

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND WORLD BANK

**Staff Guidance Note on the Application of the Joint Fund-Bank Debt Sustainability
Framework for Low-Income Countries**

Prepared by the staffs of the IMF and the World Bank

Approved by Mark Allen and Danny Leipziger

April 16, 2007

Table of Contents

	Page
Abbreviations and Acronyms	3
I. Introduction and Country Coverage	4
II. LIC DSA Framework.....	6
A. Debt and Debt-Service Projections and Indicators	7
B. Country-Specific Debt-Burden Thresholds.....	8
C. Debt Distress Risk.....	8
III. DSA Design and Operational Implications.....	9
A. Design of Macroeconomic Scenarios	10
Standard Reality Checks	10
Reality Checks and Precautionary Features in Scaling-Up Scenarios.....	11
B. Treatment of Domestic Debt.....	12
C. Treatment of Debt Held by Private External Creditors.....	13
D. Operational Implications.....	14
IV. Modalities For Preparing DSAs.....	16
A. Frequency and Presentation	16
B. Division of Responsibilities between Fund and Bank Staff.....	17
C. Dispute Resolution	19
D. Review Process	19
V. Arrangements for HIPC.....	20
VI. Communications Strategy.....	21
References.....	23

Annex I: Debt Dynamics Templates for Low-Income Countries Users' Guide.....	24
---	----

Boxes

1. Enhancing the DSF: Main Changes from Previous Practice.....	6
2. Indicators for Analysis of the Link Between Debt-Financed Investment and Growth....	11
3. DSA Process.....	17

Tables

1. PRGF-Eligible Countries According to IDA Status.....	5
2. Debt Burden Thresholds under the DSF.....	8
3. Suggested Indicators for Vulnerability Analysis.....	15

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AsDB	Asian Development Bank
BOP	Balance of Payments
CIRR	Commercial Interest Reference Rate
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
DSA	Debt Sustainability Analysis
DSF	Debt Sustainability Framework
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EDSS	Economic Data Sharing System
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
LIC	Low-Income Country
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDRI	Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative
NPV	Net Present Value
PDR	Policy Development and Review Department (Fund)
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PPG	Public and Publicly-Guaranteed
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRMED	Economic Policy and Debt Department (Bank)
PRMVP	Office of the Vice President and Head of Network (Bank)
SECBO	Board Operations (Bank)
TFP	Total Factor Productivity
WEO	World Economic Outlook

I. INTRODUCTION AND COUNTRY COVERAGE¹

1. **The objective of the joint Fund-Bank debt sustainability framework for low-income countries is to support LICs in their efforts to achieve their development goals without creating future debt problems, and to keep countries that have received debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) on a sustainable track.**² Under the framework, country DSAs are prepared jointly by Bank and Fund staff, with close collaboration between the two staffs on the design of the macroeconomic baseline, alternative scenarios, the debt distress rating, and the drafting of the write-up.³
2. **Joint Bank-Fund LIC [DSAs](#) are generally expected to be prepared once a year for PRGF-eligible, [IDA-only](#) countries (Table 1).** For PRGF-eligible countries that are not IDA-only, Fund staff is expected to produce a LIC DSA once a year, unless the country has significant access to market financing, in which case Fund staff could conduct the annual DSA using the template designed for middle-income countries. Given that the Bank is a large creditor to most of these countries, close consultation with Bank staff is still desirable for all countries with limited or no market access that are PRGF-eligible but not IDA-only.
3. **The DSF should be seen as an upstream device to inform country teams' broader dialogue with the authorities—rather than an ex-post consistency check.** Country teams should also communicate frequently on DSAs with the relevant Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) in the preparation of DSAs, present DSA results to the authorities (staff in the ministry of finance, central bank, and other relevant government entities), and share the final DSA files with the authorities. Following the Board meeting, and with consent of the authorities, country teams are encouraged to present the DSA findings to donors and other interested parties.
4. **The new financial environment of LICs, particularly post debt relief, poses new policy challenges.** Debt relief has led to the perception of a large borrowing space in some LICs. Simultaneously, the emergence of new creditors and the rising importance of domestic debt have led to an expansion in the volume and sources of funds available to these countries. In view of the risks raised by these developments, the Fund and Bank Boards called on staffs to enhance the rigor and quality of DSAs and the effectiveness of the DSF. Country teams are therefore expected to strengthen the application of the DSF by using its built-in

¹ The guidance note has been prepared jointly by the World Bank and the IMF staffs. Implementation of the new guidelines will be reviewed as needed, once sufficient experience has been accumulated.

² The Executive Boards of the Fund and the Bank approved the debt sustainability framework (DSF) for low-income countries (LICs) in April 2005 ([IMF and IDA, 2005](#)) and reviewed it in March 2006 ([IMF and IDA, 2006](#)) and November 2006 ([IMF and IDA, 2006a](#)).

³ “DSF” refers to the framework for joint debt sustainability analyses in LICs. “DSA” refers to an analysis of debt sustainability in a particular country.

precautionary aspects, designing realistic baseline macroeconomic and growth scenarios, integrating domestic debt more systematically into the assessment of debt sustainability, and introducing additional vulnerability indicators in cases where debt to private external creditors is significant. In all these areas, further experience accumulated under the DSF will be important to inform and refine future practice, as embodied in these guidelines.

Table 1. PRGF-Eligible Countries According to IDA Status

Last update: February 1, 2007

IDA-only countries		Non-IDA-only countries
Afghanistan	Liberia	Albania
Angola	Madagascar	Azerbaijan
Armenia	Malawi	Bolivia
Bangladesh	Maldives	Dominica
Benin	Mali	Grenada
Bhutan	Mauritania	India
Burkina Faso	Moldova	Pakistan
Burundi	Mongolia	Papua New Guinea
Cambodia	Mozambique	St. Lucia
Cameroon	Myanmar	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Cape Verde	Nepal	Uzbekistan
Central African Republic	Nicaragua	Zimbabwe
Chad	Niger	
Comoros	Nigeria	
Congo, Democratic Republic of	Rwanda	
Congo, Republic of	Samoa	
Côte d'Ivoire	São Tomé and Príncipe	
Djibouti	Senegal	
Eritrea	Sierra Leone	
Ethiopia	Solomon Islands	
Gambia, The	Somalia	
Georgia	Sri Lanka	
Ghana	Sudan	
Guinea	Tajikistan	
Guinea-Bissau	Tanzania	
Guyana	Timor Leste	
Haiti	Togo	
Honduras	Tonga	
Kenya	Uganda	
Kiribati	Vanuatu	
Kyrgyz Republic	Vietnam	
Lao P.D.R.	Yemen, Republic of	
Lesotho	Zambia	

5. **The guidance note is structured as follows.**⁴ Section II covers analytical aspects of the DSA framework, including the main changes introduced in this note (Box 1). Section III discusses DSA design and operational implications. Section IV discusses technical modalities for preparing DSAs including timing, information sharing, review, and clearance. Section V outlines arrangements for HIPC. Section VI discusses a communications strategy. Annex I provides a user’s guide to the templates.

Box 1. Enhancing the DSF: Main Changes from Previous Practice

- **Historical scenarios** should be used actively and large differences between the baseline and historical scenarios will need to be carefully justified in the text (Section III A).
- **Scrutinizing past projections** against outcomes is critical to improve the quality of future projections (Section III A).
- **High projected growth dividends** associated with large upfront borrowing (5 percent of GDP or more in NPV terms) trigger the inclusion of an alternative “high-investment, low-growth” scenario and a detailed and explicit justification of projected growth dividends (Section III A).
- **Financing assumptions** require an explicit justification when the scenario assumes a significant improvement in the terms, such that, absent this improvement, the evolution of debt indicators would be significantly worse (Section III A).
- **Public DSAs** should be included in all DSAs. The write up should explicitly flag situations where the inclusion of domestic debt in overall debt and debt-service prospects would lead to a different interpretation of the risk of debt distress from consideration of external debt and debt service alone (Section III B).
- **Additional analysis** is needed in cases where increased private external capital flows into sovereign debt instruments may give rise to new vulnerabilities (Section III C).
- **A three-year moving average CPIA score** should be used to reduce the volatility of the thresholds and, as a result, the potential unwarranted fluctuations in the IDA grant share for a given country (Section II B).
- **Building capacity and ownership.** Staff should actively discuss the DSA assumptions and outcomes with the authorities and encourage them to use the instrument (Section VI).
- **DSAs should be published as supplements to Fund staff reports, self contained, and easily accessible** to enhance the effectiveness of the DSF as a coordinating tool for creditors and borrowers (Section IV A).
- **Review process.** To provide teams with early constructive feedback, a preliminary DSA needs to be included in IMF briefing papers; Bank-Fund collaboration needs to take place prior to the preparation of briefs for the DSA to be joint (Section IV A, B, D and Box 3). In cases where the DSA is needed for a Bank document, a similar timeline should be adhered to.

II. LIC DSA FRAMEWORK

6. **The LIC DSA framework is built on three pillars:** (i) a standardized forward-looking analysis of debt and debt-service dynamics under a baseline scenario, alternative scenarios, and standardized stress test scenarios (also referred to as bound tests); (ii) a debt sustainability assessment based on indicative country-specific debt-burden thresholds that depend on the quality of policies and institutions in the country; and (iii) recommendations

⁴ For IMF staff this guidance note replaces the existing interim guidance note.

on a borrowing (and lending) strategy to limit the risk of debt distress, while maximizing the resource envelope to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A. Debt and Debt-Service Projections and Indicators

7. **The DSF requires projection of external and total public sector debt indicators.** To that end, staff inserts historical and projected data for a range of macroeconomic variables in two mandatory pre-set templates; one for public, publicly-guaranteed (PPG),⁵ and private external debt⁶ and one for total public sector debt including domestic debt (where possible including state-owned enterprises).⁷ The templates are designed for a twenty-year projection period (in light of the long maturity of LIC debt) and use a uniform discount rate to calculate the present value of future external debt-service obligations. The discount rate will be adjusted in the template whenever the six-month average U.S. dollar commercial interest reference rate (CIRR) deviates from the rate in the template by more than 100 basis points for a period of six months or more. The templates automatically produce output tables that display the dynamics of debt and debt-service ratios in the baseline scenario and summarize the results of standardized alternative scenarios and stress tests to enable an assessment of the country's vulnerability to sustained deviations from the baseline and to various plausible shocks. These scenarios should, when appropriate, also be adjusted to take account of country-specific circumstances.⁸

8. **Debt sustainability is assessed based on debt and debt service relative to measures of repayment capacity.** Debt stock indicators provide a useful measure of the total future debt-service burden of existing debt. This burden is best measured using the net present value (NPV) of debt to capture the concessionality of outstanding debt. Debt-service indicators provide a measure of the immediate burden that debt imposes on a country by crowding out other uses of scarce resources. Repayment capacity is measured by GDP, exports of goods and services, or government revenues. The most relevant measure of repayment capacity depends on the constraints that are most binding in an individual country. NPV debt ratios are summary indicators of the burden represented by the future obligations

⁵ Including debt owed by the central bank to the IMF, if any.

⁶ Private external debt is not considered for the purpose of IDA grant allocations. Nonetheless, the level and the evolution of private external debt clearly matter for overall external debt sustainability and in some cases the inclusion of private external debt would lead to a different overall debt sustainability assessment.

⁷ External debt is defined on a residency basis and may thus include domestic currency denominated debt. In practice, because of difficulties in record keeping (e.g., secondary market trading) and data limitations in LICs, domestically-issued debt is often used as a proxy for domestic debt (see section III. B.).

⁸ The bound tests are partial, and assume a passive fiscal policy. Fiscal reaction functions could, if desired, be included in an alternative scenario, where this is deemed important enough by staff to warrant investigation and discussion in the DSA. The reaction functions would need to be modeled separately.

of a country and thus reflect long-term risks to solvency, while the time path of debt-service ratios provides an indication of the likelihood and possible timing of liquidity problems.

B. Country-Specific Debt-Burden Thresholds

9. **The DSF uses policy-dependent external debt-burden indicators because the debt levels that LICs can sustain are influenced by the quality of their policies and institutions.** These debt-burden thresholds are not to be seen as rigid ceilings but as guideposts for informing debt sustainability assessments. Policy performance is measured by the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) index, compiled annually by the World Bank. The DSF divides countries into three performance categories: strong, medium, and poor.⁹ Table 2 shows the associated external debt-burden thresholds. The risk classification depends on the indicative thresholds and therefore on the CPIA score. To reduce undesirable uncertainty regarding the country's financing terms from IDA (and possibly other donors) from annual fluctuations in the CPIA, the three-year moving average CPIA score should be used to determine a country's policy performance under the DSF.¹⁰

Table 2. Debt Burden Thresholds under the DSF
(Applying to external public debt)

	NPV of debt in percent of			Debt service in percent of	
	Exports	GDP	Revenue	Exports	Revenue
Weak Policy	100	30	200	15	25
Medium Policy	150	40	250	20	30
Strong Policy	200	50	300	25	35

C. Debt Distress Risk

10. **Every joint Fund-Bank DSA should include an explicit assessment of the country's risk of debt distress.** Depending on how the country's current and projected

⁹ A rating at or above 3.75 corresponds to strong performance; a rating between 3.25 and 3.75 reflects medium performance; and a rating at or below 3.25 corresponds to poor policy performance.

¹⁰ Because CPIA scores are averages of 16 indicators of policy and institutional quality, the CPIA thresholds should not be used mechanically in country assessments. In addition, in cases where the move to the three-year average leads to undue volatility in the performance rating and thereby potentially to fluctuations in the loan-grant mix, country teams, upon confirmation with reviewing departments (PRMED and PDR), may apply discretion as to the exact timing of the changing to the three-year average.

external public debt indicators compare with the thresholds under the baseline, alternative scenarios, and stress tests, a country is classified as (see [IMF and IDA, 2005](#)):

- **Low risk.** All debt indicators are well below relevant country-specific debt-burden thresholds. Stress testing and country-specific alternative scenarios do not result in indicators significantly breaching thresholds. In cases where only one indicator is above its benchmark, judgment is needed to determine whether there is a debt sustainability problem or some other issue, for example, a data problem.
- **Moderate risk.** While the baseline scenario does not indicate a breach of thresholds, alternative scenarios or stress tests result in a significant rise in debt-service indicators over the projection period (nearing thresholds) or a breach of debt or debt-service thresholds.
- **High risk.** The baseline scenario indicates a protracted breach of debt or debt-service thresholds but the country does currently not face any payment difficulties. This is exacerbated by the alternative scenarios or stress tests.
- **In debt distress.** Current debt and debt-service ratios are in significant or sustained breach of thresholds. The existence of arrears would generally suggest that a country is in debt distress, unless there are other reasons than debt-service burden for not servicing its debt.

11. **The assessment of the risk of debt distress needs to strike a balance between a mechanistic use of this classification and a judgmental approach.** There may be cases where staff judge that a mechanistic approach would imply an unreasonable rating. These could include, for instance, a marginal and temporary breach of thresholds, or an ability to pay that is not captured in the templates but evidenced from the level of foreign exchange reserves; or problems in compiling the relevant CPIA scores. In those cases, judgment should be applied and explained in the DSA write-up.

III. DSA DESIGN AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

12. **DSAs should function as an upstream device in relation to Bank and Fund program design and inform the broader dialogue with the authorities.** Aimed at early detection of debt-related vulnerabilities, DSAs should be a cornerstone for the elaboration of medium-term debt strategies, fiscal frameworks, and public expenditure planning in support of sustainable progress toward the country's development goals (the third DSF pillar). To achieve these objectives, DSAs need to be based on *realistic* macroeconomic scenarios, and this section provides guidance on their design. It also provides guidance on how to address within the DSA the rising importance of domestic debt in many LICs and the emergence of new creditors.

A. Design of Macroeconomic Scenarios

13. **DSAs need to be based on *realistic* macroeconomic scenarios.**¹¹ The principal mechanism for promoting realism in DSAs is to scrutinize baseline projections by (i) subjecting them to *reality checks* and (ii) making use of existing and new *precautionary features* of the DSF. The reality checks and precautionary features are intended to provide safeguards against excessive borrowing and a return to debt distress, without constraining *justified* optimism about the effective use of external resources to promote growth, reduce poverty, and achieve the MDGs.

Standard Reality Checks

14. **Checks against historical outcomes help guard against excessive optimism:**

- **Historical scenarios** are a standard feature built into the DSA template to compare baseline projections with the evolution of debt ratios under historical trends for key economic variables. Baseline debt ratios that are significantly lower than the ratios under the historical scenario raise concerns of excessive optimism and require explicit justification of the underlying economic rationale in the DSA write-up. Plausible reasons for deviations include recent performance improvements that are not adequately reflected in historical (10-year) averages or structural breaks, such as the end of civil conflict.
- **Scrutinizing past projections** provides another useful signal about the realism of staff forecasts and the overall macroeconomic framework. “Post-mortems” explaining differences of assumptions and outcomes for key variables of the previous DSA are therefore expected in the write-up. In situations where previous DSAs proved too optimistic, assumptions should be subject to more detailed scrutiny and justification, and would presumably need to be revised if they have not been adequately adjusted to account for previous forecast errors.
- **Financing assumptions** that envisage a notable improvement in financing terms, such that, absent this improvement, the evolution of debt indicators would be significantly worse, require an explicit justification of the underlying factors driving this improvement. Plausible justifications include, for example, the contracting of concessional loans that has already taken place and firm commitments of highly concessional financing from specified donors. Some review of the accuracy of past financing assumptions would be called for in such cases.

15. Explicit justification will be required if the sustainability of debt ratios is driven by DSA assumptions of *sharp* shifts in fiscal policy (e.g., a significant improvement in revenue collection), the investment rate, the financing mix, or productivity growth.

¹¹ Realistic in this context means a scenario that takes due account of a country’s growth potential but also capacity constraints, including the risk that desired policy reforms may not be implemented.

Reality Checks and Precautionary Features in Scaling-Up Scenarios

16. **While historical experience provides a useful benchmark, it may underestimate future growth prospects, for example, if a country is expected to scale up public investment significantly.** An analytical challenge in scaling-up scenarios is to project the impact of additional public investment on other macroeconomic variables, such as GDP growth, exports, and public revenues, which determine the relevant debt indicators.

17. **In the absence of rules of thumb, teams are expected to justify carefully their underlying assumptions and check their plausibility.** In doing this, they will need to take into account a range of country-specific factors that influence the link between public spending and other macroeconomic variables. Teams should draw as much as possible on a country's own history, analytical considerations, and empirical cross-country work (see Box 2 and Appendix 3 of [IMF and IDA \(2006a\)](#)).

Box 2. Indicators for Analysis of the Link Between Debt-Financed Investment and Growth

When available, the indicators listed below can help establish a link between public expenditure and growth, and ultimately define the scope for debt accumulation. Relevance and availability will vary by country and these indicators are not expected to be shown explicitly in DSAs. In general, a comparison with their evolution in the country's past and in relevant comparator groups could provide useful benchmarks. The Bank would be expected to take the lead in this analysis.

Rates of Return

- Microeconomic studies on rates of return of projects
- Implementation lags/gaps for investment and recurrent budgets
- Estimates of stocks and shortfalls in public capital
- Composition of public expenditures in terms of growth impact

Structural Constraints

- Policy and institutional constraints as indicated by the CPIA, public governance indicators, Doing Business surveys, PEFA, other public expenditure management analyses
- Level and growth rates of public investment
- Completion or implementation rate of public investment projects
- Skill shortages that can only be alleviated in the long run

Macroeconomic Constraints

- The cost of capital, as indicated through firm-level surveys and real interest rates
- Rate (or rate of growth) of private investment
- Excess reserves/lending capacity in banking system
- Various real exchange rate measures (unit labor costs, export market share)

Aggregate Trends

- Growth rate of per capita GDP
- Growth rate of TFP
- Results of "binding constraints to growth" analyses

18. Some general conclusions drawn from the empirical literature also provide useful guidance:

- Prolonged growth accelerations are rare, arguing for caution.
- Even if individual projects have high rates of returns, the macroeconomic returns (notably the impact on GDP, government revenues, and exports) tend to be considerably lower, since these are modulated by factors outside the scope of the project itself.
- The quality of policies and institutions has a large influence on the macroeconomic return of public investment.
- Economic volatility, including aid volatility, and shocks, which cannot be projected *ex ante*, argue for caution in average growth/export projections over time.

19. Special scrutiny is needed in situations of high projected growth dividends associated with ambitious borrowing plans:

- Inclusion of an *alternative “high-investment, low-growth” scenario is mandatory* if the baseline assumes that an ambitious debt-financed investment program leads to sizeable growth dividends. One benchmark for “sizeable” would be growth rates of at least one standard deviation above the historical average. Another would be if changing growth alone to historical levels would imply a significantly worse debt outlook, such that sustainability is critically dependent on the projected growth acceleration. In these cases, the DSA should include an alternative scenario that assumes little or no growth payoff from the debt-financed investment program. The baseline will then need to be supported by compelling evidence that the assumed growth dividends are very likely to materialize. Absent such evidence, the baseline should be revised.
- A detailed and explicit *justification of projected growth dividends* (e.g., in a separate box) is required if the baseline includes very large *upfront* borrowing—which has been found to significantly increase the likelihood of debt distress. Large upfront borrowing is defined as an annual increase in the NPV of public external or total public debt of 5 percent of GDP or more.

B. Treatment of Domestic Debt

20. Regardless of the size of public domestic debt, all LIC DSAs must include a public DSA. Public domestic debt typically involves higher costs and shorter maturities, and is large and increasing in many LICs. Empirical analysis shows that rising domestic debt increases the likelihood of external debt distress. Public DSAs are therefore expected to play a critical role in helping detect and address any emerging risks.

21. **The coverage and definition of domestic debt should be guided by the following considerations.** In line with general statistical norms, public domestic debt is defined on a residency basis and may thus include foreign currency-denominated obligations.¹² Domestic debt data should seek to cover the liabilities of the broader public sector, including the central government, local governments, government-owned enterprises, and the central bank. In most cases, data limitations will limit the coverage to just the central or general government, at least until the capacity to record fully all public sector liabilities is established. To the extent possible, public sector contingent liabilities, including those arising from public-private partnerships and weaknesses in the financial sector, should be taken into account. Staff should flag these problems and any steps taken to improve coverage in the DSA write-up.

22. **Guided by the results of stress tests and alternative scenarios, staff's assessment should focus on the following issues:**

- **Domestic debt risks:** Staff should provide a thorough review of risks in cases where domestic debt stocks are significant (i.e., above 15-20 percent of GDP). Irrespective of the level of domestic debt, any rapid recent build-up of domestic debt would warrant an explanation. In both cases, staff's assessment should cover any specific circumstances behind the high/rising debt stock (e.g., general budget financing or assumption of contingent liabilities), including its creditor base, likely duration, financing burden, and medium-term implications.
- **Primary balance:** The public DSA should be a key tool to assess whether the projected evolution of the primary fiscal balance is consistent with debt sustainability. Staff should assess the risks (if any) posed by the baseline primary fiscal deficit path.
- **Debt distress classification:** The level and the evolution of domestic debt and debt service clearly matter for overall (fiscal) sustainability. In cases where the inclusion of domestic debt and debt service would lead to a different sustainability assessment than that under the external DSA, the DSA write-up should provide an expanded commentary, reviewing debt-servicing risks and medium-term fiscal implications. However, this assessment would not affect a country's classification of the risk of (external) debt distress and therefore IDA's grant allocation. The latter will be guided only by the results of the external DSA relative to the thresholds.

C. Treatment of Debt Held by Private External Creditors

23. **Increased private sector capital flows into both domestic and external sovereign debt instruments could provide additional resources for LICs, but may also give rise to new vulnerabilities that require monitoring.** These vulnerabilities include: (i) abrupt

¹² As indicated in footnote 7, the residency criterion is sometimes difficult to apply. In those cases, domestically-issued debt is often used as a proxy for domestic debt.

reversals in market sentiment leading to sudden capital outflows; (ii) non-standard financing terms, such as collateralization with future export receipts, weakening medium-term debt sustainability; and (iii) secondary balance sheet effects on the domestic financial system as a result of shifts in lending away from lower yield government securities toward riskier assets, possibly creating contingent public liabilities.

24. For countries borrowing significant amounts from private external creditors, the DSF should be complemented with additional analyses of short-term debt-related vulnerabilities and financial sector soundness. Where private capital inflows become significant, the additional indicators suggested in Table 3, subject to data availability, could contribute to highlight: (i) risks to sovereign liquidity stemming from the composition and maturity structure of debt; (ii) external liquidity and rollover risks, and the adequacy of reserve cover (especially in relation to short-term debt), which may need to reflect the risk of reversals in market sentiment;¹³ and (iii) weaknesses in the financial sector that may give rise to contingent public liabilities. Where these factors are significant, they should be explained and taken into account in the sustainability assessment.

25. In relevant cases, country teams should discuss with the authorities any policies that could help alleviate these risks.¹⁴ The following is an illustrative but not exhaustive list of such policies. A desirable debt-management framework should assign the legal authority to borrow and identify permissible instruments and accountability mechanisms. Portfolio management should be facilitated through an effective recording of the debt stock; a framework for liquidity forecasting; and the availability of critical indicators to monitor benefits, costs, and risks associated with borrowing from private sources. This could imply a need for technical assistance. Reserve adequacy may need to be re-assessed. More broadly, the sequencing of reforms would typically need to strengthen the framework for banking supervision and prudential regulation prior to undertaking steps to liberalize the capital account.

D. Operational Implications

26. LIC DSAs play a pivotal role in IDA operations and should also have an impact on Fund program design:

¹³ In particular, reserve targets originally aimed at providing sufficient foreign exchange to meet the country's import requirements may need to be adapted to provide sufficient cover also for the country's short-term external debt obligations (at remaining maturity), including nonresident's holdings of domestic government paper (which may have to be estimated given data limitations).

¹⁴ This work would typically be done by the Fund as part of the surveillance work on monetary management and exchange rate policies.

Table 3. Suggested Indicators for Vulnerability Analysis

Indicator	Source	
	Current DSF	Additional Indicators
Indicators of public sector stock imbalances (solvency risk)		
NPV of public sector debt-to-GDP (public sector revenue)	✓	
NPV of external public sector debt-to-GDP (exports)	✓	
NPV of foreign-currency denominated public sector debt-to-GDP	✓	
NPV of contingent liabilities (not included in public sector debt)	✓	
Public sector debt-to-GDP ratio	✓	
<i>Of which:</i> External	✓	
<i>Of which:</i> Foreign currency denominated	✓	
<i>Of which:</i> Foreign currency linked		✓
<i>Of which:</i> Indexed to the CPI		✓
Primary deficit that stabilizes public sector debt-to-GDP	✓	
Indicators of external sector stock imbalances (solvency risk)		
NPV of external debt-to-GDP (exports)	✓	
External debt-to-GDP	✓	
Non-interest external current account deficit that stabilizes external debt-to-GDP	✓	
Indicators of public sector flow imbalances (liquidity, rollover risks)		
Public sector debt service-to-revenue 1/	✓	
External public debt service-to-exports	✓	
Public sector gross financing need (in percent of GDP) 2/	✓	
Short-term public debt-to-total debt (at remaining maturity) 3/		✓
Domestically-issued public debt held by nonresidents-to-GDP		✓
Indicators of external sector flow imbalances (external liquidity, rollover risks)		
External debt service-to-exports (revenue)	✓	
External gross financing need (billions of U.S. dollars) 4/	✓	
Gross official reserves-to-short-term external debt (at remaining maturity) 5/		✓
Extended reserve cover 6/		✓
Gross official reserves-to-broad money (M2)		✓
Foreign currency deposits-to-foreign assets of the banking system		✓
Indicators of financial system soundness		
Regulatory capital-to-risk-weighted assets		✓
Nonperforming loans-to-total loans (gross and net of provisions)		✓
Claims on the Government and Central Bank-to-total banking sector claims		✓
Private sector credit growth		✓
Foreign currency loans-to-total loans		✓
Foreign currency deposits-to-total banking sector deposits		✓
Share of foreign currency deposits held by nonresidents		✓

Source: IMF.

1/ The sum of interest and amortization of medium- and long-term debt.

2/ Defined as the primary deficit plus debt service plus the stock of short-term debt at the end of the last period.

3/ Amortization of medium- and long-term debt plus stock of short-term debt at the end of the last period.

4/ Defined as the current account deficit adjusted for net FDI inflows plus total external amortization due plus the stock of short-term debt at the end of the last period.

5/ External short-term debt includes amortization of medium- and long-term debt plus stock of short-term debt at the end of the last period.

6/ Gross official reserves in percent of the current account deficit adjusted for net FDI inflows plus total external amortization due plus the stock of short-term debt at the end of the last period plus foreign currency deposits in the banking system.

- LIC DSAs form the basis for determining the grant/loan mix in future IDA allocations and those of some other multilaterals, including the African Development Fund. IDA-only countries judged to be at high risk of debt distress risk receive 100 percent grant financing from IDA, while countries at moderate risk receive a 50/50 blend of grants and traditional credits, and countries at low risk continue to receive 100 percent credit financing on standard IDA terms.
- Because DSA risk ratings determine IDA grant allocations, regular IDA *credit terms* on all IDA lending should be assumed for all years in the projection period for which grant finance has not already been committed to by IDA.
- For the Fund, programs for LICs in which debt sustainability is a concern could supplement existing debt limits with conditionality related to the NPV of external debt, as well as make more systematic use of limits on the overall fiscal deficit as compared to existing limits on domestic financing. Conditionality on the NPV of external debt would be derived from the DSA on a fiscal year basis. It would also be expected to be in the form of indicative targets, because of the complexity of NPV calculations and the associated difficulties in monitoring NPV-based targets ([IMF and IDA, 2004b](#)).
- It is presumed that the recommended grant element for concessional loans, including in Fund-supported programs, would increase with the risk of debt distress ([IMF and IDA, 2006a](#)). The DSA should be the primary means of assessing the impact of alternative financing strategies and recommending the minimum concessionality for new lending.
- When the debt distress risk classification shifts to a higher level, staff should conduct a comprehensive reassessment of the recommended debt accumulation strategy.

IV. MODALITIES FOR PREPARING DSAS

A. Frequency and Presentation

27. **A joint LIC DSA is generally expected to be prepared once a year for each IDA-only, PRGF-eligible country.** Each calendar year, Fund and Bank country teams need to agree on a schedule for the preparation of DSAs for individual countries. For the Fund, a DSA will normally be produced for an Article IV consultation, and otherwise in the context of program requests or reviews. For the Bank, the DSA will be required for Country Assistance Strategies and for IDA allocation purposes. It is therefore critical that both sides agree well ahead of time on the content and timing of the DSA (Box 3). In cases where a joint DSA is needed in the context of a Bank operation in a country where the Fund's Board is not expected to consider a review for an arrangement or conclude an Article IV consultation within two months, the joint DSA would be sent to the Fund's Board for information at the same time the DSA is sent to the Bank's Board. The corresponding procedure of informing the Bank's Board applies when Fund requirements drive the timing of the DSA.

Box 3. DSA Process

As a first step, Bank and Fund country teams need to agree on a schedule for the preparation of DSAs for individual countries each calendar year. Once the DSA process has started, early consultations between Fund and Bank stakeholders are critical to avoid last minute requests for changes. In the Fund, the briefing stage provides an opportunity for early input from reviewing departments. Although the Bank does not have a briefing stage, the Bank country team will be responsible for liaising with the Economic Policy and Debt Department (PRMED) as necessary at that time (i.e., informing of timing and requesting any required technical support). Bank and Fund country teams should agree on the broad parameters of the DSA, including new borrowing, prior to the briefing stage. As a general rule, this agreement should be sought at least 90 business days ahead of the prospective Board meeting (see timeline below).

A preliminary joint DSA should be included in the Fund's brief. It should incorporate available new information and revised assumptions, so as to be consistent with the Fund's latest macroeconomic framework. Such an update is expected to involve limited extra work at the briefing stage. It is understood that the preliminary DSA included in the brief contains the broad parameters of a medium-to-long-term macro framework and is subject to change depending on the mission's findings. No Bank clearance of the preliminary DSA contained in briefs is required but any significant differences in view should be reported in the brief.

RECOMMENDED TIMELINE AND TASKS FOR JOINT FUND-BANK DSAs

DSA stage	Fund	Bank	Approx. Timing (in business days)
Pre-briefing paper	Fund team (desk or PDR economist) prepares DSA template and write-up in consultation with Bank counterpart economist; Mission chief approves the draft DSA	Bank team (country economist or PRMED) prepares DSA template and write-up in consultation with Fund counterpart economist; Lead Economist approves the draft DSA	(T-90) days
Department review of brief	Fund Team sends draft DSA as part of brief to PDR and other departments; the objective is to raise and resolve all major issues related to content, coverage, and broad assumptions at this time	Bank Team sends draft DSA to PRMED; the objective is to raise and resolve all major issues related to content, coverage, and broad assumptions at this time	(T-65) days
To management	Fund management clears the brief		(T-60) days
Mission	Fund team completes DSA preparation during mission with inputs/comments from the authorities	Bank team completes DSA work with Fund staff, with inputs/comments from the authorities (Bank participation in mission is encouraged)	(T-55) days
End of mission	If Bank country team has not been on mission, Fund team relays any changes to draft DSA	If Bank country team has not been on mission, it receives changes on draft DSA, templates and macro framework from Fund team	(T-45) days
Department review of staff report	Completed DSA sent to review departments alongside staff report	Completed DSA sent to PRMED and regional PREM Director for review	(T-25) days
To management	Fund team sends an Executive Summary to management that highlights DSA results, and raises DSA issues (if needed) in clearance note	Bank team sends full DSA to management alongside any other country document. PRMED clearance of DSA pending IMF clearance	(T-18) days
Board circulation	DSA transmitted to Board	DSA submitted by PRMVP to SECBO and transmitted to Board for information	(T-10) days
Board discussion	DSA published as Staff Report Supplement 1/	DSA published	T

1/ Publication is subject to the Fund's publication policy, including the requirement that the authorities consent to publication.

28. **Each institution can update the DSA for its own purposes if changes in assumptions are relatively minor.** The other institution has to be notified of the changes and given adequate time—at an absolute minimum three business days—to comment. When either institution believes that major changes are warranted, consultation with the other will be required.

29. **LIC DSAs should be prepared as self-contained documents.** In particular, they should include a clear description of macroeconomic assumptions without referring to the Fund staff report to which they are a supplement. DSAs should however be concise, and a limit of 2000 words is suggested (excluding tables or any appendices). This practice will also help ensure consistency across the two institutions; the Bank now publishes LIC DSAs on a stand-alone basis and as of FY08 will send all LIC DSAs to its Board for information in this format.¹⁵

B. Division of Responsibilities between Fund and Bank Staff

30. **Bank and Fund staff should cooperate closely in preparing joint DSAs, based on their respective areas of expertise.** The Fund takes the lead on medium-term macroeconomic projections (three to five years) developed with the member country, which will be the starting point for consultation with the Bank on the baseline scenario for the DSA ([IMF and IDA, 2005](#)). The Bank takes the lead on long-term growth prospects.¹⁶ For the external sector DSA, Fund staff is responsible for debt-service projections for bilateral and commercial creditors and assumptions on new borrowing from these creditors, whereas the Bank staff provides debt-service projections for multilateral creditors together with assumptions on new multilateral borrowing based on current allocations.¹⁷ With this input, Fund and Bank country teams should agree on a set of assumptions underlying the baseline scenario, collaborate on the design of alternative scenarios and stress tests, and consider additional country-specific factors. Once simulations have been performed (beyond the standard tests embodied in the template), the teams should review the findings and reach a common assessment of the country's risk of debt distress. All relevant data files should be shared across Bank and Fund teams but treated confidentially by both staffs.

31. **The output from the external sector DSA, together with Fund staff's fiscal projections, provide the basis for the preparation of public sector DSAs.** While the public sector DSA does not affect directly the risk of debt distress rating, the Fund and Bank country teams should discuss if the output of the public sector DSA would lead to a different

¹⁵ As of FY08 in the Bank, for all IDA-only countries the LIC DSA Board document will become a formal deliverable with associated code and budget norm range.

¹⁶ Long-term growth assumptions will typically not be based on detailed policy reforms assumed in the near-term. As a consequence, long-term growth rates need not be identical to near-term forecasts.

¹⁷ Bank staff should where necessary obtain debt-service projections on outstanding Fund lending from the Fund country team.

sustainability assessment than that under the external DSA and agree on how to reflect this situation on the DSA write-up.

C. Dispute Resolution

32. **While a common Bank-Fund assessment of the debt sustainability outlook should be sought in the largest possible number of cases, there may be cases of disagreement.** In such rare cases, country teams should first seek to resolve the disagreements at the working level before using the dispute resolution mechanism agreed to in 2005 ([IMF and IDA, 2005](#)):

- At the working level, country economists should discuss the basis for their disagreements and seek to determine whether the different viewpoints lead to a material difference in risk classification. If not, they should seek to accommodate differences. If material differences arise, the Fund mission chief and the Bank's regional PREM director should attempt to reach an agreement.
- The mission chief and the regional director should, after consultation with their respective review departments (PDR in the Fund, PRMED in the Bank), seek a resolution within five working days. If they are unsuccessful, the matter should be elevated to the level of area department director at the Fund and vice president at the Bank to seek resolution, again within five working days. Failures to resolve differences at this level will cause the matter to be brought to the attention of the managements of the two institutions.
- The managements can, within five working days, either resolve the dispute or decide that the DSA document will present the different views of the staffs to the Boards of the two institutions. In the latter case, each institution will present its views in its own words.

D. Review Process

33. **LIC DSA documents prepared by Fund and Bank staff are subject to the regular review process.** Details of review and clearance, including timing, are given in Box 3. On the Fund side, PDR (and other functional departments) will have at least three days for review and clearance and management at least five days for approval. Any substantive changes by Fund management will be communicated to Bank staff at that time. On the Bank side, country teams should transmit a preliminary draft (corresponding to the briefing stage in the Fund) to PRMED for initial guidance. When complete, the DSA will be reviewed on a stand-alone basis by PRMED and the regional PREM director, who will have three days for review. Once any comments necessary for clearance are incorporated, the DSA will be sent by PRMED as a stand-alone document via PRMVP to SECBO for transmission to the Board for information.

34. **Each institution is expected to abide by the agreed timeline so as not to hold up the issuance of a DSA document for the other.** Any major disagreement should be brought to the attention of the other institution immediately. If comments are not received within the

agreed timeframe despite efforts to seek the other side's input/comments, the front office of the Fund Area Department/Bank Region of the originating institution should contact that of the commenting institution and inform them of the missed deadline and try to work out a mutually agreeable timeframe to receive comments. *However, in the end, the institution that does not provide comments by the agreed timeline implicitly waives its right to comment.* These cases, if any, should be documented and brought to the attention of management in the Bank Region/PRMED and Fund Area Department/PDR.

35. The final versions of the DSA files (external and fiscal templates) should be submitted to the PDR review box in the Fund and to PRMED in the Bank at the time the DSA (and staff report) is sent to the Fund's Executive Board or respective Executive Boards. To avoid discrepancies between published tables and the electronic files, all electronic links to external files (fiscal, balance of payments etc.) should be broken.¹⁸

V. ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIPCs

36. There are important conceptual and methodological differences between the debt sustainability analysis under the HIPC Initiative and the LIC DSA ([IMF and IDA, 2005](#)). While both are driven by the objective of preventing excessive indebtedness, the HIPC DSA is a tool to calculate debt relief under the HIPC Initiative. The HIPC Initiative thresholds for the NPV of debt-to-exports and the NPV of debt-to-revenue ratios are uniform across countries; their denominators (exports and revenues) are derived on the basis of three-year backward-looking averages to limit the impact of volatility; and predetermined currency specific discount rates are used to calculate NPVs within currencies, to avoid reliance on exchange rate projections. The LIC DSA is forward-looking, uses single-year denominators, and applies policy-dependent indicative thresholds.

37. The DSF should be applied to both HIPCs and non-HIPC low-income countries. In addition, for HIPCs that have started the process under the Initiative (i.e., for HIPCs for which a preliminary HIPC document has been issued, and a HIPC DSA has been prepared) but have not reached the completion point, the following arrangements apply:

- The DSF remains the main tool for debt sustainability analysis and the LIC DSA should be updated annually. Selected debt indicators drawn from the HIPC DSA should be included in LIC DSA tables as a memorandum item (debt-service and debt-stock ratios).
- In addition to the HIPC DSA, decision and completion point documents should contain a LIC DSA as a supplement to the main document to be used for forward looking analysis and assessment.¹⁹

¹⁸ The files should also be sent to the authorities.

¹⁹ Further guidance on the relationship between DSAs using HIPC versus DSF methodologies will appear in the forthcoming HIPC Guidebook.

38. **When the HIPC DSA and the LIC DSA are included in the same document, both DSAs need to be based on consistent underlying assumptions regarding the baseline macroeconomic scenario and debt data.** The baseline macroeconomic scenarios, including assumptions on new borrowing, should generally be identical in the HIPC and LIC DSAs. Debt ratios and debt-service projections will however differ between the HIPC and LIC DSA given the different exchange rates and discount rates used. The write-up should explain the causes of significant differences in debt ratios by decomposing them into components attributable to: (i) different discount and exchange rates, and (ii) different exports (three-year averages versus current levels) used by the two frameworks.

39. **HIPC Initiative and MDRI debt relief should be accounted for in the baseline or alternative scenario, depending on HIPC status.**²⁰ The LIC DSA should include the following baseline and alternative scenarios:

- For post-completion point countries, the LIC DSA should incorporate HIPC Initiative and MDRI relief in the baseline scenario. Debt-service projections used in the baseline scenario should take into account the specific mechanisms under which HIPC and MDRI relief is delivered (e.g., debt forgiveness or rescheduling).
- For countries in the interim period, the baseline scenario should assume HIPC interim relief (the risk rating should not be predicated on the country reaching completion point). In an alternative scenario, irrevocable HIPC and MDRI relief should be assumed beyond the expected completion point date. In this scenario, the NPV indicators should only be affected by HIPC and MDRI debt relief beyond the expected completion point date. In years preceding the expected completion point date, the NPV should be based on debt-service projections before completion point debt relief.
- For countries that have not yet reached the decision point but for which the Boards have reviewed the HIPC preliminary document, the baseline scenario should incorporate only traditional debt relief. For the alternative scenario, HIPC relief assumed to be delivered through debt rescheduling should be incorporated beyond the assumed decision point date. In this case, it should be noted that the estimates of the value of debt relief will only be approximate, since the actual HIPC debt reduction factor will depend on the decision point date.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

40. **The effectiveness of the DSF ultimately depends on its broader use by borrowers and creditors.** The DSF should thus be seen as a tool for better communication and coordination between creditors and borrowers, and among creditors. This includes emerging

²⁰ MDRI assistance should include any indicated assistance from regional development banks (e.g., the African Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank).

creditors, some of which have a limited tradition of regular coordination and information sharing.

41. **Country teams are encouraged to involve relevant MDBs, as appropriate and with the consent of the authorities where needed, in the early phases of the DSA process.**²¹ A separate note will provide more detailed guidance on this issue.

42. **The DSF is also a tool to facilitate country teams' dialogue with the authorities.** DSA assumptions and results should be thoroughly discussed with the authorities (preferably early in the Fund mission in cases where the DSA is being produced for an IMF Board document). The final DSA templates should be provided to the authorities. The DSF, combined with technical assistance, should help to build capacity in public debt management. Over time, borrowers can develop their own medium-term debt strategy to support development objectives while containing risks of debt distress and macroeconomic vulnerability.

43. **Following the Board meeting, country teams, in consultation with the authorities, are also encouraged to disseminate DSA results, if and when the authorities consent to this.**²² This could take the form of a presentation in the context of regular contacts with the donor/creditor community (e.g. consultative group meetings), including emerging creditors. Both the Bank and the Fund maintain a dedicated website on published DSAs and relevant background material (<http://www.imf.org/dsa> and <http://worldbank.org/debt>). Wherever possible, staff should encourage the authorities to consent to the publication of the DSA (for the Fund, the staff report to which the DSA is supplemented).

²¹ The MDBs would typically include the AfDB, AsDB, IDB, and EBRD. Information sharing is subject to the Fund's policy on sharing confidential information and may require consent of the authorities' or third parties.

²² To the extent that the DSA contains nonpublic third party information, consent of such third parties would in principle also be required for the DSA's dissemination. In practice, such a need may arise only rarely, because information received from third party is generally processed and aggregated to other information.

REFERENCES

- International Monetary Fund and International Development Association, 2004, “Debt-Sustainability in Low-Income Countries-Proposal for an Operational Framework and Policy Implications,” available via internet:
<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=41>).
- _____, 2004a, “Debt Sustainability in Low-Income Countries—Further Considerations on an Operational Framework and Policy Implications,” available via internet:
<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=440>.
- _____, 2004b, “Operational Framework for Debt Sustainability in Low-Income Countries—Implications for Fund Program Design,” available via internet:
<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=479>
- _____, 2005, “Operational Framework for Debt Sustainability Assessments in Low-Income Countries—Further Considerations,” available via internet:
<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=412>
- _____, 2006 “Review of Low-Income Country Debt Sustainability Framework and Implications of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI),” available via internet:
<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=557>.
- _____, 2006a, “Applying the Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries Post Debt Relief,” available via internet:
<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=3959>

ANNEX I: DEBT DYNAMICS TEMPLATES FOR LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES USERS' GUIDE

I. INTRODUCTION

44. **Assessing fiscal and external sustainability is an integral part of the Fund's work in both Article IV surveillance and the use of Fund resources and underpins IDA's allocation of its grants as well as informing the Bank's dialogue with the government on economic management.** The LIC DSA has been used only since its inception in April 2005.²³ This user's guide provides practical guidance to country teams on how to use the templates for conducting external and fiscal sustainability analyses in low-income countries.

45. **The analysis is conducted in a standardized way.** The templates share a number of features. Both templates are set up for a 20-year projection period, in light of the long maturity periods of concessional debt, and are part of the same overall macroeconomic framework. They include a baseline scenario, a set of sensitivity tests, an output table, and a set of charts summarizing the results of the DSA. An important difference between the templates relates to coverage of debt: the external sustainability template analyzes debt incurred externally by domestic residents (both public and private sectors), while the fiscal sustainability template includes all debt incurred by the public sector, including domestic debt.

II. EXTERNAL TEMPLATE

46. **The external template consists of** (i) two input sheets; (ii) two output tables; (iii) one output figure; (iv) a range of worksheets that transform the input data into the information provided in the output tables; and (v) a summary of the instructions laid out in more detail in this note.

A. Input worksheets

47. **The input sheets** ("*Input_external*" and "*Inp_Outp_debt*") require information on the key macroeconomic series in the staff's baseline scenario and some assumptions regarding the terms of new borrowing. The required inputs are the cells shaded in *yellow* in the input sheets (the non-shaded cells are automatically calculated as formulas). In contrast to the HIPC framework, the analysis only requires data on the total stock of existing debt and on new borrowing and associated debt service, both by main creditors. That is, a DSA does not usually require loan-by-loan data.

48. **Worksheet "*Input_external*"**: This worksheet collects key macroeconomic series for the baseline scenario, including the stock of total external debt and associated debt service

²³ In the IMF, the framework for "countries with significant market access," covering all industrial and middle-income countries, has been applied for some time. The Bank also uses a distinct template for fiscal analysis in middle-income countries and has templates for other cases, such as resource rich economies.

(including on new borrowing), exports, imports, current transfers, nominal GDP, etc. and qualitative information such as the three-year moving average of the CPIA, the debt distress rating, HIPC, MDRI, IMF-supported program, and IDA status. For the historical years and the first five projection years, most of the macroeconomic data can be refreshed in the Fund via EDSS, consistent with the latest published WEO information. To do this, staff needs to (i) change the country code in column "Series_Code" to the one for the respective country, and (ii) refresh the data by selecting the EDSS refresh button.²⁴ If WEO projections are outdated (or the program baseline projection differs from the WEO projection), all relevant figures need to be inserted directly.²⁵ The latter is also the case for the projections beyond the WEO period.

49. **Worksheet "Inp_Outp_debt"**: Given that low-income countries primarily rely on concessional financing, the net present value (NPV)²⁶ of debt is needed to be informative as a measure of a country's effective debt burden. For private external debt, the NPV is assumed as a simplification to be identical to the nominal value of the debt (i.e., the nominal interest rate is assumed to be equal to the discount rate), which is taken from the "input_external" sheet. To calculate the NPV of public and publicly-guaranteed (PPG) external debt—a key concept under the framework—the worksheet requires information on:

- Debt-service projections on existing outstanding liabilities by main creditor groups over the entire maturity period, i.e., until all existing claims are paid off. For the purpose of debt-service ratios in the template, only debt service on existing and new (calculated in the template based on borrowing assumptions) PPG external debt matters. The coverage therefore differs from the debt-service concept in the input external sheet, which is consistent with the WEO BOP concept and also includes debt service on private sector debt.
- Disbursements by creditors and the repayment terms (interest rate, grace period, and maturity).

50. The terms of the additional financing resulting from the stress tests are set to coincide with the average terms assumed in the baseline, but could be adjusted, if warranted. The discount rate has been set at a uniform 5 percent, consistent with the proposal in [IMF and IDA \(2004\)](#) and should not be altered. It will be adjusted by 100 basis points whenever it deviates from the U.S. dollar CIRR (6-month average) by at least that magnitude for a consecutive period of 6 months. Any changes to the discount rate will be reflected in the

²⁴ Note that imports need to be converted into positive values.

²⁵ Linking the input worksheet of the template to the macroeconomic framework worksheet will allow staff to update automatically the DSA when the baseline scenario changes. It will also help to ensure consistency between the input worksheets of the two templates.

²⁶ The NPV of debt is defined as the discounted value of all future debt-service payments due on the debt disbursed and outstanding at a given point in time.

most recent version of the template, which will be posted on PDR’s website. The use of one discount rate for all loans implies the need for explicit exchange-rate projections to convert the debt service on existing debt into U.S. dollars. The medium-term conversion should be done on the basis of WEO exchange rate assumptions.

B. Output tables and graphs

51. **Once the input sheets are filled in correctly, the template automatically runs the stress tests and produces the output tables and the panel chart.**

52. The table “*SR_Table_Baseline*” reports the evolution of the nominal debt-to-GDP ratio in the baseline scenario and, in each year, decomposes this evolution into its driving factors, namely (i) the non-interest current account deficit and its basic breakdown, (ii) non-debt creating capital inflows (net FDI), and (iii) endogenous debt dynamics. The latter includes GDP growth, interest rates, and price and exchange rate movements (which are not shown for the projection period in line with Fund convention). The change in debt that is unexplained by these identifiable factors is included in a residual.²⁷ The table presents the evolution of five other debt-burden indicators that are key under the framework. These are the NPV of PPG external debt relative to GDP, exports, and revenues, and the debt service on PPG external debt relative to exports and revenues. Key macroeconomic assumptions underlying the baseline scenario, how they compare with the country’s historical averages, and the rate of debt accumulations—which would trigger a more thorough analysis if in excess of 5 percent—are also shown.

53. The table “*SR_Table_Stress*” shows the sensitivity of the five key external debt-burden indicators to standardized shocks and alternative assumptions, specified below. The panel chart depicts the evolution of the five debt-burden indicators under the baseline, the “historical scenario” (see below), and the most extreme stress test (defined as the test that results in the highest indicator after 10 years of projections), as well as the rate of debt accumulation and the average grant element under the baseline.

C. Sensitivity analyses

54. **The template includes a set of standardized sensitivity tests to assess the robustness of the sustainability indicators to changes in key assumptions and parameters.** It distinguishes between two “alternative scenarios” and six “bound tests”. The debt dynamics under the alternative scenarios and bound tests are derived in separate worksheets and summarized in the output tables and panel chart (see below).

²⁷ The decomposition may show a substantial residual (due, for example, to depreciation of the US dollar against other currencies in which debt is held, debt relief, arrears accumulation or changes in international reserves), but a very large residual may indicate data errors. The source of large residuals should be understood.

Alternative Scenarios

55. **Historical Average Scenario (Worksheet “A1_Historical”):** This scenario presents an alternative evolution of the debt ratio under the assumption that key variables are at their respective historical averages throughout the projection period. The template uses ten-year historical averages as a default. This scenario provides indications about the extent of optimism in the baseline projections relative to the country’s own historical performance.

56. **Level of concessionality (Worksheet “A2_Financing”):** This scenario assumes that the interest rate on new borrowing is two percentage points higher than in the baseline scenario.

57. **The two alternative scenarios discussed above present a mechanical response of the debt dynamics to changes in critical variables in line with the respective scenarios.** They do not reflect a comprehensive and consistent alternative macroeconomic scenario, and ignore the joint dynamic response of the macroeconomic variables relevant for debt dynamics and assume that fiscal policy does not react to the developments. Staff may wish to present the debt dynamics for an alternative fully articulated macroeconomic scenario, which could include a policy response. This could reflect a different adjustment path or take account of the policy response to a specific hypothetical shock (e.g., an oil or other commodity price shock). This option would require staff to develop an alternative baseline projection consistent with such a scenario and rerun the template.

Bound tests

58. **The bound tests are standardized tests, akin to providing the upper bound of a confidence interval to the baseline projections.** The confidence interval corresponds, on average, to a 25 percent probability over a ten-year period.²⁸ The first four tests assume respectively that real GDP growth (*Worksheet “B1_GDP”*), exports growth (*“B2_Exports”*), inflation, measured by the increase in the U.S. dollar GDP deflator (*“B3_Deflator”*), and net non-debt flows, including both FDI and current transfers (*“B4_non-debt flows”*), in each of the first two years, are one standard deviation below their historical average. Another test combines all four variables and assumes that in each of the first two years they are half a standard deviation below their historical average (*“B5_Combo”*). A fifth test assumes a one-time 30 percent depreciation of the domestic currency in the first year of the projection period.

59. **The sensitivity tests could be adjusted to take account of country-specific circumstances.** Possible modifications may include the choice of the period over which the stress-test parameters are calibrated (the template uses averages and standard deviations over

²⁸ This probability is derived on the basis of stochastic simulations presented in Appendix III of [IMF and IDA \(2004\)](#).

the past 10 years). Country teams may wish to adjust the historical data if it covers non-representative events such as a war or a particularly severe crisis that could distort the results. Changes to the parameters used in this scenario should be made in the worksheet “Baseline”, and would need to be clearly noted and justified.

III. FISCAL TEMPLATE

60. The fiscal template consists of (i) one input sheet; (ii) two output tables; (iii) one output graph; (iv) a range of worksheets that transform the input data into the information provided in the output tables; and (v) a summary of the instructions (first sheet), which are laid out in more detail in this note.

A. Input worksheet

61. The input sheet (*Worksheet “Input_fiscal”*) requires information on the key macroeconomic series in the staff’s baseline scenario, as well as assumptions regarding the terms of marginal borrowing. The required inputs are the cells shaded in *yellow* in the input sheet (the non-shaded cells are automatically calculated as formulas).

62. In formulating the baseline scenario, staff must determine what level of coverage of the public sector (e.g., central government, general government, nonfinancial public sector, etc.) and type of debt (net or gross) are most appropriate for the country, taking into account country-specific institutional features and data availability. The coverage and type of debt should be noted in the DSA write-up. The level of coverage should also be consistent across fiscal series, so that changes in debt stocks can be compared to fiscal flows. To facilitate this, data on contingent liabilities should be reported as a separate item (if available), rather than as part of the debt stock. Staff should ensure that the coverage of series taken from IMF BOP files is consistent with the coverage of the public sector in the fiscal series (note that this may mean that public external debt as defined in the external template and as defined in the fiscal template may be different).

63. Assumptions on the terms of marginal borrowing (additional financing resulting from the stress tests) are required for the stress tests (cells D33-51). The template allows staff to divide marginal borrowing between foreign-currency borrowing, domestic medium- and long-term borrowing, and domestic short-term borrowing. In addition, staff can specify the interest rate and maturity structure for each type of marginal borrowing. The interest rates are specified in nominal terms for foreign-currency borrowing (assumed to be in U.S. dollars) and in real terms for domestic borrowing. The terms on marginal foreign-currency borrowing should be consistent with those used in the external template. The discount rate should be the same as in the external template and not be altered (see discussion of the discount rate in the external template section)

B. Output tables and graphs

64. Once the input sheet is filled in correctly, the template automatically runs the stress tests and produces output tables.

65. The first table (*Worksheet “Table_baseline”*) reports the evolution of the debt-to-GDP ratio in the baseline scenario. It also decomposes the evolution into the driving factors, namely the primary balance and its basic breakdown; endogenous debt dynamics, including GDP growth, interest rates, and currency appreciation/depreciation (which is not shown for the projection period in line with Fund convention); and other debt-creating/reducing flows, including privatization receipts and asset purchases (when debt is defined in gross terms), debt relief, or recognition of contingent liabilities.²⁹ The change in debt that is unexplained by these identifiable factors represents the residual. While a substantial residual may be common (due, for example, to depreciation of the U.S. dollar against other currencies in which debt is held), a very large residual may indicate data errors and should be understood.

66. The table also presents several other debt indicators. These include the following:

- *NPV of debt-to-GDP*: For simplicity, the template calculates the NPV of debt as the sum of the NPV of external debt plus the nominal value of public domestic debt (i.e., for domestic debt, the assumption is that the nominal interest rate equals the discount rate);
- *NPV of contingent liabilities*: These may include government loan guarantees, the expected costs of bank recapitalization, or unfunded pension liabilities, and should be provided if available. In calculating these, the standard discount rate should be used for external debt, while the NPV of domestic debt is assumed equal to its nominal value;
- *Gross financing need*;
- *NPV of debt-to-revenue ratio*;
- *Debt-service-to-revenue ratio*;
- *Primary deficit that stabilizes the debt-to-GDP ratio*: This is defined as the difference between the actual primary deficit and the actual change in the debt-to-GDP ratio. One should note that (1) a negative number corresponds to a primary surplus and (2) the estimated primary deficit only stabilizes the NPV ratio in the year in question, assuming that all previous years followed the path of the baseline scenario.

67. The first table also shows the key macro and external assumptions in the baseline scenario and how they compare to the historical average.

68. The second table (*Worksheet “Table tests”*) shows the evolution of NPV of debt-to-GDP, NPV of debt-to-revenue and debt-service-to-revenue under alternative scenarios and stress tests. The template also produces a panel chart (*Worksheet “charts”*) that shows how

²⁹ For an analytical presentation of the debt dynamics based on this breakdown, see the technical appendix to E. Baldacci and K. Fletcher, 2004, “A Framework for Fiscal Debt Sustainability Analysis in Low-Income Countries,” in Gupta, Sanjeev, Clements, Benedict, and Inchauste, Gabriela (eds.), *Helping Countries Develop—The Role of Fiscal Policy* (Washington: International Monetary Fund).

the variables evolve in the baseline, the no-reform scenario, and in the most extreme stress test. The most extreme stress test is defined as the test that results in the highest indicator after 10 years of projections.

C. Sensitivity analysis

69. The template includes a set of standardized sensitivity tests to assess the robustness of the sustainability indicators to changes in key assumptions and parameters. It distinguishes between three “alternative scenarios” and five “bound tests”. The debt dynamics under the alternative scenarios and bound tests are derived in separate worksheets and summarized in the output tables and figure.

Alternative Scenarios

70. *Historical average scenario (Worksheet “A1_historical”)*: This scenario presents the evolution of the debt ratios under the assumption that key variables are at their historical averages throughout the projection period. The template uses ten-year historical averages as a default. This scenario provides indications about the extent of optimism in the baseline projections relative to the country’s historical performance.

71. *Primary balance unchanged (Worksheet “A2_PB unchanged”)*: This scenario assumes that the primary balance is unchanged from the last actual observation, intending to replicate a “status quo”.

72. *Lower long-run GDP growth (Worksheet “A3_LR growth”)*: This scenario assumes that real GDP growth in all future years is lower than the baseline by one standard deviation divided by the square root of the projection period. This scenario is intended to illustrate the effects of persistently lower-than-projected growth.

73. The three alternative scenarios discussed above present a mechanical response of the debt dynamics to changes in critical variables. They do not reflect comprehensive and consistent alternative macroeconomic scenarios. Staff may wish to present the debt dynamics for an alternative fully articulated macroeconomic scenario, which could include a policy response. This could reflect a different adjustment path or take account of the policy response to a specific hypothetical shock. This would require the staff to develop an alternative baseline projection consistent with such a scenario and rerun the template.

Bound tests

74. The bound tests are standardized tests, akin to providing the upper bound of a confidence interval to the baseline projections. The first two tests assume that real GDP growth (*Worksheet “B1_GDP”*) and the primary balance (*Worksheet “B2_PB”*) are one standard deviation below the historical average in the first two years of projection. Another test combines shocks to these two variables, assuming that they are one-half a standard deviation below the historical average (*Worksheet “B3_combo”*). A fourth test (*Worksheet “B4_depreciation”*) assumes a one-time 30 percent depreciation of the domestic currency

(relative to the baseline) in the first year of the projection period. A fifth test (*Worksheet “B5_other flows”*) assumes that debt increases by 10 percent of GDP in the first year of projection due to other debt-creating flows, such as a bank recapitalization or recognition of other contingent liabilities.

75. The sensitivity tests can be adjusted to take account of country-specific circumstances. Possible modifications include changing the period over which the stress-test parameters are calibrated (the template uses averages and standard deviations over the past 10 years). Country teams may wish to adjust the historical data if it covers non-representative events such as a war or a particularly severe crisis that could distort the results. Changes to the parameters used in this scenario should be made in the worksheet “Baseline” (columns AJ-AK). Staff can also change tests B1-B3 to shock the baseline rather than the historical averages if they feel that the historical averages are excessively optimistic (for example, in cases where the deficit may have been rising over time, making the historical average deficit excessively optimistic looking forward). Any changes, however, should be properly noted and justified.

76. Staff should note that the shocks to GDP growth assume that revenue stays constant as a share of GDP while expenditure stays constant in nominal terms. As a result, GDP shocks increase (decrease) the primary deficit (surplus), which partly explains why these shocks often have large effects. If staff feel that these assumptions are unreasonable for their country, the assumptions could be altered, although again this should be clearly noted and justified.