Brief: State-Building Assessment Tool

What Is State-Building?

Building resilient states is essential to overcoming fragility and conflict. This tool conceptualizes state-building as a process through which the authority, capacity and legitimacy of the state and its institutions are strengthened across sectors or state ‘domains’ over time. The concepts upon which the tool is built therefore include:

- **The three key dimensions of governance** that are required for states to acquire resilience and exit fragility: authority, capacity, and legitimacy;

- **The spheres or ‘functional domains’** where citizens expect the state to perform: security domain, political/government domain, economic domain, and social/service delivery domain;

- **The specific institutions and organizations** that contribute to the outcomes in these four domains, and which are crucial for building resilient states.

These concepts are not unique to fragile states. Rather, they represent essential ‘building blocks’ of functional states everywhere. However, understanding and identifying ways to strengthen them is particularly important in the context of fragility and conflict.

Why Use the State-Building Assessment Tool?

- It offers country teams in fragile states and beyond a conceptual framework or a ‘common language’ on state-building.

- It generates a common team-based experience of linking analysis to operational implications.

- It can 'surface' many of the difficult issues and diverse viewpoints about state-building that often are left unnoticed.

- It offers suggestions for strategic and operational choices for supporting state-building.

What can the Bank/ Bank country teams do about state-building?

The creation and development of a state is primarily shaped by its elites and citizens. However, the Bank and other donors can have a supporting role to play in helping states overcome fragility and become resilient. At a minimum, they have to respect the ‘Do No Harm’ principle and be attuned to the specific risks of state fragility. But the Bank – in partnership with other donors and members of the international community – can also actively support different aspects of state-building through its interventions. This requires developing a deeper understanding of state-building and moving beyond a narrow approach focused on state capacity, to include issues of state authority and legitimacy. The State-Building Assessment Tool (SBAT) aims to help Bank country teams develop such an understanding.
What is the State-Building Assessment Tool?

The state-building assessment tool (SBAT) is an excel-based tool that offers country teams a structured and guided process by which to assess state-building needs collectively. It is primarily targeted at teams working in fragile and conflict-affected states, but it can also be used in any country where there are questions about governance and state performance. The SBAT is accompanied by a series of products aimed to help inform its use. It is related and builds on analytical frameworks such as conflict assessments and political economy analyses. However, it also has a number of distinguishing features that set it apart, both in terms of its content and in terms of its application:

1. While including fragility and political economy considerations, its primary focus is more squarely on state-building and what the Bank and its partners can do to support it. It breaks the concept down into constituent elements and provides questions or ‘prompts’ to guide users through the assessment. In doing so, it moves from the macro-/strategic level down to the level of specific institutions and organizations, and from analysis to strategic and operational implications.

2. Its primary purpose is to guide teams systematically through a joint assessment of state-building needs and priorities and their implications for country programming. In this sense, it is not a ‘classic’ framework to be used for commissioning external studies. Rather, it is a tool for mobilizing, structuring, and turning to account the tacit knowledge available in Bank country teams and beyond.

How does the State-Building Assessment Tool work?

The SBAT comes in two versions. Version 1 – ‘slim’ focuses more narrowly on the state-building assessment and consists of three steps. At each step, teams can discuss and record the key implications of the assessment for their country programming. The steps are:

1. Assess the state’s overall authority, capacity and legitimacy and their expected evolution over time.

2. Assess how the state’s authority, capacity and legitimacy play out in each state domain, their expected evolution over time, and their relative priority for external support. Indicators to help inform this assessment are also provided as part of the toolbox.

3. Identify specific institutions and organizations in the prioritized domains and assess their authority, capacity, and legitimacy.

Version 2 – the ‘extended’ or full version – has an extra step at the beginning: assessing the social and political context to identify the nature and causes of fragility. It also gives teams more options to record the strategic and operational implications of the assessment at each step – by explicitly considering how the government and other international partners address the state-building issues identified through the assessment, as well as how this affects the risks for the Bank’s portfolio. Figure 1 below graphically represents the steps of the full version of the SBAT.
How to Use the State-Building Assessment Tool

The SBAT is a team-based assessment and planning tool. At its core is a workshop during which the expertise and ‘tacit’ knowledge of a diverse team of experts is mobilized and integrated. The tool can be ‘customized’ to meet a variety of needs, but its best use is in the context of overarching country planning processes – such as the development of Interim Strategy Notes (ISNs) or Country Assistance Strategies (CASs). Table 1 on the next page details the steps for a ‘typical’ state-building assessment workshop, including typical resources needed.

The main issues to remember are:

1. A workshop can take about **1-2 days for the ‘slim’ version and 2-4 for the ‘extended’ version of the SBAT**. As the number of participants or the need for discussion rises, more time might be necessary.
2. A contact person in the country team to help prepare, organize, and follow-up the workshop is necessary.
3. Teams can also use the tool by themselves, but **facilitation** is highly recommended. Contact persons from the ‘tool’ team are listed at the end of this brief. If external facilitation is not available, country teams can designate a member of the team to facilitate the workshop.

4. **Technology** required consists at a minimum of one laptop (PC, MS Excel 2007 preferred) and one projector per 5-6 participants. Alternatively, each participant can bring their own laptop, in which case one projector for the entire workshop should be enough.

**Table 1** on the next page gives an overview of the steps for preparing and carrying out the workshop, including general time and – implicitly – costs estimations. In reality, costs will vary substantially, depending e.g. on where the workshop is being held, cost of the venue, travel required from participants, etc.. Time necessary will also vary, not only depending on which version of the tool is used, but also depending on how much consensus there is among participants to begin with. If perceptions of key fragility and state-building issues vary substantially among participants, more time for discussion than in the ‘standard’ version will be necessary. Finally, the tool can also be ‘customized’ to meet different needs – whether by including a broader range of stakeholders or ‘zooming in’ on a specific element of the tool. The ‘tool team’ can help with customization and other efforts to make the tool most useful to specific country team needs.

### Examples of customization

1. **Joint donor assessments.** Given that it aims to capture and reconcile different viewpoints, the SBAT can be very useful for structuring and advancing donor discussions. Depending on the set-up and the number of participants, time needed for preparation, workshop and follow-up might be higher than in the ‘standard’ version.

2. **Focus on a specific sector or domain.** This is recommended particularly for follow-up, i.e. after the tool has been used for an overall analysis, country teams can choose to delve deeper in one of the sectors and corresponding institutions that have been prioritized in their country strategy and/ or for which a substantial intervention (e.g. IL) is being planned.

3. **Use for sub-national authorities.** This can be done either by inserting rows dedicated specifically to sub-national authorities (e.g. states in federal systems) in the state-building assessment tabs (e.g. Strategic Level, State Domains and Institutions) or by using the whole tool for assessing one specific sub-national entity.

4. **Use with government and/ or civil society representatives.** It is up to country teams to decide if and how they want to share the tool with their partners and other country stakeholders. Given that some of the questions can be sensitive in some contexts, teams are encouraged to carefully select which elements of the tool they want to share. Some parts of tool have already been piloted with civil society organizations from a number of African countries at a workshop in May 2012.

5. **Use in other low- and middle-income countries.** While state-building is a high priority in fragile and conflict-affected states, the tool can also help identify and address governance concerns in ‘non-fragile’ states. In these cases, some parts of the assessment can be done more quickly (e.g. regarding security), depending on the context and specific country needs.
Table 1. Steps suggested for a ‘standard’ state-building assessment workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Time / Costs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact person in country team (Operations Officer or similar) + administrative support + Facilitator</td>
<td>Identification of country needs + Familiarization with the Tool and ‘adaptation’ to country needs if necessary + Review of existing analytical products and country planning documents and preparations of ‘briefs’ for workshop participants if necessary, + Workshop preparation - Logistics (e.g. identification of venue, catering etc.)</td>
<td>1-2 staff weeks effective working time, including facilitator working time + 1-2 Month advance preparation time (can also be shortened)</td>
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| Workshop | Facilitator + Country team members – country manager, operations officers, sector specialists etc. + administrative support | Ca. 5 ‘sessions’ for the ‘slim’ version and 6 sessions for the full version. 1. Introduction (ca. 0.5-1 hour) 2. Assessment of the Socio-Political Context (ca 1.5-3 hours – full version only) 3. Overall/ Strategic Assessment (ca 1-2 hours) 4. Domain-Level Assessment (ca. 2-4 hours) 5. Institutional-Level Assessment (2-8 hours – can vary a lot depending on the number of institutions included) 6. Review and presentation of results, identification of next steps (ca 1.5-3 hours) | 2-4 staff days and travel costs for facilitator + 2-4 staff days per participant plus travel costs as applicable + Std. workshop costs (venue, catering, etc.) |

Assessments are best carried out in (sub-)teams of 5-6 persons max. If there are more participants, ‘in-between’ sessions to review and consolidate results of the sub-teams at each step are recommended. Additional sessions can be added if needed.

Equipment: projector and laptops (either one laptop per participant or 1 projector + laptop per sub-team) with MS Excel 2007 or later.

| Follow-up | Contact person in country team + Facilitator (if necessary) | Finalization/ clean-up of completed E-Tool, print-out, distribution to team members, preparation of briefs etc. and other follow-up actions if necessary. | 1 staff day and up |
**Further resources**

The SBAT is part of a Toolkit on State-Building in Fragile States, which includes:

1. **A Guidance Note**, which discusses the conceptual framework underlying the SBAT, the steps of the assessment, and offers some strategic and operational suggestions for supporting state-building.

2. **A ‘Technical Guide’** to explain step by step the use of the SBAT.

3. **A set of 'State Building at a Glance' sheets** for selected countries, summarizing indicators suggested for assessing state authority, capacity and legitimacy in the four domains. For countries not included in the set, a separate excel file for manually generating such sheets is available.

4. **A working paper**, titled “Beyond Capacity: Addressing Authority and Legitimacy in Fragile States”, which summarizes the theoretical and empirical basis for the proposed approach.

**Contact**

The SBAT, the resources listed above, and answers to any further questions can be obtained by mailing Sabina Schnell (Consultant, PRSMPS): sschnell@worldbank.org.