approaches in the subject country.			
Facilitation	At least one member of the team should be skilled in leading large group discussions in an unbiased manner. This skill is particularly important for large teams that include representatives from a range of participating agencies. It can also be useful when focus groups are included as a key interviewing method.			
Writing	The lead writer should have proven experience writing assessment-type documents for a government audience. Other members of the team may be expected to write specific sections of the assessment as agreed upon with the team leader.			
Management / Leadership	The team leader is expected to exercise leadership regarding airing substantive issues, communicating with USAID/USG, and managing interpersonal dynamics, process, and logistics. Prior experience in managing or leading a field team, particularly USAID assessment teams, is preferred. Ideally, the team leader will also have strong research and analytical skills, particularly if the lead writer is not a separate team member. Responsibilities will include: ensuring proper data collection methods, coordinating meetings, making travel arrangements, collecting receipts, and managing petty cash.			
Data Collection and Analysis	At least one member of the team, who may also be the country expert or team leader, should have robust experience with data collection methodologies. This work may include experiences with focus groups, key informant interviews, surveys, etc. S/he should also have the ability to lead the analysis and to combine local field-based research with broader analytical trends and observations. This work includes explaining and applying findings and recommendations following the assessment.			
Logistics	This individual should have enough local knowledge to deal with local travel and security arrangements, to set up meetings, to rent "safe" meeting space, and to understand the security situation and related procedures, etc. It is also optimal to have a USAID logistics coordinator in the field. This person serves several roles: informing implementing partners, etc. of the assessment; preparing official USG correspondence as needed by the team; and, when necessary, setting up USG meetings.			
Interpreter/ Translator	A translator might be used to go through key documents and data in local language(s). If a team is splitting up to cover different regions and lacks local language skills, multiple translators may be needed. Translators should have experience in the technical area of work and be perceived as neutral by interlocutors. It is seldom a good idea to rely on team members with local language skills for interpretation, not because their skills might not be good, but because it makes it difficult for them to fulfill their main role.			

Identity Dynamics on the Assessment Team

All people have identities that both influence their perspectives, as well as influence how others perceive them. These identities can include different ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, nationalities, and political

orientations. It is important to be attentive to how the identities of the core team members may affect how the team is perceived in-country, how the team interprets the data it collects, and how the team operates internally.

If FSNs, for example, have been active in a dominant political party or opposition movement, or if they come from an identity group salient to the conflict, this fact may influence the shape of the assessment. In other cases, USAID staff may have been working on a particular program of relevance to the assessment for a long time and, therefore, may have very strong feelings that need to be artfully navigated. Lastly, *gender* can exert a powerful but subtle influence across the spectrum and underscores the necessity of establishing gender balance on the team, particularly when gender sensitivity is needed for interviews with host country nationals.

2.1.5 Formalizing the Discussion

Once consensus has been established on the general scope and shape of the assessment, it can be formalized through an invitation to conduct an assessment. The invitation should preferably originate from the Mission Director and be addressed to the Director of CMM.

In addition to the formal invitation, CMM and the USAID Mission should draft and agree to a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** that will serve as the "charter" of the assessment process and identify the members of the assessment team. The MOU may also be referred to as the **Statement of Work (SOW)**, although it is not to be confused with the Scope of Work (SOW) between USAID and the Contractor (see next section). The MOU defines expectations about the inputs that will be needed for the assessment process, and it addresses topics such as the purpose of the assessment, key questions to be investigated, the composition of the team, and approximate timing.

The following is a list of key points to consider:

- The MOU must be conveyed to the Mission Director well before any major planning, investment or contracting is underway. It is one of the most important items to have in the early stages of the assessment.
- Maintaining open and frequent communication with all members of the assessment team is crucial. Regular teleconferences with staff in the field, weekly updates via email, and the use of new web tools are all at the team's disposal. In some cases, expectations about the frequency and format of communication will be documented in the MOU.
- The MOU helps the Mission and the USG to clarify key relationships and serves as a vehicle for circulating information and soliciting input on the assessment.

For a sample MOU/SOW, refer to Annex D.

2.2 PREPARATION

The preparation phase includes four key components:

- I. Developing a Scope of Work
- 2. Preparing an Assessment Support Document
- 3. Conducting Washington-Based Consultations
- 4. Arranging Pre-Departure Logistics

2.2.1 Scope of Work

The Scope of Work (SOW) is the agreement between USAID and a contractor to provide assessment support services, including consultants if needed. It describes the structure of the assessment and outlines the expected outputs and results. The SOW should not be confused with the Statement of

Work, i.e., the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CMM and the USAID Mission, which is described in the previous section.

A typical Scope of Work includes sections outlined in the table below.

Elements of a Conflict Ass	sessment Scope of Work (SOW)
I. Background	This section provides a brief description of the conflict and its relevance to USAID or the USG, including a description of any strategies, programs, or policies that are of relevance to the assessment's purpose.
2. Purpose	This section articulates the objectives of the conflict assessment, including how the assessment findings will be used to inform decision-making.
3. Methodology	This section identifies the basic framework for data collection and analysis as described in the CAF 2.0. It describes the assessment's basic steps and highlights data collection techniques that will be employed. It also outlines the requirements for pre-departure preparation, desk study/literature review, field work, analysis, briefings, and post-deployment writing.
4. Team Requirements	This section describes team requirements in terms of skill sets, rather than individual roles. Requisite skill sets include: conflict expertise, country expertise, facilitation, report writing, management/leadership, data collection and analysis, logistics, and interpretation/translations. (See Section 2.1.4).
5. Technical Direction	This section outlines the details of any particular approaches to data collection. Frequently-used data collection methods include: interviews, roundtables, focus group discussions, observations, perception surveys, and review of existing literature or quantitative data.
6. Deliverables	This section describes the contractor's expected deliverables. Typically, these requirements include participation in pre-departure analysis and planning, field work research, in-brief and out-brief presentations to the USAID Mission and other stakeholders, preparation and submission of a draft and final report, and related technical support.
7. Timeframe/Schedule	This section describes the expectations around the timeframe needed for the assessment. The schedule should allow sufficient leeway to USAID to accommodate unexpected changes in plans.
8. Budget and Level of Effort	Depending on the needs of the assessment and type of contractual instrument employed, this section may or may not provide estimates of personnel time (Level of Effort, or LOE) and other acceptable costs, such as for transportation, security, or the use of a survey instrument.

For more detailed guidance on developing a SOW, refer to the supplemental Guidance for SOW available from DCHA/CMM.

2.2.2 Assessment Support Document

The assessment support document is an analytical tool that provides support to the process and the team with a common reference point. It may take a variety of forms. Frequently, it takes the form of a desk study, which presents relevant data and background about the country. This information can range from a relatively straightforward presentation of facts to a more synthesized analytic document. Literature reviews and issues papers can also orient the assessment team to the salient perspectives and issues of the conflict or country. In some cases, enough is known about the conflict dynamics in question that the document becomes a rough draft or preliminary outline of the ultimate report. This latter approach, however, must be tempered by the need to conduct fresh, objective, and timely analysis that

reflects current realities. Regardless of the approach taken, one of the most useful functions of an assessment support document is to assist the team to formulate focused lines of inquiry based on preliminary conflict diagnosis and identified gaps in current knowledge.

For more information on preparing and utilizing assessment support documents, refer to the supplemental guidance on that topic available from DCHA/CMM.

Data

The preparation of the Assessment Support Document is the best opportunity to collect and report on the facts relevant to the conflict diagnosis, especially as related to the context. Comprehensive sources for high-quality data include:

- USAID Assessment Reports
- USAID Economic Analysis and Data Services (EADS)⁵
- State Department Country Reports and Cables
- CIA World Fact Book
- Economist Intelligence Unit
- OECD
- The World Bank
- United Nations Agencies

Needless to say, not all contextual information lends itself to quantification. For this reason, other assessments—particularly conflict and democracy/governance assessments—by USAID or its development partners should also be reviewed. Country and program reports from U.S. Government agencies and reputable NGOs (non-advocacy)—such as the U.S. Institute of Peace or the International Crisis Group—may also be very helpful.

2.2.3 Washington-Based Consultations

In conjunction with preparing the desk study or support document, the assessment team should arrange for Washington-based consultations to inform the analysis and planning. Usually, this consultation process involves both individual interviews and a roundtable. Consultations should incorporate USG stakeholders, development partner representatives, country/regional analysts, and others.⁶

The purpose of the roundtable is to identify the most salient issues relevant to the conflict and to formulate the central hypotheses that need to be explored during the field work and data collection phase. Ideally, the desk study will serve as the basis for discussion. This is not a place for producing concrete findings and recommendations, but rather to set an agenda for further research. Those at the roundtable may also be able to alert the assessment team to areas of particular political sensitivity in the country.

Roundtable discussions should remain informal and academic in nature, without the need for expert facilitation. Having a note-taker, however, is desirable to ensure that useful suggestions are recorded and that proceedings are shared with team members in the field. Generally, a roundtable requires about half a day to complete.

⁵ USAID's Knowledge Service Center (KSC) and <u>Economic Analysis and Data Services</u> (EADS) may provide useful support in locating and analyzing data.

⁶ Frequently, participants are drawn from academic institutions, knowledgeable NGOs (non-advocacy), other bilateral or multilateral donors, think tanks, or other research bodies like the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars or the U.S. Institute of Peace.

2.2.4 Pre-Departure Logistics

In the lead up to the field work, there are two overarching logistical priorities:

- 1. Arranging international travel for the team to the assessment country.
- 2. Planning in-country travel for the team.

Of course, making progress on logistical planning depends on how much progress has been made on the SOW and the preliminary work on team composition.

International Travel

Procedures for making international travel arrangements vary considerably according to the status of the traveler—U.S. Direct Hire, Institutional Contractor, Consultant, etc.—and are not discussed in this document.

The assessment's dates, however, should be firmly established between the team lead and the Mission and clearly listed in the SOW prior to booking any travel. Teams will find it valuable to schedule their arrival in-country well enough in advance of work days to adjust to the time zone difference and to resolve any last-minute logistical details. If altitude or extreme climate is an issue in the assessment country, then it would be prudent to allow for sufficient adjustment time.

In-Country Travel Planning: Pre-Departure

While it is critical to begin planning in-country work assignments and logistics well in advance of departure, it is unlikely that all details will be finalized before the full assessment team—including staff at the Mission—has had a chance to hold initial meetings.

Mission policies vary in the level of access and support afforded to non-USG consultants. In some instances, consultants (non-USG) will not be allowed to utilize Mission computers or Mission space. It is important to clarify Mission policies well in advance to avoid embarrassment and to allow for time to make appropriate adjustments to work schedules.

For USG staff, it is not unreasonable to expect the Mission to provide logistical support in the form of vehicles and local lodging arrangements. In those situations where the assessment is conducted principally by consultants, or when there are restrictions on USG staff movement outside the capital city or in the country, then the team will need to rely on local-hire consultants to provide logistical support. The budget should reflect these needs.

Putting a single person in charge of the logistical planning will help streamline communication and ensure that important items do not slip off the agenda. It is ideal if the local-hire consultants can plan the itinerary, make logistical arrangements, begin scheduling interviews, conduct pre-interviews, etc. prior to the core team's arrival in the country.

Some helpful questions to ask include the following:

Logistical Questions

- <u>Pre-Planning/International Travel</u> How early should the team arrive in-country? Is altitude adjustment likely to pose a problem? Where will the team stay in the capital? Has the Embassy been notified of, and given its approval for, the assessment? How much support is the Mission able and willing to provide?
- <u>Security</u> What is the security situation? Are there travel restrictions for USG team members?
- Travel Itinerary/Field Work Who will be the primary person responsible for planning logistics? Where are the teams going? How will meetings be arranged in the field? Are translation or interpretation services needed? Does the team have a plan in place to maintain objectivity and conduct critical analysis?

- <u>Team Composition</u> Is the team composed primarily of USG personnel or consultants? Will there be sub-teams? How will they be divided? Does each team have key skills?
- <u>Transportation</u> How many vehicles and drivers are available? Can the team drive? Do they need to fly?
- <u>Communications</u> How will teams communicate (internally, across locations, and with the Mission/Embassy)? How often will the team regroup during the assessment? How frequently will the teams check-in and engage in planning?

2.3 ORIENTATION

The orientation phase covers the assessment team's first several days in-country. During this time, there are three main tasks to accomplish:

- I. Building the assessment team;
- 2. Developing a relationship among the team and stakeholders; and
- 3. Finalizing the data collection process and associated logistics.

This list is not necessarily intended to be sequential. Collectively, the orientation tasks will take approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ days at the outset of the in-country field work. Orientation cannot be abbreviated.

2.3.1 Building the Team

Teambuilding is not a luxury; it is a necessity. The complex demands of a conflict assessment make it critical for the team members to reach a shared understanding of the assessment methodology and strategy and to develop internal relationships and communication strategies that allow them to work together seamlessly. It is possible that the first morning in-country will also be the first time that all members of the core team are in the same physical space. The following list outlines the considerable work that must be done to ensure that these individuals form a cohesive team.

Begin with introductions, expectations, and concerns, including exploring definitions of success. Icebreakers and similar exercises offer a way to facilitate introductions and get to know one another, although the amount of time committed to these activities will vary depending on the diversity of the group and whether it has had prior experience working together. Often, the process is best accomplished with the help of an experienced facilitator—either one of the team members, or an outside consultant.

Next, discuss the analytical process by introducing and/or reviewing the Conflict Assessment Framework.

At least one team member must bring expertise in the CAF 2.0 and methodology. This person is primarily responsible for ensuring that the assessment's methodology is applied. It is important, however, for all team members to be familiar with the framework. Ideally, team members will have already participated in the Conflict 102 and Advanced Conflict Assessment courses offered by CMM and USAID University. This segment of the orientation will, essentially, be a condensed course introducing the CAF 2.0 and it allows participants to apply their learning to a case study country. CMM offers a variety of training packages and other materials that can serve as the foundation for developing this part of the orientation.

The team should allow sufficient time for a deep discussion on the assessment framework and methodological expectations, since this will be a major focus of the field work. For example, if the team intends to use headlines as part of the synthesis (described below), then these should be introduced at this stage.

At this point, it is important for the team to establish clear expectations of individual team members' responsibilities with respect to the methodology. For example, if there will be a data collection form, then it should be clear to all involved who is responsible for completing it, how, when, and to whom it must be submitted.

Discuss the Assessment Support Document and any other background reports.

Prior to this stage, the team will have already read the Assessment Support Document (see Section 2.2.2 above) and established whether there are other key documents that all assessment team members should review. Other documents might include influential reports, articles, or operational documents, such as the MOU or a draft CDCS. As with the Washington-based roundtable, the priority is to identify gaps in information (in the context of the assessment framework) and to highlight any areas where there may be differences in perspective or where further clarification may be necessary.

The team's country experts should have the opportunity to share additional information and perspectives. The ultimate aim is to develop a robust collective familiarity and sense of "ownership" of the information so that the team can effectively convey and represent it to other stakeholders.

By this stage, the team should have formulated clear, shared ideas about:

- The primary audience for the assessment report, as well as their needs and expectations from the process;
- The central narrative hypotheses about the country's conflict drivers and the dynamics related to both peace and conflict; and
- The outstanding empirical questions (related to the hypotheses), which will be investigated during the field work.

Drafting and reviewing the interview language.

Assessment teams should be careful not to confuse interviews and focus groups with surveys. In a formal opinion poll, it is critical to conduct proper sampling and to ask the same, exact, carefully formulated questions in order to infer statistical significance to answers and extrapolate responses to a much larger population. Assessment interviews, by contrast, are generally intended to provide more complex narrative information to fill gaps in knowledge, establish frames of reference, capture arguments, and identify areas for further inquiry. Therefore, while asking similar questions can allow for some basic comparison across interviews, assessment teams will generally find it advantageous to adapt their phrasing and interview structure to the situation. This approach may entail asking follow up questions, challenging responses, and generally adopting a more dynamic and flexible approach to interactions with interviewees.

Nonetheless, the team may find it helpful to establish an informal set of standard questions. Local people, especially FSNs, can be a valuable resource for vetting interview questions with respect to cultural and linguistic appropriateness and for highlighting potential sensitivities. There are also many protocol issues, such as with host country government officials, to be considered. If the data collection will involve translators, then some agreement must be reached on how, and how not, to utilize them.

Data collection can also be culturally sensitive. Some cultures discuss conflicts quite openly, for example, while others are relatively closed. The form and process adopted for interviews or focus groups needs to respect those preferences.

Review the team's external message.

The team will need to come to a general agreement on how to describe data collection methods to external audiences. Transparency is important from a methodological and ethical standpoint; however, language and narrative can affect how the people perceive the assessment. Members of the host government, NGOs, local citizens, the media, and others are all likely to come into contact with the conflict assessment team. Therefore, devising an appropriate communication strategy is in order.

Frequently, assessment teams find it valuable to describe their work as "examining sources of peace, security, and development," rather than using the term "conflict." Similarly, under some circumstances, it may not be appropriate for team members to distribute their standard business cards; alternate cards with more benign titles may be desirable (e.g., program specialist rather than conflict specialist). Consistent with U.S. law, and under no circumstances, may an assessment be utilized for purposes of intelligence collection or covert operations.

See Annex B for more information on issues related to ethical considerations, standards for research on human subjects, and protection of interviewees.

Clarify roles.

It is important during this initial phase to review how the team will function, to clarify expectations, and to specify team member's roles. For example, will one member be the team leader who will introduce the group every time, or will it be a shared responsibility? Who will record the interviews, or will it be a shared responsibility? If there is a decision to utilize sub-teams, will the schedule provide time for the sub-teams to meet?

2.3.2 Developing Relationships

Just as it was essential to involve Mission leadership early on in the assessment process, these relationships should also be maintained and deepened in the field work phase. The team lead on logistics is frequently the best-placed person to arrange and facilitate these meetings; although, in some cases, the Mission (or Embassy) POC will be the more appropriate person to do so.

The team should schedule:

- An in-briefing with the Mission Director to receive guidance on the scope of work and to discuss any other critical issues of concern;
- A mandatory in-briefing with the **Regional Security Officer** (RSO), to be followed by regular communication with this individual on in-country travel; and
- A roundtable discussion or similar forum with other **Stakeholders** (or the expanded team).
 This task is, ideally, done in the context of reviewing and finalizing the Assessment Support Document (e.g., Desk Study) and can identify information gaps, disagreements, differing interpretations, and areas for further inquiry.

Discussions within the assessment team should also be ongoing and should review similar questions to those identified earlier on in this document, such as: Are there other areas the team should visit? Are there important interviews that need to be arranged? Are there any gaps in the current data collection plan?

2.3.3 Finalize the Data Collection Process and Associated Logistics

The team usually cannot make final decisions on where to travel, who to interview, and what to ask prior to arriving in the country and holding the preliminary discussions described above.

Formulating good data collection plans, which requires a shared and solid understanding of the assessment framework methodology, is critical. However, formulating such plans and attendant logistics within a limited timeframe can create significant tensions. Owing to the different cultures across the USG—and diverse local protocols for arranging meetings with government officials, for example—the team will need to remain both determined and flexible in making its arrangements for data collection. This work may entail balancing competing interests and requirements against the goal to collect the best data possible.

Data Collection Form

It is important for the team to explain how the data collection form will be utilized and what types of information should be collected. For example, should standardized questions be used? The answer to

this question will depend not only on the research needs, but also on public perceptions (i.e., what happens if the team asks certain questions of one group, but not another). Someone with a strong understanding of local culture will provide valuable input on these perceptions. For example, in some situations, gendered dynamics between interviewers and interviewees may be particularly salient and have implications for how the interview team is structured.

Data Quality Standards

Not all information collected during an assessment is of equal quality. Some information may be incorrect, or certain interviewees may even provide deliberately misleading information. Similarly, information collected in focus groups or public settings may be biased due to groupthink, political/security considerations, or related effects. It is impossible to avoid receiving some biased or erroneous information, but there are steps the team can take to improve the likelihood of collecting good information, as well as to structure the analysis and synthesis to adjust for possible error. For this reason, it is essential to have a member of the team who is familiar with qualitative social science research methodologies. This individual, and the whole team, should discuss their approach to maintain data quality and integrity.

Logistics

Depending on the model to be utilized, the responsibility for arranging logistics like transportation, accommodations, and meetings may fall to the local Mission and/or Embassy personnel, a contractor or both. It is important to clarify as early as possible what those roles are, who is taking on what tasks, and what critical logistical issues remain unaddressed.

Communication

Sub-teams need to determine how they will communicate with one another, as well as with the Mission and, as necessary, with the Embassy. Team leaders can benefit by communicating with one another frequently throughout the data collection period. Whether such communication is in-person, via phone, or the internet is best determined by the practical demands of the country and schedule.

2.4 FIELD WORK: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

During the data collection phase, the core team will conduct a series of interviews and focus groups, probably in the capital and/or in targeted regions of the country. They will implement the data collection plan, which has been finalized in the opening days of in-country teamwork.

This phase requires the team to collect adequate information on the various components of the CAF 2.0, including on grievances and resiliencies, key mobilizers, trends, and triggers. Through field work, the team will begin to confirm or modify the hypotheses that emerged from initial analysis and desk study. The field work provides an opportunity to establish areas of contention or disagreement, and to gain an accurate picture of reality, or, alternatively, to describe the multiple versions of reality held by different stakeholders.

A few principles guide this process:

First, the interviews and assessment must stay firmly and clearly tied to the analytical categories of the assessment framework. Questions needn't use the specific terminology or categories of the framework, but interviewers should never let the model leave their mind.

Second, it generally makes sense to interview individuals early on who are in the position to provide local validation or challenges to the desk study or other core documents. In other words, the team should contact knowledgeable persons from local think tanks, universities, or NGOs. These individuals should be consulted again towards the end of the assessment process as a means to vet conclusions and hypotheses. As much as possible, they should be debriefed and kept informed (e.g. by sharing a copy of the report, if allowable) after the field work is complete.

Third, prior to each interview or focus group, the team should clarify the nature and focus of its interest. Is there a conflict dynamic or trajectory that the interviewee can help explain? Which facts, feelings, or forecasts is the team seeking? The questions will flow from this determination.

Fourth, even in situations with many sub-teams and dispersed interviews, there will be some cases where the entire team should be present for a particular discussion. In these circumstances, the Mission should convene panels or other groupings of key people to discuss particularly salient issues.

When it comes to data collection, assessment teams can choose from a number of options. Frequently, assessments incorporate a mix of methods. The most common are the following:

- **Key Informant Interviews (in the field):** Interviews can be rich sources of information. Typically, the assessment team may seek interviews with key USAID stakeholders, including Mission staff and Chiefs of Party for major programs, government officials in the host country, political party leaders (including the opposition), other donors and international agencies, academics; journalists, civil society members, and others. It is important that interviewees represent a wide variety of viewpoints, including those of all the major parties to the conflict. Generally, a semi-structured interviewing approach is best, but as team interviewing proceeds and as knowledge of the conflict dynamics grow, the questions may need to change.
- Focus Group Discussions: This form of interviewing brings people of similar background together (e.g., a group of women, men, or youth from the same village). The group is asked to respond to questions about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a particular service, program, situation, or idea. This format provides an interactive setting in which the team can collect qualitative data where participants are free to talk with, and among, other group members. Proper focus group sessions are time-consuming to plan, arrange, and conduct. They also produce extensive transcripts. Hence, conducting focus group discussions adds significantly to the time needed for data analysis. On the one hand, focus groups allow for many more individuals to be consulted and they provide an imperfect means for assessing which viewpoints are more widely held than others. On the other hand, the views expressed in focus groups are not necessarily held by everyone; social dynamics within the group can also lead to group think, intimidation, censure, and other forms of message distortion.
- **Observations:** Both formal and informal observations can be a useful part of an assessment. Formal observations—or where the team uses an observation guide to look for specific things—can provide data for further analysis and triangulation with other methods. Informal observation is less intrusive and can be done without prior knowledge of those being observed. It can be subjective to the observer and typically does not provide hard data for use in analysis. Rather, it is a means of confirming other data found.
- **Perception Survey:** A survey—often conducted at the household level—provides the opportunity to assess changes in perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards the conflict situation. It is an expensive and time-consuming task, but the information it yields comes with a high degree of precision and confidence. A survey generally requires a *minimum of four months*, with substantial administration required. As such, it is generally not feasible for the assessment team to be closely involved in survey management or design during the field work period. Rather, a survey is typically conducted just prior to, or following, an assessment. Frequently, there are relevant surveys and polls already available with information relevant to the assessment. Ideally, this information should be collected as part of preparing the Assessment Support Document.
- Other Data: Existing survey data, government service statistics, income and employment data, data concerning arrests and detentions, etc., may all shed light on the underpinnings of key grievances. This data should generally be collected prior to the field work and when the Assessment Support Document is being prepared.

The above list is not exhaustive; other methods of data collection may also be considered. However, if innovative or specialized methodologies will be requested by USAID, they should be included in the SOW to the contractor.

2.4.1 Analysis

The Conflict Assessment Framework (2.0) is the companion document to this guide and provides extensive additional information on analyzing findings. The framework need not be repeated here.

However, it is worth noting that logistical arrangements may affect the quality and scope of the team's analysis. For example, if the team is broken into two or three sub-teams and is collecting data outside of the capital, there may be little to no time for robust joint analysis with the whole team. Therefore, the team may need to set aside additional time back in the capital to allow for an extended analysis and synthesis review.

The goal, through careful planning and the orientation training, is to have the team working from the same core analytical framework.

That said, the CAF 2.0 is intended to be a tool to assist the team in conducting sound analysis. Its purpose is not to validate the framework, but to produce valuable information for the USAID Mission. To that end, the team should focus on critical thinking in their analysis, not on over-adherence to doctrine. The CAF 2.0 may, however, also be useful in analyzing certain forms of violence beyond civil war—such as terrorism, violent extremism, and violent crime. Supplemental reference materials may further this analysis. For instance, USAID's *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism* can serve as a useful resource in instances where violent extremism is of particular relevance to the conflict dynamics.

Using the CAF 2.0 methodology for generating response options implies that certain types of data should be specifically sought out during the assessment. This approach might include collecting information on not only an analysis of the conflict, but also on resiliencies, conflict mitigating factors, and bright spots. Similarly, determining where USAID's resources are best-poised to achieve overall impact in the country context requires the team to look for evidence of how existing programs are perceived, as well as for data on activities and policies of other donors and external actors.

Ultimately, the data collection plan should emerge from analytical needs, not the inverse. The function of data collection is not to interview as many people as possible, but rather to generate data to inform hypotheses and to guide further inquiry. Thus, as field work comes to a close, the marginal utility of an additional day of interviewing will often be superseded by the greater need for the assessment team to proceed with final analysis and synthesis.

2.5 SYNTHESIS

Synthesis is the process by which different parts of the analysis are integrated into a more holistic, comprehensive, and systematic narrative. In practice, synthesis occurs in tandem with analysis, but for purposes of assessment planning, the formal synthesis phase begins shortly after the team completes its data collection. By this point, team members will be deeply immersed in information, and many will have stronger ideas about the conflict dynamics that are most salient and why. The purpose of synthesis is to bring together these impressions and turn them into a commonly shared understanding of the country's conflict dynamics.

This process is, essentially, an extended discussion among team members. The degree of formality, the style of facilitation, and the general structure of the proceedings will depend on the size of the team and the precise methodology they have employed. If the team is relatively small, synthesis will likely occur organically during the data collection phase and through conversation and shared reflection. If, however, the assessment team is large, or has been divided into sub-groups, the many smaller conversations will

need to be captured and integrated. In either case, it is necessary to set aside time for synthesis and, of course, this process will require more time in larger teams than in smaller ones.

There is no fixed procedure for synthesizing the data and information from the assessment. However, practices that have worked well—and are briefly described below—include "Headlines" and "Systems Mapping."

The process of synthesis, whether it follows one of the models below or uses another approach, requires creativity. It involves "seeing the forest for the trees." This approach typically requires the team to set aside both the CAF, as well as accumulated data, in order to brainstorm and form ideas. Ultimately, however, all synthesized information must be rooted in evidence and empirical data. All synthesis results should be tied back to the evidence produced through the Assessment Support Document, or collected through field work.

2.5.1 Headlines: A Four-Step Process for Synthesis

The overarching idea behind the "headlines" exercise is to help the team reach consensus on the conflict dynamics by collaboratively sorting information about the assessment findings. The procedure is organized into four steps as follows:

Step One: Writing Headlines

Each team member is given a stack of large post-it notes, with no minimum or limit to the number of post-its per person. Each individual writes a set of "headlines" that he or she feels captures something important about what s/he has learned. "Headlines" in this case are simple, short, declarative sentences that capture an idea in an interesting way—much like a newspaper headline. Where possible, individuals should indicate sources of support for their headline—the interviews or documents from the assessment that the headline is based upon, for example. Each team member can be asked to develop headlines the night prior to the formal exercise.

Step Two: Validating and Combining Headlines

Once all the team members have written their headlines on the post-it notes, the team members split into two groups and work independently. Individuals within each group read out their headlines in turn and then cluster similar headlines. Through this process, the group identifies areas of convergence, as well as any areas of divergence among observations.

Step Three: Further Distilling

Upon completion of the small group process, each group will have a smaller number of headlines than when they began. The process from Step Two is then repeated with the entire group, which results in yet a smaller number of headlines.

Step Four: Using the Headlines

The resulting consensus-based group of headlines may be utilized in two ways:

- One option is to organize the headlines according to the analytical categories described in Chapter 3 of the Conflict Assessment Framework document: namely, the conflict dynamics, trajectories, and their component elements. Inevitably, some headlines will seem to straddle multiple categories, but organizing them in this way allows the team to easily reference the main ideas to be conveyed in later presentations to the country team. For this process to work, however, all team members must have a strong understanding of the assessment framework.
- Another option is to organize the headlines around a compelling analytic narrative. The team's
 objective in examining the headlines is to find overarching themes or connections that can be
 used to explain the relationships among the headlines. This process can be time consuming
 because it requires multiple reorganizations of the consensus headlines. However, the end result
 is frequently a model that adequately captures the critical dynamics at play and facilitates the
 production of the final report.

Step Five: Validate the Results

Once the headlines have been developed and an analytical narrative emerges, the team should set aside time to validate the findings. Are all conclusions grounded in firm evidence or reasonable assumptions? Do the headlines capture the most *salient* and *prevalent* feelings and forecasts collected through the assessment process? Are there any outliners, or observations that are outside the norm? Why? Through an iterative, creative process, the team will form a coherent story rooted in careful observation and robust analysis.

2.5.2 Systems Thinking and Mapping

Systems thinking and mapping is another approach to facilitate synthesis and it draws on a wide range of disciplines and theoretical approaches. It focuses on interactions among interdependent components of a system and can be particularly helpful in dynamic and unpredictable situations, such as those found in conflict contexts.

Systems thinking is based on the premise that, as Aristotle observed in his *Metaphysics*, the "whole is greater than the sum of the parts." It looks not only at individual elements or factors of a system, but also at the interconnections and relationships among them. In this way, it tracks causal relationships that are not linear (or unidirectional), but dynamic.

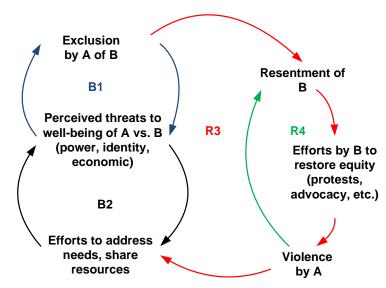
Common system dynamics have been identified in a number of conflicts. These archetypes provide a structural template for analyzing conflict dynamics that can help focus attention on the heart of the problem and explain why and how some negative societal patterns are "resilient," or hard to change.

Using a systems thinking approach to create a visual map or diagram of the conflict diagnosis is one way help prioritize and synthesize the many factors in any given conflict. The process of drawing and adjusting the systems map can help analysts to identify the most important pieces of information, and more importantly, to demonstrate how the various determinants of stability and instability are connected.

For example, a common social pattern driving grievance involves exclusion and discrimination. The diagram below shows this relationship. Beginning in the bottom left corner of the diagram is a core political dilemma for the state: how to address needs and share resources. Imagine two identity groups (A and B) in this state. The allocation of power and economics, viewed through the lens of identity, in this particular conflict dynamic leads to exclusion of group A by group B. That pattern of exclusion in turn feeds a deepening feeling of perceived threat by group A—a "vicious cycle," labeled B1.

The pattern deepens. Shifting to the right in the system map, exclusion—a response to perceived threat to each identity group's power, economic gain, identity, security, etc.—mitigates the threat in the short run for the dominant party (B), but has a side effect over time of generating a cycle of resentment and grievances. B makes efforts to address these grievances and restore equity, but the process of doing so leads to repression on the part of A, which further deepens the pattern of exclusion (R3) and resentment (R4). This makes it more difficult for the two groups to work together to resolve their fundamental political dilemma of how to address needs and share resources. In other words, continuing vicious cycles of repression and eventual violence make efforts to address the problem through power-sharing, development, etc. even more difficult. The dominant party becomes "addicted" to the symptomatic solution, such that the addiction itself becomes an additional problem.

Exclusion Archetype



The map above of the "exclusion" archetype helps to illustrate two benefits to systems thinking and mapping. First, the process of mapping forces analysts to identify causal connections among factors (analysis) and to perceive inter-relationships among the different factors (synthesis). Second, the systems map itself is an effective visual aid for quickly communicating a complex set of relationships. Audiences can clearly see that any response to this pattern must interfere with a key link in the overall dynamic.

While the practice of systems mapping can be somewhat complicated, DCHA/CMM is currently developing materials to assist assessment teams in the application of systems thinking to conflict analysis. For more information, refer to the report to USAID on Systems Thinking in Conflict Analysis: Principles and Application (2012).

SECTION 3: RESPONSE

3.1 OVERVIEW

Assessments consist of two parts: diagnosis and response. While identifying and analyzing response options flows from the diagnosis, the two parts should develop concurrently. They do not always take place in a strictly linear or sequential fashion.

The response component of conflict assessments typically consists of recommendations that the team makes to the USAID Mission. It is important to confirm early on in the process how the Mission prefers to receive deliverables or recommendations. This information should be captured in the MOU (see Section 2.5.1). Generally, the purpose of a USAID conflict assessment is either to inform the CDCS process or the adjustment/design of a major new program.

While each situation is different, response options generally involve:

 Some degree of *prioritization* of issues based on the diagnosis and capacity for response, including a feasible identification of potential *points of entry or leverage* where targeted interventions can create more systemic change;

- Discussion of how existing programs funded by USAID (and others) affect and are affected by the dynamics of conflict (directly or indirectly). This exercise includes analysis of, and recommendations on, the conflict sensitivity of existing programs; and
- Based on the above, presenting options for integrating conflict response initiatives into USAID's assistance, including through the CDCS or new/existing programs.

Response recommendations are <u>not</u> substitutes for robust program design. DCHA/CMM is available to provide technical assistance on program design/adaptation, but this is a separate process from assessment.

Please refer to Chapter 4 of the Conflict Assessment Framework document for detailed information on the different dimensions of response formulation.

In brief, the response framework involves generating and filtering ideas based on: I) **technical merit,** and 2) pragmatic **priority**.

Response options with technical merit are generally:

- 1. rooted in the conflict analysis (i.e. diagnosis);
- 2. based on one or more credible theory of change;
- 3. vetted for likely effectiveness; and
- 4. designed to build on existing bright spots.

Prioritizing possible responses involves considering which options with technical merit are best suited to match the following: USAID's Mission's priorities; time horizon; financial/human resources; existing/desired partnerships; and relationships with the USG interagency and the international community.

The process of formulating effective response recommendations is related to, but quite distinct from, the diagnostic process. Both require careful analysis of the conflict dynamics and trajectories. Response formulation, however, requires additional knowledge of development policies and programming norms as expressed both in USAID policies and procedures and in international standards. It also requires a degree of creativity mixed with clear-eyed pragmatism, particularly regarding what is in USAID's manageable interests to achieve.

Because response recommendations are generally directed at USAID, the team members from the Mission and from DCHA/CMM frequently play a more active role in developing the recommendations, due to their familiarity with the agency. While this is understandable and sensible, it is critical for all assessment team members to remain engaged in the response phase—in part because the inclusion of different perspectives reduces the risk of "groupthink."

Developing recommendations also requires careful analysis and research. It is not unusual for the recommendation section of the assessment to be incomplete or open to substantial revision once the team finishes its work. Teams, however, should be transparent about their approach and avoid the temptation to seize on incomplete ideas in order to meet deadlines.

A number of resources are available from USAID and other sources to assist assessment teams in generating sensible recommendations. These include the following:

- USAID/DCHA/CMM Toolkits
- USAID/DCHA/CMM Theories and Indicators of Change Project Documents
- USAID Policy on the Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency
- USAID Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming
- USAID Guide to Economic Growth in Post-Conflict Countries
- USAID, DOS, DOD Security Sector Reform Guidance
- USAID Fragile States Strategy

- USAID Land Tenure and Property Rights Portal
- USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy Guidance
- USAID Project Design Guidance
- OECD-DAC Principles for Good Engagement in Fragile States and Situations
- OECD-DAC/G7+ New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States
- OECD-DAC Policy Guidance on Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility

3.2 REPORTING

The last phase of the assessment entails reporting on the assessment team's findings. There are two major issues to address in this phase: I) what to report, and 2) the mechanics of when reports will be made, and to whom.

This phase requires some negotiation with the Embassy and USAID Mission as to:

- which groups/audiences should receive final briefings, and
- what deliverables the assessment team should convey prior to departure.

The team should not attempt to deliver a report, or even definitive findings, prior to their departure. Developing well-vetted conclusions and recommendations requires approximately three additional weeks of analysis and vetting.

3.2.1 Briefings

The Mission may request one or more debriefs at various times during the post-field work phase. For a three week assessment, debriefs will usually fall within the last week and often take place during the final few days of the deployment, although a briefing upon arrival may also be requested.

At a minimum, the team will need to prepare a briefing for the USAID Mission and, possibly, the U.S. Embassy. The team should consult with the USAID Mission to determine who the appropriate audience will be for debriefs, but generally the team should attempt to report back in one way or another to the key stakeholders who were consulted early on in the process.

Beyond Mission leadership and other stakeholders, there are other audiences that may expect to learn about the assessment's findings, plus those who will be keenly interested. Mission Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) generally fall into these categories, as do other donor organizations and their host governments. Which groups receive briefings must, however, be explicitly negotiated with the Mission Director.

Current standard practice for conducting these briefings is an hour-long oral presentation supported with appropriate presentation slides. It is important to develop these slides carefully and to a high standard, as they are one of the principle deliverables that the team will leave behind.

The team should also determine what other products should be delivered upon the close of the field work phase. Possible items could include:

- an updated version of the desk-study;
- a short note listing provisional key findings;
- an outline of the presentation; or
- a list of principle recommendations and/or next steps.

Finally, upon return to Washington, it is equally important to conduct briefings at the headquarters level with the Washington-based country team and, potentially, the interagency. It may be advisable to clear the presentation ahead of time with the Mission Director. Generally, the team should utilize the same briefing materials in Washington as those that were utilized in the field.

3.2.2 Final Report Structure

The assessment team should prepare both a draft and a final report. Ideally, the lead report writer should be tasked with delivering a draft report no later than four weeks following return from the field. CMM and the USAID Mission will then provide comments. The report writer should deliver the final report within roughly two weeks of receiving comments on the draft.

The assessment team and USAID Mission can negotiate the report structure. In general, it should be shaped around an analytical narrative that addresses the key elements of CAF 2.0 and the synthesis process. It does not need to be organized according to the CAF 2.0 categories per se, but should generally follow themes identified by the assessment.

Usually, supplemental materials—such as the desk study, scope of work, data collection forms, or synthesis materials—will be attached to the main report as annexes.

Timing of Report Submissions

On occasion, assessment teams are asked to leave behind drafts of the assessment report. To the extent possible, this practice should be avoided. Time in-country is best spent in the field, including collecting data, analyzing it, and synthesizing it. If a draft report is required before departure, the report writing will crowd out more valuable activities. One of the reasons for investing in the desk study at the beginning of the process is to ensure that the Mission has a substantive piece of analysis for their immediate use.

Nevertheless, it is important to submit the final report as soon as possible after the team returns to headquarters so as to capitalize on the interest and enthusiasm that has been generated both within the team and with field-based stakeholders. A report that arrives too long after the assessment is often ignored. One of the unshakable realities for USG team members is that they will have difficulty contributing to the final report due to the demands on their time from new responsibilities. For this reason, CMM's recommendation is usually to rely on a contractor (who is on the assessment team) to serve as the principle author of the report. Dates for final report submission are usually incorporated in the contractor's SOW. It is best for the team to develop consensus on the report's table of contents prior to departure, including a list of all annexes.

Report Review and Clearance

Once a draft of the final report has been submitted, the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) and other USAID members on the assessment team will need to review it. It then goes to other team members and immediate stakeholders (e.g. the Mission POC) and, finally, to the Mission leadership.

Hopefully, the care taken with the process of synthesis and reporting while the team was in-country will result in an easy clearance process. If not, it may be necessary to hold several rounds of revision and review. Usually, USG staff must assume responsibility for revisions due to the sensitivity of the issues. In addition, contractor budgets will normally have been fully expended by this stage in the process.

During the last review, it is important to clarify how the final report will be handled and distributed, including whether it will remain unclassified or be designated as Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU). Even if the main report will have no distribution limits, some of the annexes will need to be SBU. Team members should not distribute raw data, especially the data collection forms.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The assessment is complete upon delivery and acceptance of the final report, although the contractor or CMM may deliver briefings on findings to various parties following that time (with Mission approval).

Of course, conducting a conflict assessment represents an early step in the programming cycle. Based on the assessment's recommendations, the USAID Mission that requested the assessment will go on to craft strategy, policy, and programs that are more sensitive to the dynamics of conflict in the country context. This additional work may involve a "conflict audit" of particular programs, new program design, modification of existing programs, adaptation of monitoring and evaluation systems, or training of USAID and partner staff. The assessment will provide high-level recommendations to inform this planning process, but detailed implementation of those findings may require additional technical assistance, which CMM can provide.

ANNEX A: SUMMARY OF PHASES AND ACTIVITIES

The following table provides a checklist to inform how an assessment may be scheduled. The timing is merely illustrative; it is essential to remain flexible and leave room in the agenda for unexpected delays.

Phase	Days	Activities
Preliminary Work	Weeks or Months	 Initial discussion Letter of invitation Establishing points-of-contacts (POCs) Alerting the Ambassador and Embassy DCM Assembling key documents and storing online Identifying assessment team members and other stakeholders Setting dates
Preparation and Planning	3 to 6 Weeks	 Drafting the Scope of Work (SOW) Arranging travel Pre-planning travel and lodging logistics Desk study (completed 2 weeks prior to deployment) Washington-based roundtables
Orientation	1.5 to 2.5 Days	 Organizing the assessment team and teambuilding In-brief with Mission Director, RSO, Mission POC, and others as necessary (Ambassador, technical teams, etc.) Decide who will manage logistical arrangements Developing a relationship with Mission POC and personnel Finalizing data collection process and associated logistics Finalize the data collection form
Field Work	I to 2 Weeks	 Data collection and analysis, which involves interviews, focus groups, and other techniques. Flexibility is critical. Time in capital is usually about 3–5 days. Time outside capital is usually about 5–8 days.
Synthesis	I to 3 Days	 Collecting and integrating findings into a single analytic narrative Employ a tool, such as headlines or system mapping, to neatly capture complex information Adjust timing/schedule depending on team size
Reporting (in the field)	2 Days	 Prepare debrief presentation (about one day) Briefings to Mission and Embassy Briefings as requested/appropriate to other stakeholders (host government, technical teams, other donors, key partners, etc.)
Reporting (in Washington)	About 3 to 4 Weeks	 Briefings to Regional Bureaus and others, upon return Distribution of presentation slides, desk study, and (possibly) list of initial recommendations Draft and submit final report

ANNEX B: PROTECTION AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

(Adapted from Guidance on Evaluating Conflict and Peacebuilding Activities, OECD-DAC, 2008)

Teams need to be aware that the process of conducting the data collection and field work in fragile and conflict-affected areas may put the team, interviewees, or other stakeholders at risk. Thus, the data collection plan should include protection measures. The Embassy's Regional Security Officer (RSO) is tasked with ensuring the protection of USAID staff falling under Chief-of-Mission authority and he/she can provide information about the security situation in the country. In addition, there may also be important security considerations for host country nationals, including for interpreters and local staff or partners. By working with or speaking to an assessment team from the U.S. Government, individuals may inadvertently put themselves at risk of attack or reprisal by actors in the conflict. These concerns must be considered throughout the assessment and made explicit to local staff as part of due diligence and an overall conflict-sensitive approach. By involving local staff deeply in the planning process, the assessment team can help to mitigate risks.

Similarly, as the OECD-DAC Guidance on Evaluating Humanitarian Aid in Complex Emergencies (1999) states.

"Psycho-social trauma may affect much larger numbers of people than is often evident to an outsider, particularly one unfamiliar with the local language and untrained in the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorders. People being interviewed during or after a major violent conflict may have experienced violence first-hand; they may have been forcibly displaced, had relatives and friends killed; or perhaps seen their personal, social or cultural identities shattered. Chronic insecurity and widespread gender-based violence, including the systematic use of rape and other forms of torture, compound trauma. Widespread trauma will no doubt impact interactions between local people and [assessment/evaluation] teams and should be handled with great care. The value and use of information collected from locals will have to be weighed against the potentially harmful effects of explaining traumatic experiences to [assessment/evaluation teams]."

The OECD-DAC Guidance's logic would apply equally to conflict assessments.

Finally, as with all research of human subjects, assessment teams should be aware of—and in compliance with—USAID Policies as outlined in the agency's Automated Directives System, ADS, 203 ("Assessing and Learning") and the Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 200 on Protection of Human Subjects in Research Supported by USAID.⁷

⁷ http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/200mbe.pdf

ANNEX C: DATA COLLECTION FORM TEMPLATE

Source/ Interviewee	Name & Title of Interviewee	Organization/ Affiliation	
	Location/Method	Date	
Collection	Collector	Team	
	Interviewer	Present	
Summary			Context
			Identity \Box
			Institutional Performance \Box
			Social Patterns \Box
			Key Mobilizers \Box
			Grievance \Box
			Resilience \Box
			Bright Spot \Box
			Trend \Box
			Trigger □
Headline			

ANNEX D: TEMPLATE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING / STATEMENT OF WORK FOR A GENERIC CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

The following template is intended to provide USAID staff and implementing partners with an outline from which to develop a country-specific MOU or SOW for a conflict assessment. USAID Missions will benefit from paying careful attention to the development of the "Background" and "Purpose" sections in particular. Please see Section 2.1 and 2.2 in the Application Guide for more information on developing this information.

Generally, MOUs are used as the basis for the development of Scopes of Work for contractors and consultants hired to support the assessment. Therefore, the template below includes some information that might be useful and appropriate for development of an SOW, including for example a section on Budget and Deliverables.

- Note: "Country X" hereunder is shorthand to mean "the country or countries to be assessed."
- Note: Brackets bring attention to quantifiable details of the assessment that will be changed for each assessment.

BACKGROUND

Country Background

Provide roughly 1–3 pages of information containing the following:

- A short summary of the USAID Mission's priorities, country strategy, and programs.
- Information on any conflict-related activities undertaken by USAID Mission in Country X, such as past assessments, peace & security programming, humanitarian or transition activities, or other relevant information.
- A statement as to why the USAID Mission requests a conflict assessment and, if possible, how the assessment will be used.
- The primary audience and point of contact within the USAID Mission.
- An overview of Key issues or themes of interest to USAID Mission in Country X.

Conflict Assessment

If necessary, the following language can be adapted to explain the function of a conflict assessment:

A conflict assessment consists of two stages: diagnosis and response. During diagnosis, an assessment team applies the revised USAID Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF 2.0) to analyze a country's internal conflict dynamics. Experience has demonstrated that the stronger the mobilized grievances (conflict drivers) and the weaker the mobilized resiliencies (mitigating factors), the greater the risk of violent conflict. After examining the conflict dynamics, the assessment team builds on its findings to articulate forecasts and likely future scenarios that could alter a country's risk of violent conflict.

During the response stage, the assessment team draws on the rich diagnostic analysis and consults with the client mission or operating unit to formulate actionable options. Response recommendations can inform strategic planning, as well as program design and management.

The two stages of diagnosis and response occur over several months of preparation, field work, and post-deployment analysis. Long before the assessment team arrives incountry, the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (DCHA/CMM) will consult

with the USAID mission or client to customize the process as needed. The analysis begins with a review of existing research and literature on the country and conflict. Once in-country, the team conducts interviews, focus group consultations, structured observations, and similar exercises to collect and process information about the conflict. The mission receives a briefing at the end of the field work and a report in the following weeks.

An assessment generally requires nine weeks from the initiation of work to the completion of work. This includes two weeks of preparation, one week to prepare a desk study, three weeks of field work, and three weeks for final analysis and writing.

An assessment team generally includes two USAID representatives (one from DCHA/CMM, one from the USAID mission), I-2 international consultants, I-2 local consultants, a logistician (as needed), and a translator (as needed). An international consultant is generally tasked with preparing the desk study and final report, and coordinating the field work and research activities.

PURPOSE

This language may be included in a Scope of Work for a contractor:

The purpose of this award will be to conduct an assessment of the dynamics of peace, conflict, and development in Country X during the period from Month YYYY to Month YYYY. The contractor will be responsible for (I) recruiting appropriate consultants (conflict specialists, country specialists, translators/interpreters, and logisticians) to undertake data collection, analysis, coordination, and report writing, (2) providing travel and logistical support to consultants and assessment teams, and (3) provide administrative support to USAID assessment teams to ensure high-quality deliverables. Unless otherwise directed by the COTR, contractors will be required to employ methodology found in USAID's revised Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF 2.0) and its Application Guide.

The intended outcome of the assessment is (I) to improve the USAID Mission's understanding of the drivers and mitigating factors of armed conflict in Country X, and (2) to provide USAID with recommendations for providing its assistance in such a way as to effectively prevent, manage, or mitigate violent conflict, or at minimum do no harm.

Therefore, the objectives of the assessment are (I) to diagnose current conflict dynamics and forecast likely future trends and scenarios with respect to security and development; (2) identify how those dynamics impact development activities/Mission priorities; (3) propose actionable, strategic, and/or programmatic recommendations to the USAID Mission.

METHODOLOGY

USAID will typically employ a contractor or team of consultants to support the assessment. For purposes of the language below, the "assessment team" refers to the group of USAID and contractor personnel immediately involved in conducting the assessment.

The following sections provide additional standardized guidance on the proposed approach. Each assessment will consist of three basic phases:

- I. Planning and preparation
- 2. Field Work: Data collection and analysis

3. Reporting

Planning and Preparation

Planning and preparation will include the following requirements:

- 1. <u>Planning</u>: Prior to the field work and while in the United States, the team shall establish roles and responsibilities, and ensure that all members of the assessment team have a full understanding of the scope of work.
- 2. Assessment Support Document: The Team shall prepare and deliver to USAID an assessment support document (ASD) prior to deployment to Country X. The assessment support document is a report that provides support to the process and the team with a common reference point. Per USAID direction, the ASD could be a desk study, literature review, issues paper, or some comparable document of 10 to 30 pages in length presenting relevant data, facts, figures, and narrative background about Country X. The ASD will be developed using the CAF 2.0 methodology.
- 3. <u>US-based interviews</u>: The team may be required to conduct interviews with US-based experts on Country X, including USG officials, policy makers, academics, and development practitioners. Interviewees could also include representatives of a diaspora. Some of these interviews could be condensed into a roundtable or workshop discussion in the Washington, DC, area.
- 4. <u>Field work plan</u>: In consultation with the USAID Mission and prior to arriving in country, the assessment team shall develop a draft field work. This plan shall include at minimum a notional field itinerary, logistics preparations, and a draft interview protocol. Upon arriving in Country X, additional field work planning will also be required for all team members, including participation in a training session on CAF 2.0.
- 5. <u>In-brief for the Mission</u>: The assessment team shall be responsible for briefing mission management shortly after arrival in Country X. The briefing shall describe the team's planned objectives and activities. The team will be responsible for supporting or delivering the briefing.

For each assessment, the total number of days for planning and preparation in Washington, DC, will be approximately [[three weeks]], although not all team members are involved in this phase.

Field Work: Data collection and analysis

Data collection and analysis shall occur in Country X over a period of approximately three weeks, including approximately (I) [[five]] days, in the capital city of training, interviews, and initial analysis; (II) [[eight]] days outside the capital city conducting key informant interviews and focus groups; and (III) [[five]] days back in the capital city to review findings and analysis, engage in synthesis, and prepare a briefing.⁸

Primary methods of data collection will include:

- I. <u>Key informant interviews</u>: In concert with USAID, the assessment team shall identify key informants to interview for the assessment in the target areas of analysis. The team will interview these informants in Country X during the field work portion of the assessment over a period of approximately [[two]] weeks. The team shall comply with guidance in the CAF 2.0 Application Guide, for example by balancing the identities/viewpoints of those being interviewed to derive a broad-based and diverse analysis.
- 2. <u>Focus groups</u>: As appropriate, the assessment team shall convene and interview groups of individuals with similar backgrounds shall be interviewed (e.g., women, men, youth, displaced per-

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⁸ Generally, Contractors should assume 6-day work weeks during data collection.

- sons, and ethnic/religious minorities from the same community) to respond to questions about exceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a particular program, situation, or idea.
- 3. <u>Document review</u>: While the majority of document review will occur in the planning/ preparation phase, assessment team members will still be required to carefully review written materials in-country, including in particular the notes of fellow team members.

All members of the assessment team will be required to take notes on their data collection activities using a variation of the standardized CAF 2.0 Data Collection Form contained in the CAF 2.0 Application Guide.

Upon return to the capital city for analysis and synthesis, the assessment team will share findings and develop a diagnosis of conflict dynamics and trajectories that examines context, core grievances, social/institutional resilience, identity groups, key actors/mobilizers, social patterns, trends, and triggers. The team shall also begin to formulate response recommendations based on the analysis and informed by coherent, evidence-driven theories of change and consideration of USAID's operational parameters. This analysis will serve as the basis for the out-brief and the final report.

For each assessment, the total number of days for data collection and analysis in Country X will be approximately [[three weeks, including 18 work days (and 3 rest days)]].

Reporting

The output of the data collection and analysis will be the following items:

- I. Out-briefing The assessment team shall deliver [[3]] debrief presentations to the [[USAID Mission Front Office, USAID Mission Technical Office, and U.S. Embassy]] including an overview of the assessment process, key findings, and preliminary recommendations in line with the SOW. The team shall plan the field work so as to be able to triangulate the findings from key interviews. An additional [[1–3]] briefings may be provided in Washington, DC, upon the team's return.
- 2. <u>Draft report</u> The team shall deliver a draft report to USAID no later than three weeks after the completion of field work. USAID will review the report and respond with comments within one week. The Contractor will be primarily responsible for preparing the report.
- 3. Final report Upon formal receipt of comments by reviewers, the team shall deliver the internal and external versions of the final report in one week. This report shall be fully formatted and branded and include all annexes. A non-sensitive, USG-approved version of the final report may be presented to the Government of Country X. The Contractor will be primarily responsible for preparing the report.

For each assessment, the total number of days from return to delivery of the final report will be approximately [[four weeks.]]

TEAM REQUIREMENTS

The assessment team is compose of those individuals who will conduct the assessment. In general, a USAID conflict assessment team consists of roughly four to six individuals, including one or more representatives of DCHA/CMM, one or more representatives from the USAID Mission (including, where possible, a Foreign Service National, or FSN), a consultant, and a translator.

Regardless of the team size and the way it is structured, all assessment teams should have capacity in certain skill sets. These skills are listed in the **chart below**. It may be possible to find a single team member with two or more of these skills and, therefore, each skill identified in the table below is not necessarily filled by a separate person.

Requisite Skills for Conflict Assessments					
Skill Type	Description				
Conflict Expertise	It is essential that the team include someone who has experience in conflict settings and is familiar with the literature surrounding the causes and consequences of violent conflict. This person should be familiar with the Conflict Assessment Framework, be committed to its implementation in the field, and be able to include the methodology in the report itself.				
Country Expertise	The team should include at least one individual with deep knowledge of the country and/or region. Ideally a local, the country expert(s) should also have a strong understanding of USAID programs and approaches in the subject country.				
Facilitation	At least one member of the team should be skilled in leading large group discussions in an unbiased manner. This skill is particularly important for large teams that include representatives from a range of participating agencies. It can also be useful when focus groups are included as a key interviewing method.				
Writing	The lead writer should have proven experience writing assessment-type documents for a government audience. Other members of the team may be expected to write specific sections of the assessment as agreed upon with the team leader.				
Management/ Leadership	The team leader is expected to exercise leadership regarding airing substantive issues, communicating with USAID/USG, and managing interpersonal dynamics, process, and logistics. Prior experience in managing or leading a field team, particularly USAID assessment teams, is preferred. Ideally, the team leader will also have strong research and analytical skills, particularly if the lead writer is not a separate team member. Responsibilities will include: ensuring proper data collection methods, coordinating meetings, making travel arrangements, collecting receipts, and managing petty cash.				
Data Collection and Analysis	At least one member of the team, who may also be the country expert or team leader, should have robust experience with data collection methodologies. This work may include experiences with focus groups, key informant interviews, surveys, etc. S/he should also have the ability to lead the analysis and to combine local field-based research with broader analytical trends and observations. This work includes explaining and applying findings and recommendations following the assessment.				
Logistics	This individual should have enough local knowledge to deal with local travel and security arrangements, to set up meetings, to rent "safe" meeting space, and to understand the security situation and related procedures, etc. It is also optimal to have a USAID logistics coordinator in the field. This person serves several roles: informing implementing partners, etc. of the assessment; preparing official USG correspondence as needed by the team; and, when necessary, setting up USG meetings.				
Interpreter/ Translator	A translator might be used to go through key documents and data in local language(s). If a team is splitting up to cover different regions and lacks local language skills, multiple translators may be needed. Translators should have experience in the technical area of work and be perceived as neutral by interlocutors. It is seldom a good idea to rely on team members with local language skills for interpretation, not because their skills might not be good, but because it makes it difficult for them to fulfill their main role.				

DELIVERABLES

The following is a succinct list of key deliverables for assessment in general:

Assessment Support Document (ASD): The team will deliver an assessment support document such as a desk study, literature review, issues paper, or comparable document at the direction of DCHA/CMM. It

will likely be written by the lead consultant with input from other team members. This ASD will serve as a foundation for the field analysis, identify key research questions, and help establish interview protocol. Interviews and roundtables in Washington may be organized with the CMM staff to complement the desktop analysis and field work. The final ASD, of roughly 10–30 pages in length, should be submitted to the USAID Mission one week prior to arrival in the country.

Planning: All members of the assessment team shall be available for up to [[3]] conference calls prior to departure for the country field work. On the first available day in-country, the team shall brief the Mission on the assessment support document and expectations for the field work.

Interview & Communications Protocols: The team shall develop a communications protocol and interview protocol within [[five]] days of arriving in the assessment country, to be approved by the USAID Mission.

Field work plan: The team/contractor shall submit a draft field work plan to the USAID Mission [[one]] week before arriving in Country X. The field work plan shall include a draft schedule of interviews/focus group discussions and a draft interview protocol. The team/contractor shall submit a final field work plan within [[four]] days after arriving in Country X.

Assessment out-brief: The assessment team shall prepare a presentation for the Mission in addition to a detailed outline that includes initial findings and preliminary recommendations of the field work.

Draft assessment report: The team/contractor shall submit the draft report to USAID [[three]] weeks after completing the synthesis phase of field work. The USAID Mission will review the report and respond with comments within [[one]] week.

Final assessment report: The team shall have one week to incorporate comments and edits from the USAID Mission into the draft and submit a final, formatted copy. The assessment report should be accompanied by a three-page executive summary containing a clear, concise summary of the most critical elements of the report, including the recommendations. The main report, not including annexes, should not exceed [[40]] pages (including annexes – the statement of work, the list of documents reviewed, the list of meetings held, etc.). The quality of the assessment report will be evaluated against the criteria specified in the CAF 2.0.

Logistical/administrative support: [[In some cases, USAID Missions will provide the team with vehicles for transportation. In other instances, a contractor may be required to provide transportation, communication, and other logistical support to the team's data collection in-country.]]

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR CONTRACTOR SOWS

Work plans

Within [[ten (10)]] working days of the effective date of this award, the Contractor will submit to the COTR a workplan that describes the parameters, benchmarks, staffing/team structure, and procedures to be observed throughout the life of the award. The details of the field work may be completed later upon arrival in Country X, as described in the Deliverables section.

Technical Direction

The Contracting Officer will designate a Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) who will responsible for the technical direction of this award. The COTR may in turn designate an activity manager (i.e., USAID Mission or DCHA/CMM point of contact) who will oversee the day-to-day technical direction of the assessment.

Travel

International and domestic travel is anticipated under this award.

Period of Performance

This contractor's period of performance will be one year from the effective date of this award.

Reports

Final versions of all reports completed under this award will adhere to USAID design, formatting and branding requirements. Final assessment reports should not exceed [[40]] pages in length, excluding annexes. Assessment support documents should not exceed [[30]] pages in length, excluding annexes.

BUDGET AND LEVEL OF EFFORT

For purposes of developing a cost estimate, it is reasonable to budget for the following cost items:

- Labor (Level of Effort)
- Airfare (international)
- Airfare (domestic)
- Lodging
- Meals and Incidental Expenses
- Printing/Reproduction
- Exit taxes and exchange fees
- Communications (international)
- Ground transportation (vehicle rental/drivers, taxis, etc.)
- Security Detail (as necessary)
- Research costs (e.g., survey support), as necessary

This list does not preclude additional cost items.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Notification of Potential Organizational Conflicts (OCI) of Interest:

The SOW for the contract/award anticipates activities related to design and evaluation of programs. Given that these activities have not yet been identified, it is not possible to notify organizations in advance if they will be precluded from future awards. However, USAID is hereby providing notification that some activities under this award may preclude the contractor from future awards. (See CIB 99–17 for further information.)

- (1) <u>Design</u>: It is USAID's policy to preclude an organization from furnishing implementation services, as the Prime or sub-contractor, when the organization had a substantial role in the design of an activity under an award with USAID by providing USAID with "material leading directly, predictably and without delay" to a work statement for the implementation of the activity. Generally, recommendations developed through assessments lack specific detail and do not constitute a "substantial role in the design."
- (2) Evaluation: Some concerns are raised when a contractor evaluates an activity or program. Principal concerns are that the evaluating contractor might give biased, unfavorable reviews of competitors, or on the other hand, might give an overly favorable review to curry favor with USAID for additional work. In addition, the evaluating contractor may glean competitively useful information from other implementing organizations in the course of its evaluations. An evaluation contractor will be precluded from furnishing implementation services as a Prime or sub-contractor that are required as a result of any findings, proposals, or recommendations in the evaluation report within eighteen months of USAID's acceptance of the evaluation report.
- (3) Organizations are required to immediately notify the Contracting Officer (CO) of potential OCIs that may arise under the performance of this award.

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