

**AVANTI**

Advancing Knowledge  
for Agricultural Impact



# Summary Report of the Lesotho AG-Scan:

Lessons learned and  
key areas identified



April 2021

## Background

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is funding the Advancing Knowledge for Agricultural Impact (AVANTI) initiative, which provides a self-assessment tool called AG-Scan. The AG-Scan is a facilitated process for an in-depth reflection around the agricultural and rural development sectors' capacities for results-based management (RBM) of specific countries. This, in turn, provides information to enable the generation of an action plan to improve governments' capacities to measure achievements against the SDGs.



AG-Scan Workshop (10 -12 April 2019)

32 Participants



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**Government Institutions:** Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Planning - M&E Department, Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security, Ministry of Small Business and Marketing, Lesotho National Development Corporation

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**Supporting Institutions:** IFAD, FAO, WFP, World Bank, Civil Society

## Findings from the AG-Scan self-assessment

The Lesotho Ag-Scan self-assessment was held in April 2019. The process adopted a workshop-style approach and explored five broad areas – Leadership, Evaluation and Monitoring, Accountability and Partners, Planning and Budgeting, and Statistics. Each broad area is scored on a scale of 1-4 (1-awareness of the issue; 2-exploring the issue; 3-transition toward full implementation; 4-full implementation).

### Leadership



Leadership scored 2 out of 4. The assessment result showed that public consultation works well. Processes and systems for consultation on public policy exist.

The main gaps identified include the misalignment between political interests and development needs as projects are often adopted for political expediency rather than results. There is low commitment to RBM among senior leadership, which is confounded by a skills gap among policymakers, who have limited technical know-how, skills and tools to advance RBM. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) lacks the means and capacity to drive RBM internally and the mandate to demand the same from non-state actors. Data are also scarce and often generated late, thereby compromising the extent to which results inform policy.



### Evaluation and Monitoring

Evaluation and monitoring scored 2 out of 4. The assessment results showed that the sector is doing well regarding the implementation and functionality of a performance measurement system. MAFS is reported to have developed M&E plans and procedures. The main gaps identified include data quality, with certain types of data not collected systematically or not collected at all, and the quality of data further compromised by a skills gap in data processing and management. The absence of up-to-date agronomic data is said to be debilitating efforts in performance-based planning. Participants also flagged the absence of an M&E framework and of functional government structures to finance and implement M&E. There are also no systems to measure client satisfaction and feedback from the rural poor remains inconsistent.

### Accountability and Partners



Accountability and partnerships scored 2.7 out of 4. The assessment results showed that formal structures, legal frameworks, policy procedures facilitating accountability and strong partnerships exist. Strong accountability structures such as the Public Accounts Committee and the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offense and the court system are said to be in place. With regard to transparency, public access to policymaking platforms and discussions is high and enhanced by wide media coverage. The main

identified gaps concerned the partial enforcement of accountability by the state and political interference. Non-state actors do not fully account to government for their activities, investments or outputs. As a result, the full picture of the combined contribution of NGOs to the SDGs is neither computed nor reported.



Planning and budgeting scored 2.5 out of 4. The assessment results showed evidence of good planning strengthened by the implementation of economic laboratories, which identified viable

projects across the four priority sectors mentioned in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) II. Formal structures for participation of the rural poor include community councils, commodity associations and district planning units. The main gaps identified included the fragmentation of donor support and their insufficient alignment to national priorities. National priorities are said to be insufficiently funded. Participants highlighted evidence-based planning as an area for improvement, mostly due to the lack of data. Soliciting inputs from private sector, state and development agencies is said to be one of the main challenges around sector planning.



Statistics scored 2.1 out of 4. The assessment results showed that data disaggregation met international standards, and the staff at the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) were well trained and skilled

in survey capability.

The main gaps identified included the lack of data quality assessment mechanisms. There is insufficient clarity around BOS and MAFS' mandate on sector data, which presents coordination and accountability challenges. The technical capacity and awareness of strategic objectives of BOS enumerators was also questioned by some participants, highlighting that this could lead to inconsistencies in the data they collect. The current paper-based system used by BOS was reported as posing numerous data quality issues such as human error and data loss.

## Lessons learned

Four critical and interrelated lessons came out of the AG-Scan process, which are highlighted below.

### 1. Coordination

A recurring theme that emerged across the four pillars was coordination. Participants agreed that the government should coordinate players to measure the impact of policy and interventions against SDG targets and indicators from the data collected.

**Lesson 1** is the need to strengthen MAFS' mandate to coordinate RBM within the agriculture and rural development sector. There is currently no clarity on the role of government in coordinating and nurturing a culture of results from private sector and development partners. Support is needed to assist the government in taking up its role in coordinating the collation of results in the sector.

**Lesson 2** is the need for improved coordination of data collection and accountability within the public sector itself. An investment in data quality will see a revamp in data collection mechanisms including the coordination of data between MAFS, BOS and other government departments reporting on similar SDG indicators.

**Lesson 3** is the need for better alignment of donor and government reporting. This will ensure that donor priorities are better aligned with national priorities.

### 2. Capacity and skills building

There is a clear skills gap around data processing, management and the interpreting of data within the public sector. At the leadership level, the technical know-how, skills and tools to advance RBM, as well as to correctly interpret data and effectively communicate it, is lacking. This compromises policy implementation and practice. At the level of technical staff, there is limited training on data processing and the skillset of enumerators is generally low, which can compromise data quality.

**Lesson 1** is the need to capacitate leaders in RBM and M&E to better interpret data for evidence-based policy and decision making.

**Lesson 2** is the need to improve financial resourcing for data management, including for training and for sufficient human resources.

### 3. Accountability

Despite relatively strong accountability structures such as the Public Accounts Committee and Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offense and the court system in place, there are still issues around political interference and partial enforcement of accountability by the state. Non-state actors such as private sector and NGOs do not fully account to government for their activities, investments or outputs.

**Lesson 1** is the need for MAFS to assume its mandate to hold private sector and development partners to account for their activities, inputs and results in the sector. This will require buy-in and drive from senior levels within the ministry.

**Lesson 2** is the need for improved commitment within and outside the state to better account for resources spent in the sector.

### 4. Improving and implementing M&E systems

The AG-Scan indicated that RBM systems in agriculture were at various stages of development on the continuum in the scan, with NGOs generally more advanced in comparison to their state counterparts. M&E is yet to be institutionalized in MAFS. Efforts to do so are debilitated by the absence of functional government structures to prioritize, finance and implement M&E.

**Lesson 1** is the need for a sector-level M&E strategy, which will require a revamp and a revitalization of existing systems (largely paper-based) and significant financial investments.

## Conclusions and way forward

The AG-Scan workshop provided the opportunity for stakeholders to take stock of the critical issues concerning M&E and SDGs using an RBM lens, while also situating these within the agriculture sector.

There are positives to build on, as Lesotho is reported to have strong accountability structures in place, such as the Public Accounts Committee, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offense and the court system, which are requisite to sustaining a culture of RBM.

If the action plan is to serve as a catalyst for longer-term improvements in RBM in agriculture in Lesotho, it requires clear and strategic input. An action plan that outlines short, medium and long-term work could be useful in setting the strategic direction. Such a plan can comprise a series of strategic projects that incubate and progressively lead to improvements in national systems for RBM in agriculture. These projects could be used to build on existing systems, provide interim outputs, pilot approaches and facilitate learning.

The next step should be for MAFS, in close collaboration with the BOS, to further develop the M&E system to capture, analyze and comprehensively report on sector performance. This exercise should include all state and non-state stakeholders and partners to create the parameters and develop plans, guidelines and templates for sector-level data.

The establishment and implementation of a sector-level M&E strategy is a medium to long-term action requiring a revitalization of existing systems and significant financial investments. The impetus for a corresponding M&E strategy and implementation framework is huge.

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## SDGs in Lesotho<sup>1</sup>

Lesotho is highly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This commitment is operationalized through the National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II), 2018/19–2022/23. The NSDP II is also aligned with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan. SDGs reflect the aspirations of Basotho as articulated in the National Vision 2020, living in a country of stable democracy, a united and prosperous nation at peace with itself and its neighbors, with a healthy and educated human resource base. Access to inclusive and quality education and health services, safe drinking water and basic sanitation will be guaranteed. The ‘leave no one behind’ principle is at the core of national values and development imperatives.

Lesotho recognizes the transformative goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The country is also committed to other global frameworks, including the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Lesotho has domesticated (nationalized) the SDGs and mainstreamed them in the country’s new development framework. Therefore, the implementation of SDGs will be part and parcel of accelerating the following: (a) decent and productive employment creation and inclusive economic growth; (b) a further energized and dynamic private sector; (c) a modernized public service that supports the private sector and is anchored in the principle of ‘people-centered development’; and (d) a good governance and accountability system.

Lesotho recognizes that the achievement of SDGs requires effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, consultations, and monitoring of and reporting on progress made in addressing the 2030 Agenda. The Agenda is not just for and about government initiatives; it involves national multi-stakeholder participation including the private sector, civil society organizations, women’s groups, children, youth, academia and other special groups, communities, local government and the media. The participation of the UN and other development partners is also critical. Therefore, effective national high-level leadership and coordination coupled with effective public and private institutions is key to the country’s success in the implementation of the SDGs within the existing national frameworks.

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<sup>1</sup> Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 agenda, 2019. Available at <https://lesotho.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/VNR%20Report%207th%20July%20%202019.pdf>