



Stabilization and Reconstruction series

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report is based on a series of consultations under the auspices of the Working Group on Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction, chaired by Frederick Barton, senior advisor and codirector of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Michael Dziedzic, program officer in the United States Institute of Peace's Research and Studies Program and the strategic planner who drafted both the Mission Implementation Plan for the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and the December 2003 "Standards for Kosovo" for the UN Mission in Kosovo. The Working Group on Measuring Progress is part of the Institute's Filling the Gaps series of working groups, which aims to systematically address the causes of failure in specific areas in reconstruction and stabilization operations and to generate policy options for those in the U.S. government and elsewhere who lead and staff these missions. Filling the Gaps is directed by Daniel Serwer and managed by Beth C. DeGrasse of the Institute.

About seventy decision makers, practitioners, and scholars met during 2004 and 2005 to define the major requirements and make recommendations for those who strive to measure progress in war-torn, weak, and failed states. The findings are also based on supplementary interviews; an analysis of existing models to measure progress; and research into more than fifty books, reports, and articles. Craig Cohen, fellow in the International Security Program of the Center for Strategic International Studies' Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, coordinated the working group and drafted the report.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

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Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction

Summary and Recommendations

- The success of efforts to stabilize and reconstruct failed states and war-torn societies is heavily dependent on proper assessment tools and reliable measures of progress. Previous interventions have been severely hampered by faulty initial analysis that has overlooked the entrenched drivers of conflict and instability. Lofty goals are rendered unattainable by unrealistic time frames, inadequate resources, and constrained authorities. Progress is judged on the basis of programs that have been implemented rather than on actual results.
- Establishing an objective process for evaluating the challenges involved and evaluating progress toward stabilization is vital for success in these interventions. To bring goals and resources into balance, policymakers must take stock of the challenges to stabilization before intervening, determine whether stabilization is being achieved, and make midcourse corrections, if necessary. Indicators must measure outcomes essential to stabilization.
- The main barrier to measuring progress is political, not conceptual. Pressures exist for official pronouncements to declare that policy objectives have been obtained; therefore, claims of success may be merely political spin. Individual agencies are inclined to report their success at implementing programs rather than their impact on stabilization. A system of metrics, or measurable indicators of progress, should provide the ability to confront facts on the ground.
- A system for measuring progress requires clear and well-integrated goals that are based on an accurate baseline assessment and are directly linked to strategic planning. Measurement must be tied to a clear baseline assessment that is derived from an initial analysis of the conflict. This should guide the establishment of mission goals and determine the level of international commitment that will be required to successfully attain

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these goals. Measurement should be directly linked to planning and should integrate the various plans that are guiding the intervention.

- Progress in stabilization and reconstruction efforts should be based on the mission's ability to reduce the means and motivations for violent conflict in a society and to build local and state capacity to sustain peace. Progress should be measured in terms of outcomes. Indicators should focus on measuring outcomes or processes leading directly to these outcomes, as opposed to assessing the number of products and services delivered or the amount of resources consumed. Indicators should draw on an appropriate mix of data sources, including quantitative data and local perceptions.
- The following steps should be taken to build the U.S. government's capacity to measure progress in stabilization and reconstruction operations.

1. *The U.S. government should invest in developing the capacity to measure progress in all stabilization and reconstruction operations.*

This study presents a model that can be used to measure progress across vital areas of stabilization and reconstruction. It breaks the mission goal into core outcomes, central tasks, and measurable indicators that can be aggregated into numerical indexes or disaggregated according to geography, gender, or group identity.

This model constitutes a rudimentary framework for the development of a comprehensive metrics system for stabilization and reconstruction. Additional work is required to establish a fully articulated set of indicators that would provide the basis for initial baseline assessments and measures of progress for the core outcomes involved in stabilization and reconstruction.

2. *Measures used to assess progress should be public and transparent, and the task of measuring should fall to a combination of independent external actors and an internal metrics office that is attached to mission planning.*

The metrics office should be empowered to solicit information from a variety of sources within the mission area and from international organizations involved in stabilization and reconstruction. It should be an integral component of strategic planning and its assessments should be used to inform the decisions of senior policymakers. External auditors should be brought in on a regular basis to work with the metrics office to perform independent assessments of progress to ensure objectivity.

3. *Decision makers must allocate adequate resources for assessing progress and integrate the results into their planning process.*

Resources earmarked specifically for measuring progress must be allocated from the initial assessment phase through the life of an intervention. Senior mission leaders must periodically review progress toward mission goals and take corrective action as required, otherwise the metrics process will quickly become an empty exercise.

Introduction

The stabilization and reconstruction of failed states and war-torn societies has become one of the defining challenges of our era. International interventions have repeatedly been mounted in weak, disintegrating, and collapsed states that have become sources of regional disorder, transnational terror, and humanitarian calamity. Yet the process of nurturing stable, responsible governance has proven elusive. All too often, lofty and politically attractive goals have been proclaimed only to be rendered unattainable by unrealistic time frames, woefully inadequate resources, and constrained authorities. To bring strategic goals and resources into better balance, policymakers require an objective

metrics system that will enable them to take stock of the magnitude of the challenges before intervening and to continuously track the progress of their efforts toward stabilization.

The weakness of current efforts to stabilize and reconstruct failed states and war-torn societies must be addressed. Initial analysis is often faulty, having overlooked the fundamental drivers of conflict and instability. Mission goals are rarely achievable on the basis of the resources countries are willing to commit. Security, diplomatic, and development goals remain poorly integrated both on the ground and in Western capitals. Individual agencies almost always report success with the implementation of their programs, which clouds decision makers' ability to make necessary tradeoffs. In reality, claims of mission success or failure are often little more than political spin.

Establishing an objective process for measuring progress is one essential factor in the successful implementation of stabilization and reconstruction activities. A system of metrics should allow decision makers to observe whether stabilization is being achieved, and if it is not, then point toward midcourse corrections that could reduce political and financial costs and save lives.

Progress continues to be judged in large part on the basis of international resources expended or programs implemented rather than on the basis of actual results produced. Spending money on training a national army or police force, for instance, may produce an abundance of forces, but it does not indicate whether these forces will be either effective or committed to defeating insurgents and spoilers or subordinate to legitimate government authority. Indicators must be designed to measure outcomes that are essential to stabilization.

The main barrier to measuring progress is political, not conceptual. Pressures to demonstrate attainment of stated policy objectives inevitably bear on official pronouncements. Also, competing interests (both within and between governments and multilateral organizations) prevent the sharing of information and encourage working in isolation. A system of metrics, however, requires committed leadership, cooperation across organizational boundaries, and a willingness to confront the facts on the ground.

An early attempt at measuring progress can be found in a 1997 DFI International study on effective transitions in UN peace operations. To date, efforts to establish measures of progress in stabilization and reconstruction operations have been disconnected from each other and a range of terminology and disparate methodologies have been employed. Outside the U.S. government, the World Bank's Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) Initiative has developed a transitional results matrix that has sought to measure progress in a variety of countries, including Liberia and Haiti. The Fund for Peace has developed a comprehensive model that it has applied to Iraq. The Center for Strategic and International Studies' Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project has developed a model for measuring progress that it has applied to both Iraq and Afghanistan's reconstruction.

A number of organizations have thought about and developed sets of indicators that could be incorporated into a comprehensive model to measure progress. Both the Henry L. Stimson Center and George Mason University's Peace Operations Policy Program are at the forefront of designing metrics. The Brookings Institution has developed an index of indicators for both Iraq and Afghanistan and the RAND Corporation has developed sector-specific indicators for security. Freedom House and Transparency International have developed sets of governance indicators, while the Vera Institute, the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA CEELI), and the World Bank have done the same for rule of law. The Collaborative for Development Action has developed criteria for measuring effectiveness in peacebuilding, while ABA CEELI has developed an assessment tool to measure discrimination against women that can be applied to stabilization and reconstruction contexts.

Within the U.S. government, efforts to measure progress have not yet been sufficiently integrated into overall mission planning. For example, the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq developed an extensive metrics reporting system in coordination with contractors

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Measuring progress in stabilization and reconstruction operations is a process aimed at determining whether a mission's goals are being achieved.

such as the Institute for Defense Analysis, but senior U.S. decision makers in Iraq did not rely upon it to make decisions. Also, while the U.S. military, Department of Defense, State Department, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are actively engaged in measuring aspects of reconstruction progress in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, they typically focus on measuring programmatic performance rather than offering an integrated assessment of a country's overall progress toward stabilization and reconstruction.

Valuable work is currently under way, however, within the U.S. government. USAID's Conflict Management and Mitigation's Warning and Analysis office has developed metrics for tracking instability, while the Office of Transition Initiatives has sought to integrate monitoring and evaluation into their strategic planning. The State Department's new Office of the Coordinator for Stabilization and Reconstruction is currently engaged in developing a comprehensive, integrated system of measuring progress. Congress' Government Accountability Office has offered a systemized method of measuring reconstruction progress in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Pentagon has set up an "Iraq Room" inside the Joint Staff, which reports to the secretary of defense and is tasked with measuring mission progress.

Despite these evolving efforts, the capacity of the U.S. government to measure progress in stabilization and reconstruction needs to improve. Most of these initiatives operate in parallel, with little standardization of indicators or assessment techniques. Individual agencies continue to report their programmatic success without a clear sense of how their achievements contribute to overall stability and reconstruction. People in the field tend to regard reporting requirements as burdensome, especially when this reporting is not clearly tied to strategic planning and policymaking.

This report suggests how current efforts could be harmonized and better directed. It is structured in the following manner.

- Part I outlines a process of defining what to measure that includes up-front analysis and goal setting.
- Part II provides a model for conceptualizing the key indicators of progress.
- Part III offers suggestions for overcoming the key challenges to measuring progress.

The report concludes with suggestions for further reading. A subsequent report that provides detailed indicators for the key sectors identified below will be issued later.

Defining What to Measure

Measuring progress in stabilization and reconstruction operations is a process aimed at determining whether a mission's goals are being achieved. It begins with up-front analysis and goal setting and then breaks mission goals into core outcomes, central tasks, and measurable indicators. Measuring progress provides decision makers with a clearer sense of achievements that have been made over time and the overall usefulness of the intervention.

The goal-setting process in most stabilization and reconstruction operations suffers from four main deficiencies.

- The motivations and means for continued violent conflict are poorly understood.
- Intervening actors often pursue different, conflicting, and sometimes concealed objectives.
- Peace and stability may be the preferred outcome, but political realities often allow suboptimal outcomes to be tolerated.
- Decision makers often tie goals to specific timelines that are more relevant to the politics of intervening nations than to local conditions.

Defining what to measure is a process that should include an up-front analysis of both the root causes of conflict and the strategies of intervening actors. This process should

seek to balance the political imperatives of the day that drive policy against the reality of what it takes to reach a truly stable outcome.

Up-Front Analysis

An initial analysis should be carried out prior to an intervention to determine the difficulty of the situation and to identify the possible obstacles to success. This should enable policymakers to establish realistic goals, bring adequate resources to bear, and focus their efforts more strategically. First, this effort should include a broad political, economic, and sociological analysis describing all sources of continuing conflict and instability. Then there must be an examination of the existing capacity of local actors and the state to overcome these sources of conflict. A check of the international level of commitment devoted to filling the gap between what needs to be done and what local actors can do is essential.

Rarely is such an analysis incorporated into the goal-setting process and often it is carried out in an incomplete, uninformed, nonintegrated fashion. There are political and institutional realities for why this is so, but decision makers should understand that failing to undertake a proper analysis in the initial stages will likely result in negative outcomes. As with any other military plan or political intervention, good analysis and intelligence must inform stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Although each mandate will raise its own unique set of questions, some of the key considerations that should inform this analysis are outlined below.

The political motivations for continued violent conflict are a primary consideration.

- Are there unsatisfied war aims for which the disputants remain willing to fight? Even if warring parties sign a peace settlement paving the way for an international mission, do unresolved conflicts persist? Are there factions that remain opposed to the peace settlement?
- Has the old regime disintegrated? If so, has this created a power vacuum that is likely to lead to a bitter internal struggle for power?
- Are respected institutions available to manage the process of determining who should govern or will they need to be created? Is recourse to political violence apt to be reflexive in a situation where militant factions and countless others have large numbers of weapons? What conditions must be met before elections can effectively substitute for force in determining who governs?
- Can the rights of minority or disenfranchised populations be reliably guaranteed, or is majority rule likely to be perceived as a continuation of a life-and-death, zero-sum form of politics by at least one of the parties to the conflict? Do citizens, and in particular minorities and women, enjoy adequate guarantees for fundamental civil and political rights of speech, movement, and assembly?

Threats to the establishment of a safe and secure environment must also be assessed.

- Do violent extremists retain the means to threaten such an environment? Are intimidation, coercion, assassination, and terrorism prevalent methods for advancing political agendas and deciding outcomes?
- Is the threat conventional and military or subversive and criminal in nature? Do informal linkages involving political extremists, paramilitary formations, intelligence operatives, and the criminal underworld remain potent forces?
- What obstacles must be overcome before armed groups can be subordinated to legitimate governmental authority?
- What indigenous security capacity must be developed to ensure that the threat of political violence ends? Did indigenous security forces disintegrate? Were they responsible for the brutality and repression that led to war?

Glossary of Key Terms

Stabilization and reconstruction: The process of addressing the causes of violence and instability in a society while building local and state capacity to sustain peace, thus enabling the reduction of outside intervention and assistance to sustainable levels.

Core outcome: A condition that is essential to the creation of long-term peace and stability. An example of a core outcome is rule of law.

Central tasks: A process or activity that is an essential component of a core outcome. An example of a central task to provide rule of law is confronting impunity and illicit power structures.

Outputs: Products and services that contribute to achieving central tasks. An example of an output is the number of judges trained. This output is intended to establish the capacity to confront impunity and illicit power structures.

Inputs: Resources used to produce outputs. Inputs include funding and staffing for international missions and reconstruction programs. An example of an input is the amount of money spent on training judges.

Indicator: Objective measures that can be used to gauge the degree to which inputs are provided, outputs are performed, central tasks are accomplished, and outcomes are attained.

An initial analysis should be carried out prior to an intervention to determine the difficulty of the situation and to identify the possible obstacles to success.

The political motivations for continued violent conflict are a primary consideration.

Justice and the rule of law are cornerstones upon which a sustainable peace is built.

The economy is another critical sector to assess because of the linkages that recur between illicit wealth and power.

On-the-ground interviews with a broad range of actors, including minority groups and women, are essential to establish trends and discern motivations that may otherwise prove elusive.

Justice and the rule of law are cornerstones upon which a sustainable peace is built.

- Do violence-prone political and criminal elites enjoy impunity?
- Are perpetrators of intercommunal crimes, politically motivated violence, and organized criminal networks deeply embedded in local power structures? Will vetting and training programs for local police, judges, and jailers be sufficient or is the threat such that those who seek to uphold the law will not long survive?
- Have war crimes or other grave violations been committed that could threaten to ignite renewed conflict unless redressed?
- What is the indigenous capacity to uphold the rule of law, protect basic rights—including for women and minority groups—and apply the law equitably?
- Do critical deficiencies exist in the indigenous capacity to maintain public order, enforce the law, and operate the judicial and penal systems?

The economy is another critical sector to assess because of the linkages that recur between illicit wealth and power, and because a functioning economy helps achieve near-term stability and underpin long-term recovery.

- Who wins and who loses if peace prevails?
- Do gray and black markets dominate economic activity?
- Does illicit wealth determine who wields political power, thereby fueling continued conflict?
- What are the revenue streams flowing to major obstructionists that sustain their capacity for coercion, terror, paramilitary activities, and intelligence operations?
- Are there networks of criminals, warlords, and corrupt and extremist ruling elites that must be broken?
- What components must be put in place to establish the macroeconomic basis for a functioning formal economy and to protect the integrity of revenues required for essential state services?
- Do any microeconomic activities have the potential to help reduce conflict in the near-term?
- What are the unemployment levels and do legal and effective means exist to put people back to work? What alternative routes to wealth creation can be established to wean people away from violent resource exploitation, drug running, or other illegal transactions linked to conflict?

Social well-being and the psychosocial impact of conflict are also important if peace is to prevail.

- Are large segments of the population beholden to faction leaders who provide for their subsistence? Who has greater clout, the international community calling for peace or local warlords preaching violence? Who controls access to food, shelter, healthcare, and electricity in local communities?
- Are women and minorities treated equitably?
- Do hatred and distrust permeate society? Is group grievance of primary importance or are economic interests more important?
- Have large portions of the population been displaced? Are people inclined to resettle and reintegrate into their traditional communities? If not, why not? Do refugee flows or the amassing of displaced in camps increase the likelihood that there will be a resurgence of conflict?

It is not enough to answer these questions simply by interviewing international experts and political leaders. On-the-ground interviews with a broad range of actors, including minority groups and women, are essential to establish trends and discern motivations that may otherwise prove elusive.

Establishing baseline information allows decision makers to determine the extent to which a society will have to be transformed before a stable outcome will be reached. The level of international interest and resource commitment should be commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge facing those who will intervene.

In some instances intervention may only come about through an incremental increase of resources and commitment to mission goals. Nevertheless, conducting an initial analysis to more clearly understand what the international community is stepping into will improve the chances of obtaining the tangible support and authority that will ultimately be required for mission success.

Goal Setting

Although political goals associated with a stabilization and reconstruction mission will vary, success will depend on the mission's ability to reduce the root causes of violence in a society and to build local and state capacity to sustain peace. Progress should be measured in terms of outcomes conducive to stabilization, along with the attainment of related political objectives.

Stabilization may not always be the primary political goal of an intervention. Countries intervene for different reasons to protect what they perceive as their national interests. However, a system of metrics that informs policymakers about whether an intervention is likely to lead to long-term stability or not should help to clarify the goal-setting process. While goals may shift, be held privately, or be pursued differently by intervening nations, it is clear that if a mission is not moving toward stabilization, then it is not moving toward a viable outcome and it will continue to require international engagement. The overarching goal of stabilization ought to be to establish an environment where the means and motivations for continued conflict have been reduced to such an extent that they can be addressed by the growing capacity of local institutions. Attaining this goal will enable outside intervention and assistance to be reduced to sustainable levels.

Key Indicators of Progress

Once the strategic determination has been made regarding mission goals, the challenge becomes how to determine if and when stabilization has been accomplished.

A Cascading Model for Measuring Progress

The approach suggested here has been drawn from an analysis of existing models that have generated indicators to track trends in war-torn societies and failing states. The analysis identified the best aspects of the various models and combined this knowledge into a single, practical approach.

Step 1: Breaking the Mission Goal into Core Outcomes

The mission goal must be broken down into the core outcomes that constitute mission success. The May 2002 Task Framework by the Association of the U.S. Army and Center for Strategic and International Studies referred to four pillars, or core outcomes, that underpin stabilization and reconstruction. These are security, governance and participation, justice and reconciliation, and economic and social well-being. All of the models under consideration used some variation of these outcomes.

Missions may prioritize various aspects differently or focus on additional or crosscutting issues due to changing realities on the ground or political imperatives, but progress toward long-term stability will depend on progress across each of these four pillars. Each core outcome should be considered in terms of the international effort required to play a catalytic role in reducing the root causes of violent conflict and instability and building the long-term capacity of the state and society to sustain peace.

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The May 2002 Task Framework referred to four pillars, or core outcomes, that underpin stabilization and reconstruction. These are security, governance and participation, justice and reconciliation, and economic and social well-being.

The baseline assessment gained through the up-front analysis should determine how large the gap is between the drivers of continued violent conflict and instability and the capacity of indigenous institutions to address them. The magnitude of the role of international actors at the start of the mission should be determined by the extent of this gap. Core outcomes associated with stabilization and reconstruction include the following:

- The *security environment* will need to be transformed so that violence-prone armed groups have been subordinated to legitimate government authority, reintegrated into society, or defeated.
- For *governance and participation*, the political conditions that spawned conflict must be transformed from intolerant zero-sum confrontations to competition for power that is conducted through effective and accountable political institutions using nonviolent, participatory processes.
- For *justice and rule of law*, lawlessness and the impunity of political and criminal elites must be effectively confronted and the legal system must be prevented from serving as an instrument of state repression. Instead, a justice system must be established that serves the public interest by preserving order, protecting the basic civil and political rights of parties on all sides of the internal conflict, including women and minorities, and applying the law equitably.
- For *social and economic well-being*, gray and black market activity must cease to be the dominant mode of economic transaction and illicit wealth must not be allowed to determine who wields political power. A foundation for economic development must be established by creating a formal economy in which jobs are created and the integrity of state revenues required for essential state services is protected. Trust must also be restored in fellow citizens and in the government's ability to provide basic services. In short, communities must eventually begin to function according to societal norms.

If progress is being made toward these outcomes, then the mission ought to be making progress toward stabilization and reconstruction. When taken in their entirety, everything critical to achieving long-term peace and stability should be addressed within these core outcomes. Much depends, therefore, on the analysis that frames the mission. If it is faulty or wrong, metrics will not be measuring the key levers of stabilization.

Step 2: Breaking Core Outcomes into Central Tasks

The next step is to break each core outcome, or pillar, into the functions or tasks that are essential to stabilization. The initial analysis should determine the extent to which local actors are capable of performing these functions. Some actors are likely to prove to be essential to progress at various stages of the intervention.

The following list is derived from an analysis of the existing models to measure progress. The tasks listed are the ones for which the greatest consensus exists, but they are not necessarily listed in rank order. Even though this list is broken into the broadly defined outcomes of governance and participation, security, justice and rule of law, and economic and social well-being, the extent to which each mission confronts these challenges will vary.

Tradeoffs among these tasks might be necessary at times, such as between integrating power brokers into a peace process and holding them accountable for war crimes. In general, most of the tasks reinforce each other.

These central tasks ought to be considered in terms of determining the point at which indigenous actors can assume effective control. The catalytic point in the stabilization process occurs when sources of violent conflict have been reduced to such an extent that local institutions that are being developed have the capacity to resolve internal conflict peacefully and are able to prevail over violent extremists while receiving sustainable levels of continuing international assistance.

The initial analysis should determine the extent to which local actors are capable of performing these functions.

These central tasks ought to be considered in terms of determining the point at which indigenous actors can assume effective control.

Local actors should play a key role in setting programmatic priorities. Although not all local actors share the same perspective, it is important to integrate local perspectives of those who are committed to peace settlement of disputes into the planning process, because it is the best way to achieve a long-term sustainable level of local ownership and capacity to peacefully resolve conflict.

Central Tasks

Governance and Participation

- Integrating recalcitrant faction leaders into peaceful political processes
- Addressing festering group grievances
- Nurturing development of peaceful dispute resolution processes
- Protecting human rights and freedoms
- Establishing transparency and accountability
- Establishing an electoral process and conducting elections
- Protecting and developing civic participation, civil society, and the media

Security

- Dislodging or demobilizing obstructionist forces
- Protecting civilians, as well as key individuals, infrastructure, and institutions
- Developing a local security capacity that is responsive to legitimate political authority
- Ensuring freedom of movement
- Establishing a framework for regional security

Justice and Rule of Law

- Confronting impunity of political and criminal elites
- Resolving disputes peacefully
- Providing equality before the law, including justice for past grievances
- Protecting fundamental human, civil, and political rights, especially for women and minorities
- Creating effective accountability procedures

Social and Economic Well-being

- Depriving obstructionists of illicit revenue streams
- Meeting basic needs, including access to education, communication, power, and transportation
- Creating jobs
- Developing the macro-level framework for expanding and opening the economy and diminishing underground activity
- Ensuring the integrity and adequacy of the revenue stream for essential government activities
- Reintegrating and resettling displaced persons
- Rebuilding a sense of community
- Addressing structural inequalities that drive conflict

When designing a system to measure progress, outcomes are central.

The use of inputs as proxies for outcomes is inherently faulty.

Designing reliable indicators requires considerable local knowledge both of the conflict dynamics and of what information is actually collectable.

When designing a system to measure progress, outcomes are central. Tracking the amount of money spent by the United States to train judges or even the number of judges trained reveals only that effort is being made. If the goal is to develop an independent judiciary capable of providing equality before the law and confronting impunity, it is vital to discern whether these judges have been co-opted, corrupted, or politicized; whether elites who are violently obstructing the stabilization process have ever been brought to trial; whether these trials have ever led to guilty verdicts and incarceration; and whether citizens, especially members of politically disadvantaged groups, have trust in the legal system. If the overall goal is to build the capacity and willingness of domestic institutions to resolve conflict peacefully, then measuring the core functions that produce this outcome must be the primary focus.

The use of inputs as proxies for outcomes is inherently faulty. Money spent on training judges does not indicate whether an independent judiciary has been established. Tracking programmatic outputs such as the number of judges trained suggests that capacity is being developed, but not whether that capacity is being put to use in a way that is consistent with the rule of law. Trained judges may be intimidated or biased in the same manner as untrained judges. To determine if the rule of law is actually emerging, indicators must tap into what is actually occurring within a society, such as whether all parties to the conflict can obtain equal access to justice.

Step 3: Designing Indicators for Central Tasks

To offer an example, the central task of establishing freedom of movement under the core outcome of security could be assessed by relying on indicators such as the following:

- Do members of formerly warring factions and competing ethnic and religious groups travel freely in areas controlled by their rivals?
- What is the percentage of primary roads that have experienced violent attacks in the past month?
- Is the number of checkpoints or roadblocks set up by the host government, rebel actors, and warlords decreasing?
- What is the percentage of residents in a given area, including women and minorities, who consider it safe to travel to market, send their children to school, and go to work?
- What is the number of landmines estimated to be present in a given area?

Multiple indicators should be designed for each of the central tasks. The nature of the indicators will vary according to the phenomenon being measured, but a diverse mixture that includes local perceptions is advantageous. Designing reliable indicators requires considerable local knowledge both of the conflict dynamics and of what information is actually collectable.

What is being described here, then, is a cascading model. An outcome that is at the core of stabilization and reconstruction is security. One of the tasks central to security is ensuring freedom of movement. An indicator of freedom of movement may be the percentage of primary roads in the previous month that have experienced a violent attack. Clusters of indicators should be developed to cover the full range of functions that are central to a stabilization and reconstruction operation.

Assessment

Decision makers may search for a single indicator or small set of indicators to assess progress in stabilization and reconstruction operations because the clarity of one or a few key indicators could simplify the process of analysis and decision making.

One alternative is to devise an aggregate index of the indicators used to measure progress toward each core outcome. Many of the models examined for this report achieve this by making use of rankings on a numbered scale. These rankings can be aggregated and assessed throughout time and converted into trend lines of progress toward core outcomes and the overall mission goal.

To make midcourse corrections and formulate better policy, inputs and outputs need to be correlated with progress toward outcomes. The challenge for mission leadership and the policy community generally is to devise an information management system that will provide a comprehensive view of who is doing what and where they are doing it. If this can be done, then it becomes possible to gather regular updates from those organizations about their activities and progress.

Resources expended could then be tracked in relation to changes in outcomes over time. This would provide a feedback loop permitting policymakers to tailor the allocation of resources and effort more efficiently to circumstances in the field. Such an effort is an essential complement to traditional program evaluations performed by implementing organizations.

Certain additional characteristics of stabilization and reconstruction operations are rarely assessed. For example, because successful interventions depend on the mission's leadership and the mission's ability to articulate its vision effectively at home and abroad, attempts should be made to develop reliable indicators for each of these key factors of success.

Overcoming Challenges to Measuring

The inherent pressures facing a stabilization and reconstruction operation pose a number of distinct challenges to measuring progress. Overcoming these challenges will require the following actions:

- *Depoliticize metrics*

Political imperatives on the part of some nations, mission leaders, and opposition critics to show undeserved success or failure will always exist. This pressure is likely to be brought to bear through all stages of the measurement process, including the design of indicators, their assessment, and the presentation of results.

The more public the measures and the more independent the body carrying out the assessment, the less chance there is for politicization of the results. An internal metrics office should be attached to the mission's strategic planning staff and should work in collaboration with external audit mechanisms to assure objectivity.

Various models exist in the public and private sectors. Management consultants and outside auditors, for instance, are often brought in to reinforce internal accounting and serve as a watchdog for dishonest reporting or "cooking the books." External actors should be brought in to stabilization and reconstruction operations on a regular basis to fulfill the role of auditor.

- *Create buy-in from leaders and staff*

Although there may be some value in enhancing accountability, the purpose of a metrics system is not primarily to critique the performance of particular agencies and individuals, but to improve operational effectiveness. If this point is not clear, mission leaders may fail to see the creation of a system of metrics as a priority; mission staff may resist having their performance judged on the basis of a set of metrics; and personnel are likely to be hostile to the possibility of being evaluated by metrics they do not control.

If measures of progress are to determine when a mission has accomplished its goals, buy-in must exist within the mission itself, particularly at the highest levels. A metrics system cannot be imposed from outside the mission. While external experts can play a useful role by advising decision makers on how to establish a metrics system, this prac-

To make midcourse corrections and formulate better policy, inputs and outputs need to be correlated with progress toward outcomes.

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Buy-in requires a metrics system that is user-friendly at all levels.

Total objectivity is not possible, but the goal should be to get as close as possible to the ground truth as seen through the eyes of the local people.

tice will succeed only if it is done in conjunction with the mission's strategic planning process.

Senior mission leaders must also periodically review progress toward mission goals and take corrective action as required. Otherwise, the metrics process will quickly become an empty exercise. A surefire way for mission leadership to create and signal that they have bought into the measuring process is to invest early in devising metrics and to fund the process continually throughout the mission's duration. Additionally, a system of incentives and awards could be useful for tying individual and agency performance to mission progress.

Buy-in requires a metrics system that is user-friendly at all levels. Products must be delivered in a format that is easily digestible so that decision makers and their staff can process information quickly and easily.

- *Collect reliable information*

The reality of stabilization and reconstruction operations is that responding to day-to-day challenges assumes an urgency that overwhelms other activities, including assessment and evaluation. This is the case even when the U.S. government has brought its wealth of resources to bear.

Mission personnel may lack the training, time, or means to collect and assess the information required. Failed states and war-torn societies often lack reliable country-level statistical data and continuing violence and intimidation may pose serious obstacles to data collection. Assessing outcomes in these settings is particularly hazardous. For this reason, planners may be reduced to providing assessments of inputs and outputs rather than central tasks or core outcomes. However, there is a real danger in fashioning metrics from what is easiest to count rather than from what really matters.

Metrics systems that rely solely on quantitative measures are likely to offer assessments biased toward easily quantifiable data. Appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators ought to be used in combination for each outcome, thus offering checks and balances on each other. Some of this information may be classified and thus not open to public perusal, particularly if it concerns obstructionist capabilities. Local perceptions that capture attitudes across a society's divides will be a useful source for assessing progress in a number of vital areas.

The most successful efforts have relied on a mixture of official and media reporting alongside polling, focus groups, statistical data, expert opinion, and interviews with local people. Total objectivity is not possible, but the goal should be to get as close as possible to the ground truth as seen through the eyes of the local people. How the average man or woman on the street perceives progress on a daily basis is the most important dimension of measuring progress, since they are ultimately the ones who determine whether international efforts will succeed or fail over the long-term.

Conclusion

Metrics have entered prominently into the public debate about how to determine success in Iraq. Congress has legally required the administration to establish a set of measurable benchmarks of progress. The State Department, Department of Defense, Government Accountability Office, Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, and now the president have responded by articulating metrics for success in Iraq. The policy debate has advanced from oversimplified questions of whether we should stay or go, to questions of what constitutes success or failure and how best to measure progress.

The U.S. government has also become more sophisticated in its use of metrics during this period, relying more on outcomes than inputs and more on a mixture of objective data and local perceptions. The administration has also made efforts to more clearly define success in terms of what is practical in the short, medium, and long-term, and to

devise strategic pillars with clear lines of action tied to measurable standards of progress. In many respects, the steps being taken by the U.S. government to improve its metrics reporting system in Iraq fit squarely with the recommendations of this working group and report.

The greatest challenge to developing trusted standards of progress remains the politicization of metrics reporting and design. It is not surprising that there is little agreement on what the appropriate metrics ought to be for Iraq. Some view metrics as a way to convince Americans that we are winning in Iraq, while others view metrics as a backdoor means of imposing conditions that will eventually lead to withdrawal. Outside auditors are critical to ensuring that the purpose of metrics is to provide as close to an objective reading of “ground truth” as possible, rather than merely providing new evidence for familiar political arguments.

Metrics will never determine strategy, but they should provide some sense of whether a strategy is working or not. Otherwise, measuring becomes an empty exercise.

The greatest challenge to developing trusted standards of progress remains the politicization of metrics reporting and design. It is not surprising that there is little agreement on what the appropriate metrics ought to be for Iraq.

Further Reading

Essential for understanding metrics:

- Hatry, Harry. *Performance Measurement: Getting Results*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 1999.

An early effort to measure progress in UN peace operations:

- Blechman, Barry, William Durch, Wendy Eaton, and Julie Werbel. *Effective Transitions from Peace Operations to Sustainable Peace: Final Report*. Washington, DC: DFI International, 1997.

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World Bank model to establish measurable benchmarks developed in conjunction with host country governments:

- Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS). *An Operational Note on Transitional Results Matrices*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005.

An example of U.S. government metrics:

- Coalition Provisional Authority. *Strategic Planning Document*. Iraq: U.S. Government, 2004.

Clusters of sector-specific indicators relevant to stabilization and reconstruction:

- *Countries at the Crossroads: A Survey of Democratic Governance*. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2005. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=139&edition=2>.
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Reviews of methods to measure and predict state fragility and conflict:

- *Measuring Fragility: Indicators and Methods for Rating State Performance*. Washington, DC: USAID, 2005.
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Key literature relevant to measuring in stabilization and reconstruction:

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Ideas from popular culture relevant to metrics:

- Gawande, Atul. "The Bell Curve: What Happens When Patients Find Out How Good Their Doctors Really Are?" *New Yorker*, December 6, 2004.
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