



# DIAGNOSING INSTABILITY, BUILDING RESILIENCE

**The Governance System Stability Assessment**

A diagnostic tool for assessing community fragility and building resilience

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# GOVERNANCE SYSTEM STABILITY ASSESSMENT

a mapping tool designed to help community leaders and development practitioners **assess the overall health of local governance systems, identify specific weaknesses or vulnerabilities within them, and then develop tailored, targeted, and right-sized approaches to build or enhance community resilience.**



The core principle behind the Governance System Stability Assessment (GSSA) is that through a deeper and more nuanced understanding of a community's unique governance system—the players that comprise it and their influence on the factors that drive its stability—community leaders and development practitioners can better tailor programmatic solutions, allocate resources, and organize constituencies, mitigating the potential for conflict and reinforcing community resilience-building mechanisms.

While there are several good methodologies for assessing both community-level conflict dynamics and the efficacy of community-level governing institutions, the GSSA seeks to bridge these two practices and bring insight into how local governance both drives, and can help mitigate, descent into instability.

The GSSA provides a standardized lens through which to analyze a community governance system, systematically evaluating its processes and outcomes in eight functional dimensions and seven stability factors (right). Essentially, the GSSA is a guided qualitative assessment questionnaire, that—depending on the availability of time and

access, and the level of detailed insight sought—may be used to rapidly gain insight into a community's individual strengths and weaknesses, risks and resiliencies, and unique perspectives of individual groups and constituencies. These dimensions and the evaluative indicators are drawn from similar national assessment frameworks, such as that used by the New Deal for Fragile States, and validated through extensive research conducted by the International Peace and Security Institute.

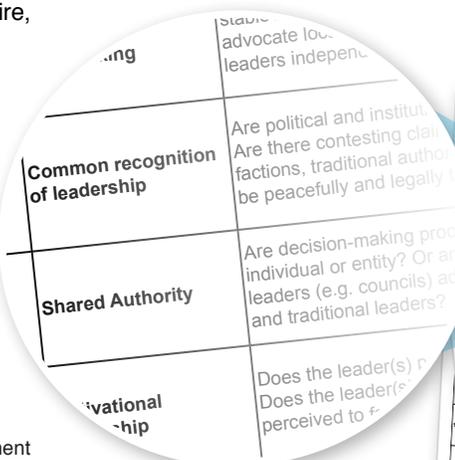
As an output, the GSSA produces an individualized profile of each Local Governance System, visually noting key vulnerabilities and potential points of resilience that can be built upon. This output provides development implementers with crucial community-specific direction in terms of what risk factors to prioritize, how to allocate or apply limited resources and where to focus planning and activities. Likewise, it affords local community leaders with a platform from which to bring groups together to discuss issues of mutual concern, undertake informed planning and work with different stakeholders to map joint pathways forward.

## 8 Dimensions of Local Governance

1. Leadership
2. Administrative Management
3. Fiscal Management
4. Service Delivery
5. Civic Participation
6. Security Environment
7. Justice & Rule of Law
8. Economic Foundations

## 7 Stability Factors

1. Inclusion
2. Decentralization & Autonomy
3. Social Cohesion
4. Performance
5. Civic Infrastructure
6. Confidence & Trust
7. System Legitimacy



The GSSA uses a qualitative assessment questionnaire to analyze a community governance system on eight key functional dimensions—from service delivery to civic participation and more.

Dimension	Indicator	Key Questions	Very Bad	Bad	Somewhat Unstable	Somewhat Stable	Stabilized
1.1 Inclusion	Representative leadership	Are elected and/or appointed officials in key institutions and decision-making bodies representative of the population in their composition (making horizontal, or does it include a range of sectors, vulnerable groups, and ethnic/tribal affiliations)?	Very Bad - Leadership monopolized to benefit favored groups	Bad - Leadership monopolized to benefit majority groups	Fair - Basic representation in leadership for minority groups	Good - Leadership composition mirrors community	Excellent - Leadership composition mirrors community
1.2 Decentralization & Autonomy	Localization of policymaking	Are local and regional governance institutions internally and vertically accountable to local leaders (take advantage of opportunities to advance or advocate local interests in central or national policymaking)? Are local leaders independent, or does it include a range of sectors, vulnerable groups, and ethnic/tribal affiliations?	Very Bad - Higher order leaders control local policymaking	Bad - Higher order leaders control local policymaking	Fair - Local leaders have control over policymaking in some areas	Good - Local leaders have control over policymaking in most areas	Excellent - Policymaking is locally driven and locally led
1.3 Social Cohesion	Common recognition of leadership	Are political and institutional leaders broadly recognized and accepted? Are there contesting claims of authority (e.g. from social or political factors, traditional authorities, or armed groups)? Is an authority being peacefully and legally transferred between groups?	Very Bad - Market competition for authority	Bad - Authority non-recognized by majority	Fair - Authority broadly recognized, with gaps/ambiguities between political leaders and others	Good - Universal recognition of authority; effective coordination between political leaders and others	Excellent - Universal recognition of authority; effective coordination between political leaders and others
1.4 Social Cohesion	Shared Authority	Are decision-making processes dominated or monopolized by one individual or entity? Or are they shared among (for example) political leaders (e.g. councils) administrative leaders (e.g. mayors), bureaucrats, and traditional leaders?	Very Bad - One individual or entity monopolizes decision-making	Bad - A dominant authority allows other leaders a nominal role in decision-making	Fair - Power imbalance between multiple leaders participating in decision-making	Good - Multiple leaders coordinate/operate in decision-making	Excellent - Multiple leaders coordinate/operate in decision-making
1.5 Social Cohesion	Institutional leadership	Does the leader(s) promote a collective identity in the community? Does the leader(s) advance particular agendas that favor or are perceived to favor one group over another?	Very Bad - Leader(s) favor one group over another	Bad - Leader(s) favor one group over another	Fair - Leader(s) neither privilege one group, nor bias inter-group bonds	Good - Leader(s) advance the community's collective good	Excellent - Leader(s) advance the community's collective good
1.6 Performance	Participatory leadership	How do political and institutional leaders interact with citizens and civil society? Are they proactive in communicating with the public or leader(s)? Do they make civic participation or consult and lead? Does the leader mobilize and channel collective action?	Very Bad - Hostile engagement with public	Bad - Reactive, defensive engagement with public	Fair - Irregular, ineffective engagement with public	Good - Proactive, constructive engagement with public	Excellent - Proactive, constructive engagement with public
1.7 Civic Infrastructure	Representative Processes	Do political processes in this community foster inclusive and representative governance (e.g. inclusion in decision-making, absence of resources, etc)? Are minority, vulnerable, or traditionally marginalized populations generally excluded from these processes?	Very Bad - Laws and social norms bar certain groups from all political processes	Bad - Opportunities to participate, but some key groups are excluded	Fair - Most groups participate, but some key groups are excluded	Good - All groups have equal opportunities and rights to participate	Excellent - All groups have equal opportunities and rights to participate
1.8 Confidence & Trust	Consistent Perceptions	Are political institutions and processes perceived by constituents to be representative, inclusive, and effective? Are they judged to have credibility in the eyes of the government? Do any key stakeholder groups feel particularly excluded, marginalized, or mistreated? Are leaders accessible and visible to their constituents? Are leaders perceived as respecting local codes of conduct and ordinances?	Very Bad - Constituents feel threatened by authorities	Bad - Constituents are mistrustful of authorities	Fair - Constituents are neutral of authorities	Good - Constituents trust effectiveness of authorities	Excellent - Constituents trust effectiveness of authorities
1.9 System Legitimacy	Regular Mandate to Govern	How are leaders selected or appointed? Are they selected/appointed to a commission process that is vetted and audited by all groups? Do people own the outcomes of leader(s) decisions?	Very Bad - Constituents feel imposed	Bad - Constituents feel imposed	Fair - Constituents only feel imposed if they agree with them	Good - Constituents own leaders as mandated and accountable to the community	Excellent - Constituents own leaders as mandated and accountable to the community

# How is Data Analyzed?



Visualizations map overall stability, strengths and weaknesses, and differences in perception. Each community is scored within the eight dimensions of local governance, with a score of 1 in any dimension indicating low stability and a score of 4 indicating high stability

## Why Focus on Local Governance?

A reciprocal, mutually-dependent relationship between actors that is based on trust

### Shared Responsibility, Shared Success

The conditions for enhanced resilience are created when a virtuous cycle occurs between local government and society.

### Social Capital

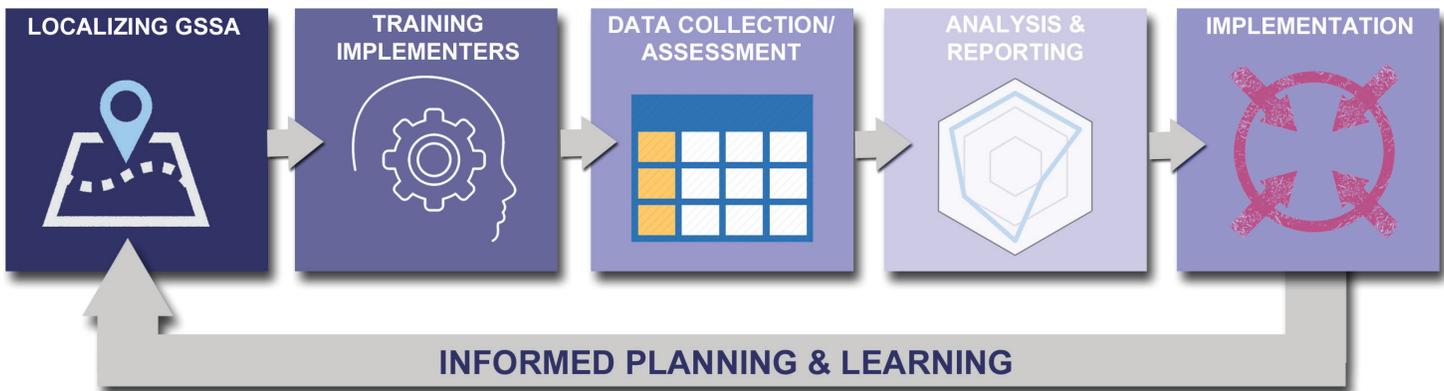
This is the fuel for resilience, defined as the ability of a community to absorb shocks, adapt to short- and long-term stresses, and transform itself to better-manage shocks and stresses into the future while maintaining coherence.

### Stability

Where the local governance system is stable, communities are better equipped to manage conflicts and grievances non-violently, and take collective action based on mutual interest when faced with resource scarcities or other shocks.



## Programming Cycle





“Governance systems are strengthened not simply by building the capacity of individual system actors, but by simultaneously enhancing the quality and utility of interactions between them.”

## Why the GSSA?

Working in conflict and post-conflict contexts around the globe, Creative Associates International and the International Peace and Security Institute (IPSI) observed that differences between communities are heightened and amplified in fraught environments. The rules and traditions by which a community governs itself—who controls assets and local levers of power, and to what end; how resources are allocated between and within groups; and how grievances are expressed and litigated—have a direct impact on a community’s vulnerability to violent conflict, and its resilience in the face of social, economic and environmental shocks and stressors.

The effectiveness of Local Governance Systems—and the extent to which they are seen to fairly allocate resources and

opportunities, justly mediate grievances and consciously manage risk factors—therefore determines in part a community’s vulnerability to violence and suffering, and its resilience against them.

Yet the confluence of risk factors that ignite violence or create susceptibility to crisis, such as wide-scale food insecurity, within one community may not necessarily replicate that condition in another. Thus, understanding the unique character of a community’s governance system—its inherent vulnerabilities and stabilizing factors—is essential to predicting and preventing destabilizing events.

However, due to a lack of nuanced information, development practitioners often apply broad-stroke methods and approaches to community stabilization and resilience-building.

In light of this gap, Creative and IPSI have developed the Governance System Stability Assessment (GSSA): a tool designed to help community leaders and development practitioners assess the overall health of Local Governance Systems, identify specific weaknesses or vulnerabilities within them, and develop tailored, targeted, and right-sized approaches to build or enhance community resilience.

## What’s Next?

We seek innovative partners in governments, multilateral organizations, and communities across a wide array of geographic areas to begin to identify typologies of Local Governance Systems through the GSSA. Creative and IPSI will continue to work jointly to evaluate, refine, and build upon the tool as it is rolled-out.



The GSSA was developed and produced by Creative Associates International, with the valued input of the International Peace and Security Institute (IPSI). Creative provides outstanding, on-the-ground development services and forges partnerships to deliver sustainable solutions to local challenges. IPSI equips global leaders through experiential training and applied research to pragmatically prevent, transform, and resolve violent conflict.

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