

Districts' Assessment Guideline for the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG)

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Technical Assessment Paper

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1. Introduction

In Afghanistan's recent history, the Ministry of the Interior has overseen district administration, giving it a limited scope to manage or control affairs of other local services departments. Relevant ministries in Kabul manage their district departments through their provincial line departments. Although the district governor has the title of the district's head, in practice his authority has remained limited to the role of coordinator between the people and the government agencies. Historically, district governors were provided with neither the technical capacity to monitor or supervise service quality and quantity, nor the political capacity and resources to manage relationships with the people.

After the new constitution that mandates parliamentary, provincial and district councils' elections was approved in 2004, establishment of a specialised department to coordinate and supervise the government agencies at the district levels became crucial. The new department was also needed to develop and implement programmes to improve the provincial and district administration and councils and facilitate municipal governments' democratisation, as required by the Constitution. Therefore, the local governance department became an independent department out of the Ministry of the Interior.

Since its inception, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) has faced the challenges of a weak legal basis, unclear policy for district and village governance and lack of rules and regulations to implement the Constitution at the district level. Governing rules of district administration and services continued to be based on a grading system that is decades old and not based on any scientific analysis. Districts are not defined and profiled; instead they are graded into categories 1 to 3 based on population, geography, and socio-economic and political conditions. There is no system to assess relationships of the above-mentioned criteria under changing socio-political circumstances and also to understand their governmental implications.

IDLG's efforts to address the challenges of local governance started by drafting a detailed sub-national policy in 2008-09. Implementation addressed some of the challenges and also revealed problems that were rooted in the existing grading system of the districts. Lack of clarity in the legal grading criteria grouped districts of completely different characteristics, which complicated resources distribution, services provision and capacity of the district governors to coordinate services and establish effective communication with the communities.

1.1 Purpose of the District Assessment

District is the first tier of the government hierarchy and the first point of contact of the people with a formal institution. It is the lowest administrative unit where government departments provide services under a vertical line of reporting, going through the provincial sub-departments to the central ministries. In the past 15 years, less attention has been paid to innovatively changing the vision of the central government leaders toward district administration. For the people, the district administration is the indicator of the performance of the rest of the government. Therefore, it is necessary that the government have an assessment and analytical guideline that will enable it to understand the changing picture at the district level. District administration is a part of the formal arrangement that influences local political behaviour.¹ Having a guideline to understand and reform this formal institution will improve services delivery and positively influence the political behavior of the people and their perception.

The administrative reforms of the Government of Afghanistan have remained limited to hiring processes. Moreover, the government has considered delegation of authority to the provincial governors and departments of the relevant services ministries as a tool to improve performance at the sub-national level. The government has not considered institutional restructuring, specifically at the district level, as a tool for improvement. Any delegation of authority without removing the ceiling created by the existing district definition by grouping them into different grades will not

¹ Douglass C. North, "Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter, 1991), pp. 97-112.

improve district authority performance because the current grading system limits the capacity of the district's administration. District grading provides a convenience-based allocation, and does not respond to the actual needs and expectations of the people.

District governance and administrative challenges vary by location, existence of large national projects and natural resources like water, mineral and high-grade arable land. Some of these challenges were revealed in a pilot assessment that was conducted in three districts of Kabul province, which indicates that similar assessments must be conducted in all of the districts to clearly understand their human and capital needs.

1.2 Methodology

Assessment based on the districts' individual characteristics is a new initiative proposed in brainstorming sessions with key government officials and community representatives from selected districts. The concept has been floating for a while in the official circles, because the existing grading system has failed to become the basis for equitable resources distribution and provide an understanding of the underlying factors of the local conflicts and other district-level challenges. This assessment guideline is focused on studying socio-politically important features of a district in its demographic and geographic perspective.

This assessment guideline proposes using data from all available sources: desk reviews, district development and governance reports, reports on women's rights, crimes, unofficial armed groups, land grabbing and rule of law and people's perceptions of it. It also proposes key informant interviews, both individually and in group discussion, at the district level. Group discussions may be not feasible in all districts and for collection of information on sensitive issues. Therefore its appropriateness will differ from district to district.

Key informant interviews clarify the role of local actors, their political affiliations and local political and power processes. Quality and strength of the information coming from key informants could be questioned, but it provides reliable and valid data if the process is managed well and diversity of the local stakeholders is considered. Geographic, political and demographic factors of the stakeholders are considered for diversifying the key informants groups. An important feature of the key informant interviews is that the respondents should be questioned about the rest of the key stakeholders and their role in the district. Grouping respondents and asking questions only about their interests will not yield useful information for designing interventions. As in this assessment, an effort is made to elaborate hidden and difficult challenges to good governance; therefore, self-reporting will be difficult to rely on.

As mentioned, utilising focus group discussions will depend on the situation of individual districts and their problems. These could be useful, in this context, when they are small and well-planned, with a narrow area of discussion. For example, land-grabbing in the suburban districts could be well-explained in a small focus group discussion of informed stakeholders. Normally, focus groups provide good information to triangulate data collected from other sources. In some cases, when appropriate and in case of suspicion of misinformation by the key informants, focus groups could be used to validate data collected from individual interviews. In such cases, the assessment team must have a clear idea about the political or any other interest-based relationship between the people involved in the key informant interviews and participants of the focus group discussions.

1.3 Process

Two scenarios are anticipated for district assessment implementation. First, the IDLG will conduct the assessment in all districts. Profiles will be developed for each district and shared with other government ministries and agencies to guide their actions and planning. The IDLG will also use these profiles to design specific training and assistance packages for the district governors. They will also be used by the provincial governors to understand the local socio-political dynamics and underlying factors of potential conflicts. The district assessment reports will help the governors to effectively communicate with the provincial councils, provincial development committees, and other stakeholders for improved services and collaborative problem solving in the districts.

The second scenario is forecasted for the long term, in which there will be specialised training packages for provincial and district staff. The trainings will be developed jointly by IDLG and the civil services commission, aimed at improving technical capacity of the district officials to support legitimate claims for more services and development projects. These trainings will enable the provincial and district governors' staff to periodically assess their districts and share the reports with the centre. In both cases, the central IDLG office will monitor the assessment process and provide technical support. These assessments are not a quick snapshot of the districts and are not supposed to be conducted in a fixed amount of time. The time needed for the assessment might differ depending on the accessibility and complexity of a district. It can take from a few days to a week to complete.

2. Defining a District

Legal definition of a district comes from the Law of Local Administration. For practical purposes, each district must have a definition that guides government and non-government agencies in efficient and effective design of their interventions. A pilot study that was conducted with the technical support of GIZ and efforts of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) department of IDLG provides a rough roadmap for these assessments. The pilot study explained the challenges created by the existing system of defining the districts into categories or grades (Annex 1). It also found rough criteria that will guide the study of the socio-political dynamics of a district and its relation to the geography and demographic factors of the district. The IDLG M&E department provided lists and maps of the districts in line with the findings of the pilot study (Annex 2).

2.1 Contextual information

Although Afghanistan is not a very large country, it has a diverse geography and ethnic distribution. Afghanistan has remained at the centre of world politics for almost three decades now. This has brought diversity to its internal political and power dynamics and has connected them to the location and natural resources, ethnic composition and social factor of the country in a complex manner. To understand this complexity, it is necessary to collect contextual information for each district. There are areas in the context that shall be studied for all districts alike, for example, demographics, recent history of conflict, political, ethnic and tribal composition. These factors must be studied before going to the rest of the contextual information.

The demographics, political and social factors will be more meaningful and programmatically useful if studied in the light of other contextual information of a district like location and resource base. Discussions with the provincial and district authorities as well as key informants made up the context section of this document. This guideline is based on the factors that influence the internal power dynamics of the districts and has enabled external factors to be relevant. The contextual study roadmap provides strategic guidelines for assessment and analysis of different factors of the district in its geo-economic background:

- Location of a district, bordering with neighbouring countries, along the highways and satellite districts of large urban centres.
- Presence of national assets both public and private in the districts, like transmission lines, irrigation and hydropower dams, industries and others.
- Natural resources, coal mines, gas fields, gem stones, forests and others.

2.2 Location

Demographic, economic and social factors of the districts in all locations should be studied. Population changes, ethnic composition and age distribution are factors that are relevant in all districts, but have more implications for the urban satellite districts. Services implications of demographic factors are similar in all districts, but their influence on the political and other tensions will vary from district to district; hence the need for government interventions to prevent escalation of local tensions.

2.2.1 District bordering the neighbouring countries

Location of a district on an international border or the Duran line is an important feature for two reasons. First, because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, its trade ports are located in the border districts. Trade ports provide employment opportunities, affect price of the land in the district, and, if controlled by a specific interest group, can be a huge patronage network asset. Therefore, demographic factors of a border district and study of its key actors should take place in light of the above.

Second, border location is important in light of recent history of conflict and the influences of the external factors of the conflict over the internal factors. Although this factor may not remain valid for long, it is important to be considered in the district assessments at this stage. District governors, provincial governors and the government in Kabul must have a clear picture of the external influences in a bordering district so that they can have the right interventions to balance them and prevent potential conflict or capture of the resources by the interest groups that have support across the border.

2.2.2 Satellite district of large urban centres

Afghanistan is one of the fastest urbanising countries in the world. This has created immense pressure on the urban centres and has outpaced formal settlement. According to one official report, about 70% of the recent rural migration to Kabul has been settled informally in the neighbouring suburban districts. A pilot study of three satellite districts of Kabul shows that informal settlements are not only a human development issue, but also a potential security risk. Moreover, it has already contributed to the strengthening of the patronage and criminal networks of the interest groups. Study of these districts will provide information on the demographic changes, and factors that influence national and local politics, as well as prevent political violence in the times of election and other national events. It also clarifies the development challenges and opportunities created by fast urbanisation.

2.2.3 Districts along the highways

The security viewpoint determines the current importance of locations along highways, specifically in the areas where insurgents have a presence. Studying this feature from a security viewpoint may not remain relevant for long time. But an insight to these districts will provide an opportunity to the local governors to work with people and create support for securing the highways. In the long run, a comprehensive understanding of these districts will help to plan economic development zones that can attract people from hard-to-reach places to relatively easily accessible districts. This will be an important feature of these districts and an opportunity that will decrease the population burden on the urban areas, as well as create employment and easily accessible manufacturing and processing centres for agricultural products. Assessment of these district will focus more on economic opportunities.

2.3 District with large scale national and private assets

Besides the demographic and socio-economic factors, study of the key actors is relevant in the districts that have large-scale national or private assets. Large-scale fixed assets like transmission lines and water dams are important from security point of view and their potential for enabling development, while assets like industries provide direct and indirect employment. Technical capacity of the local labour and their access to the employment in the large-scale projects can be both an opportunity for social cohesion and a point of contention among the communities. Relationships of the local community in terms of expectation and support to the presence of large projects will be affected by the type of project and its ownership status, i.e., private or public.

In the districts where these assets are located, the assessment will clarify the development opportunities created by the assets. It will study opportunities for small-scale projects in industries and businesses that are related to the assets. For example, in districts where irrigation dams are located, the assessment will identify development interventions that can generate employment and revenues. Symbiotic dependability between the national assets and residents of the districts is important for sustainable employment opportunities and security and safety. The assessment provides information on the key actors and interest groups in the asset, which enables the district authorities to secure it with the key actors and also with the security agencies in case of a potential threat.

In districts where the assets are private or in the form of large industries or oil and gas storages, the assessment will try to find about the social corporate responsibilities of the industries. The assessment will recommend specific training for the district officials and awareness initiatives for the people. Awareness and capacity will foster fruitful relationships between the people and the owners of the assets.

2.4 Districts with natural resources

Without proper management, natural resources quickly become the curse of communities in conflict and post-conflict situations. Therefore, the national government must have strategic understanding of the districts where natural resources are. The district officials must have proper knowledge and create profiles of the key actors, armed groups, civil society and underlying political and ethnic tensions in order to enable the government to properly manage and prevent conflicts. Proper assessment of the political dynamics of the district with natural resources helps prevent insurgents and terrorists from indirectly collecting taxes or selling the resources through their hidden associates in the community.

2.5 Districts with illicit poppy cultivation

Poppy cultivation has a direct link to instability, insurgency and crime. It is both a sign and a cause of instability. UN agencies, along with the ministry of counter-narcotics and the police, have comprehensive information about the amount of poppy cultivation in each district and the size of land covered by it. Information on poppy cultivation provides predictors of instability and the level of crime that district officials might face. In addition, the assessment should also collect any available information on the opium processing and groups involved with the processing and trafficking of the final product.

2.6 Conclusion

Assessment of the different aspects of the districts so far discussed is actually a part of the context in which the political actors and interest groups interact. The contextual factors create incentives for specific behaviour either to break or cooperate with the rule of law. The district assessment and report is therefore an important tool that will guide government interventions for stability of the district. It will inform the government about the right staffing and capacity for the district offices. Right interventions supplemented by adequate and equitable services and development initiatives will stabilise the district, which is important for socio-economic development.

3. Stage 2: Political Economy Analysis

Assessment of the political economy mainly addresses the stakeholders of the related processes and the incentives that shape their behaviours in the specific context of the districts. Government documents show that the political figures and interest groups have repeatedly taken advantage of the district-level information gap, and have manipulated the situation in their favour. Existence of law enforcement agencies and institutions is not enough to prevent interest groups and actors from undermining the rule of law and thwarting development and appropriate services. District assessment will create profiles of the key actors and will guide the government on how to encourage these actors in support of development and stability initiatives. Assessment and analysis of the political environment should be conducted for all sets of districts discussed in the first section.

3.1 Stakeholders

In any given district, more than one group of stakeholders will have interests in the government development and provision of services. Some of the groups and individual stakeholders try to positively influence and support the decisions in favour of the people, while some other groups will try to influence decisions in favour of their individual and group interests. Government and its local officials need to know the landscape of these stakeholders and their strategies for safeguarding their interests. Understanding of the government officials should be in the ethno-politic, geographic and economic context of the district. This will provide them with the power of strategic movements to guide different interest groups.

The long history of conflict in Afghanistan has created a complex environment of district-level socio-political relationships. Therefore, detailed information and analysis of the stakeholders in terms of their ethnic, tribal and political affiliation helps the government to identify political challenges of development, services and rule of law. With the help of stakeholders' analysis, the government agencies will have a strategic edge over the groups that are secretly promoting their patronage networks. Evidence from different districts suggests that political groups ask for services according to the existing grading system in order to create employment for the members of their patronage networks. Once these groups grab the jobs for their group members, they influence them for unlawful favours.

3.1.1 Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders could be put together into interest groups, but it would be better to just list them all at the beginning and then see which are more relevant to the specific conditions of the individual district. Stakeholders could be roughly divided into government officials, community members and leaders and non-governmental associations and organisations. But in some cases it will be difficult to find a separating line between the government officials and community leaders. For example, in many districts, members of the police force will belong to influential local families or the local police will be just from one strong ethnic or tribal group. The leader of the group might be portraying himself as an impartial member of the community with no interests in the political processes of the districts. These are instances that need extensive information collection and analysis, without which opportunities for equitable services and establishing rule of law might be lost.

The following list could be used as a guide to think of different interest groups in a district:

- Government officials
- National police
- Local police
- Ethnic groups and their sub-groups
- Tribal groups and their sub-groups
- Organised political parties

- Political parties having armed wings
- Ulema councils
- Tribal councils
- Formal civil society organisations
- Health committees in the district
- District Development Assembly (DDA)
- Community Development Councils (CDCs)
- Education committees in the district
- Members of the provincial council from the district
- Member of the parliament from the district
- Illegal armed groups

3.1.2 Interests of the Stakeholders

In stable conditions where interest groups have a long history of peaceful political competition, groups clearly demand protection of their interests through recognised mechanisms and processes. But in post-conflict situations such as Afghanistan, interest groups conceal and mix their interests with the issues of identity, religious and sectarian ideology, and security and their antiterrorism enthusiasm. By digging deep into the structure of their motives, one can easily show that the same impetus for maximising interest and control of the resources is also behind interest groups' concealment in Afghanistan. Assessment must clarify the motives behind the actions of the political groups and concisely report them.

In some districts, politicians might demand the status quo of services and development to continue, while in others they will demand dramatic increases. In both cases, the assessment must dig deeper into the roots of demands by triangulating relationships of the political groups to the government officials, business groups, illegal armed groups and people who are involved in illegal extraction of natural resources. Moreover, local political links to the larger political groups in Kabul and their mutual contributions need to be understood. In some cases, even the media and civil society groups will have affiliations with certain interest and political groups. Even though civil society and the media can provide valid information on other groups, their own interests and affiliation should also be put to question.

Government officials normally avoid responding to civil society and community leaders, arguing that these contacts are time consuming and slow down services and development. This is one of the areas that needs to be explored and linked to the interests of the government officials, because a working relationship between the civil society, community leaders and the government officials is important for transparency and accountability. District assessment must try to find a way through the complexities of the conflicting interests in the district and recommend strategies that will help to ensure equitable services and the rule of law and enable development projects.

3.1.3 Resource base of the stakeholders

The formative study discovered that the political actors in a district rely on three sources of political support to maintain their strength and protect their interests. First, they have links with high-level political groups and high officials in the centre. Government officials in the districts rely on their strong links to higher-ups in Kabul. Second, actors will also rely on their links to the local power hubs of ethnic and religious affiliations. Third, they use their contact with and control over the local police and their own armed groups as a support backstop. All these linkages must be included in the assessment.

Financial resources of the district actors must also be understood via concise contextual profiling. Financial resources could be both legitimate and illegitimate. In the case of illegal resources, the

actors might have access to or control over mining operations, production and sale of illicit drugs and grabbing public or private land. In extreme cases, they use armed groups for kidnappings and extortion and imposing illegal taxes on the community. In districts on the international borders, the political actors and the government officials have access to custom taxation on imports. The resource base of the stakeholders in the districts is important and should be clearly assessed.

Key political actors in a district will also use their capacity of making alliances with other stakeholders as a resource to influence local administration and distribution of services. These alliances are more relevant when studied at the province level because the composition of larger political parties and ethnic groups suggests that these operate on a larger geography than a district, which provides a stronger network of influence and control over services, development and rule of law.

3.2 Key stresses and environment of power interplay in the district

Discussion of key stress points is relevant for the district officials and central government. These are the hidden issues that can become open conflicts between interest groups, causing local youth to join insurgents and affecting cooperation of key political actors with the provincial administration. Stresses are not necessarily grievances, but grievances can become stresses and potential threats to effective district administration.

Stresses could be economic, military and political in nature. Economic stresses will vary with type and access structure. The existence of strong armed groups with capacity to control land and resources, even if it is public, will create competition from rival groups. In some cases, an alliance of government officials and local power holders will be controlling resources, which will lead to even greater resentment in the community and can become a serious stress in a district.

Political stresses are normally outcomes of the system flaws and the existence of larger political and ethnic alliances beyond the district boundaries. These stresses must be addressed, though they are easily defensible by those who derive interest from them. In situations like this, one political, tribal or ethnic group controls most or all arenas of political contestation. It suppresses the rest of the political groups in an unseen way. Everything looks normal on the surface, and if some questions are asked, the system is blamed. Examples of this type of stress exist in some provinces and districts, where one group has succeeded to control the DDA, membership of the provincial council and also of the parliament. Situations like this should be identified and their consequences should be open for discussion with all district stakeholders. Joint decisions should be facilitated by the district governors and staff on development of alternative mechanisms of informal political participation.

Military stresses are caused by the presence of insurgents, illegal armed groups and pro-government militias. District and provincial authorities should try to collect as detailed information as possible on these stresses. Intelligence, police and military reports are important sources about numbers, strength and capacity of these groups. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions will provide detailed qualitative explanations. Therefore, the assessment should use both primary and secondary sources of information. The presence of armed groups is both a sign and cause of instability and poor governance.

3.3 Role of the Government Institutions

The formative study that was conducted to inform this assessment guideline revealed that people in districts collectively refer to the state institutions as government. For example, when they see corruption in the judiciary, they consider it corruption of the government. Therefore, all the district-level state institutions should be assessed. Their linkages, political inclination, performance and perception of the people about them should be assessed.

3.3.1 District governor office

District governors are left with little role in the vertical funding and reporting structure of the services administration in Afghanistan. But they still bear the greatest share of blame for government incompetency. In reality, the district governors have only a coordinating role, both among the government agencies and between the government and the people.

The district governor's capacity should be assessed in the light of information coming from the contextual assessment and analysis of the individual districts. For example, in a border district, where the power play is revolving around illegal access to revenues from the custom taxes, the district governor must have the required human resources and institutional capacity to effectively mobilise state institutions and people to prevent illegal control of state resources. Similarly, contextual information from other types of district will help to calculate the ability of a district governor's office to respond appropriately to the specific needs of her/his district.

3.3.2 District's judiciary

The district judiciary is the most important institution that can contribute to the legitimacy of the government, and state as whole, in insecure areas. The presence of the judiciary, along with their capacity, people's perceptions and linkages of the judiciary with the local political groups should all be assessed, analysed and reported in detail. The context-specific capacity of the judiciary is also important to be assessed. For example, the judiciary of a district where coal mines constitute a major source of livelihoods of the people must have the capacity to handle cases of labour rights violations, identification of illegal mining activities and operations that can endanger mine workers. Moreover, mechanisms of influence of political actors and interest groups should be assessed on the district judiciary. This will help the district official and the judiciary to plan preventive interventions.

3.3.3 Security agencies

Assessment of the national police's numbers and service quality is an important indicator of the success of the national level reforms of the security agencies. The national police at the district level has remained at the center of the ghost police controversy among the government leadership. Assessment will help the provincial and district governors to know the power landscape of the district and adopt strategies accordingly. Moreover, the involvement of the police in local politics, along with their political, tribal and ethnic affiliations and involvement in economic activities are all important issues to be known to the district and provincial governors. A similar understanding of the situation of the local police is important in places where it is established.

Additionally, the assessment should equally focus on the qualitative aspect of the security forces in the district. It must create a body of knowledge on the context-specific capacities that police and other security agencies require. A good example is that the government must know about the capacity of the police and other security agencies to protect high voltage transmission lines in the districts where they pass. Information on the capacity of security agencies will become even more relevant when the pipelines become a reality and start bringing gas and oil from Central Asia.

4. Conclusion

The first section of the assessment guideline suggests establishing a specific definition for districts on the basis of potential risk and opportunities. Location, available natural resources and presence of national assets all provide both opportunities and risks to the government and people of the district. There should be an efficient and effective administration in the district to maximise benefits and minimise risk of these opportunities. Therefore, the district administration must have a comprehensive profile of the district that provides information on all aspects of the district.

In case of any opportunity or risk, people will organise around issues and act in groups to achieve the opportunity and avoid risk. The act and type of organisation depends on the opportunities and risks and institutional arrangement that presents the opportunities. Therefore, district administration as an important component of the institutional arrangement must use the right tools to create a body of knowledge about the district and define it correctly in line with the available opportunities. The district administration must also have the capacity to create the right type of awareness in people in order to influence people and their acts in a constructive direction.

The contextual data of a district helps to see the governance challenges against a clear background. The contextual information shows the political and economic actors and helps to define strategic interventions to diffuse negative influences of these actors. Without having the right information, political actors in a district and the government can create misconceptions about each other. In an environment where ideas are established on rumours, every political actor thinks that the next political actor has access to more resources than her/his own group and a corrupt arrangement with the government must provide an edge to the next group. This leads to lack of cooperation among certain groups; in some cases open opposition, and in some others it leads to armed opposition of the government. To avoid this situation, the district administration and the government must have exact profile and contextual information of the district. By having the right knowledge, the government is able to negotiate terms both with and among different groups and create alliances in support of the government initiatives.

A right definition and profile of the district enables the government to allocate appropriate resources to provide services and human resources that have the capacity to manage the services and expectations. It also helps the government to come up with the right development projects, leading to the development of those skills in the people, which they will use in the long run because of the specificity of the skills to the context. Moreover, context enables the government to fund such development projects that further support the existing set of skills and small industries in the district.

Context information is deficient without having the capacity to manoeuvre through the political landscape. The political landscape of any district in Afghanistan can be complex. Normally, there are layers of complexities superimposed over each other. It is possible that two opposite groups might belong to different ethnic groups, but the same political party, or one ethnic group will be divided into sub-groups on one issue, but united on an issue of identity. This will not be visible without digging deep into the political and economic dynamics of the district.

5. Questions Guide

This section does not have detailed questions; it guides the thinking process of coming up with questions for each section of an assessment that is proposed by this guideline. The basic concept is that the assessment of each district will follow its preliminary definition based on the contextual information given in section 2.0 of this guideline. The M&E department of IDLG has already developed lists and maps of the districts that follow the lines described in section 2.0. Inclusion of specific questions will be based on these lists, but it is important to note that every assessment team must be trained to add applicable questions when needed.

- General information: These questions need to be asked for all the districts:
 - Population, available estimates from different sources, Central Statistics Office (CSO), vaccination records, UN agencies like UNICEF and other estimates
 - Main livelihoods of the people
 - Age demography, literacy
 - Number of schools, clinics, NSP projects
 - Citizens' Charter projects
 - Civil society organisations, NGOs working there
 - Agriculture, industries, arable land, water sources
 - Presence and number of Kochis
- Location specific questions guide, Bordering District:
 - length of border/separation line with the neighboring country
 - Terrain of the district
 - Terrain and crossings through the border
 - Ethnic, tribal and political groups located along the border
 - Formal crossing points, number, presence of custom authorities,
 - Main business across the border, what is imported and exported, illegal business, drugs and weapons coming and going
 - People involved in cross border businesses, both legitimate and illegal
 - Control of certain groups on the cross border business
 - Presence of the armed groups
 - Cross border movement of the armed groups, are certain groups more free than the others,
 - Returnees, their number and composition
 - Armed groups and local police, their numbers and ethno-political relations
- Satellite districts of large urban centers:
 - Total area of the districts
 - Area included in the city plan
 - Area included in the city without a city plan
 - Area of the public land in the district (in sq km or jeribs)
 - Public land grabbed by local people

- Public land grabbed by powerful figures
- Ethnic, tribal and political relations of the people who have grabbed public land
- Price difference of the land that is included in the city and outside the city
- Industries
- Common skill sets, type of available labour
- New settlers in the district
- Land related tensions, conflicts
- Presence of criminal networks
- Relation of criminal networks to the land grabbing groups
- Amount of public and private land grabbed illegally
- General perception of the land grabbing groups
- Armed groups
- Districts along the highways:
 - Which highway
 - Length of the highway
 - Any industries along the highway
 - Population concentration along the highways
 - Availability of public land
 - Type of the private land
 - Livelihoods of the people
 - Security along the highway
 - Groups blamed for insecurity
 - Presence of armed groups
 - Presence of police and military
 - Estimates of the population who have access and benefit from the highway
 - closest urban centers along the highway
 - Estimates of people going to the urban center for work
- Districts having large scale assets:
 - What are the assets
 - Public of private
 - Related employment opportunities
 - Who benefits from the employment opportunities
 - General information and perception of the people about the asset
 - Sense of ownership in case of public asset
 - Number and type of people employed, labor, skilled labor or technical staff
 - Contribution to the local economy

- Districts with natural resources:
 - Type and location of the natural resources
 - Accessibility of the natural resources
 - Any mining or extraction taking place
 - Who is mining
 - Who controls the area of the natural resources
 - Any taxation taking place
 - Any armed group benefiting from the resources
 - Existence of relevant labor and skills
 - People’s awareness of the potential of the natural resource
 - People’s perception of the opportunity created by the natural resources
- Districts with poppy cultivation:
 - Size of the land covered by poppy cultivation
 - Who controls the area
 - People involved with cultivation, processing and trafficking
 - Any perceived involvement of government officials
 - Any proof of the involvement of the government people
 - Perceived involvement of the politicians
 - Security in the district
 - Crimes, any sign of organised crimes
- Stakeholders’ analysis:
 - Individuals, their legacy in recent conflicts, political affiliations, ethnic and tribal affiliations
 - Groups, armed, unarmed, legally armed like local police
 - Civil society groups, NGOs, community associations, CDCs, DDA, education and health or other services committees
 - Are certain political groups more organised than others
 - Is organisation supported from outside
 - Perceived motives of the organisations
 - Perceived motives of the individual stakeholders
 - People’s perception about organised stakeholders
 - People’s perception about the government
 - Interests of the stakeholders, political, economic or military
 - Resource base of key stakeholders, support from outside, sale of lands, drugs, arms, crime, legitimate businesses, types of businesses
 - Existence of formal institutions to shape interaction between different stakeholders
 - Any informal institutions to facilitate interaction among stakeholders, like known conventions and traditions, community elders to intervene when needed, moral code, tribal code

- Key stresses:
 - Presence of an ongoing conflict, armed or unarmed
 - Long standing land or property conflicts among ethnic or tribal groups
 - Ethnic tensions, known history of crimes committed by ethnic, tribal or political groups against each other
 - New claims by certain groups over property or land of another group
 - Any land dispute between the government and the people
 - Any collective claim by the people over public land
 - History of tensions between the locals and Kochis
 - History of sectarian conflicts
 - Claims of powerful political groups
 - Negative perception about a certain group
 - Presence of criminal groups
 - Presence of terrorists, local or foreign
 - Presence of insurgents
- Role of the government agencies:
 - Presence and number of officials
 - Infrastructure of the government offices
 - Qualifications and capacity level
 - Temporary or permanent
 - Political appointees or merit based
 - Political, ethnic and tribal affiliations
 - Allegation of corruption and bribery
 - Dominance of certain political group in the public service

