

AVANTI

Advancing Knowledge
for Agricultural Impact



Summary Report of the Vietnam AG-Scan:

Lessons learned and
key areas identified



April 2021

Background

Advancing Knowledge for Agricultural Impact (AVANTI), an initiative funded by The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), developed and supports the implementation of the Agricultural Scan (AG-Scan) self-assessment tool. 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; and their ability to measure achievements against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This in turn provides information to develop an action plan to improve governments' capacities to measure achievements against the SDGs.



AG-Scan Workshop (24-25 Sept. 2019)

30 Participants
24 M, 6 F



11 **Government departments and agencies** : Departments of planning, livestock production, fisheries, cooperatives and rural development, international cooperation; Administration of fisheries and forestry; Directorate of water resources; Disaster management authority; Centre for information and statistics

3 **Supporting institutions** : IFAD, Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences

Findings from the AG-Scan self-assessment

The Viet Nam AG-Scan was held in September 2019. The process was designed and implemented in a participatory way and explored five broad dimensions – Leadership, Evaluation and Monitoring, Accountability and Partners, Planning and Budgeting, and Statistics. Each area is scored on a scale of 1 to 4 (1-awareness of the issue; 2-exploring the issue; 3-transition toward full implementation; 4-full implementation).



Leadership was ranked quite positively by participants, with an average of 3 out of a possible 4, corresponding to being in transition between exploring the further development of the

leadership dimension and achieving full implementation. There was a feeling that leaders 'talked the talk' of RBM and engaged in policy consultation, though discussions centered more on consultation within and between ministries rather than being oriented toward a broader public. **Main gaps** centered on RBM capacity not cutting across all categories of leadership in ministries, which necessitates capacity development around RBM skills for managers. Procedures for giving feedback in the process of policy development was also perceived to be somewhat weak and needs to be strengthened.



Overall, the self-assessment ranked Evaluation and monitoring at 2.5, somewhere between the level of exploration and transition to full implementation. Participants felt the general framework for effective evaluation and monitoring was largely in place as well as mechanisms for collecting and managing data.

Main gaps include the insufficient financial resources within the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) for relevant surveys. The capacity of MARD staff and the use of data to measure performance are still not in place. Tools/methods and skills on data analysis are also relatively weak and need to be strengthened.



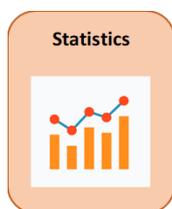
Accountability was scored overall at approximately 3, or at the transition stage. The assessment showed that officials are accountable for their actions (though with a focus on upward accountability of staff to their supervisors), and the state does provide some capacity building for non-government institutions to support accountability. Although there is some capacity of state actors to manage for results, and there is some level of public access to results, these are some of the areas identified for further development. There was a **perceived gap** in

information sharing and public access to information.



Planning and budgeting was given a score averaging 2.75, or just below the level of transition. Generally, budget allocation reflects national development priorities and plans, but **there are**

gaps in the knowledge of theory of change. For most MARD staff, planning and budgeting has been more strongly oriented to identifying expected outputs and allocating pre-determined resources to them, than to engagement in the full planning and budgeting process from the beginning.



Scoring of the Statistics dimension was relatively high and averaged 3.25 out of 4, more or less at the transition level. Having a statistics strategy and disaggregation of data were seen

quite positively. **There were gaps** in data quality assessment and survey capability and thus, identified as areas needing capacity development.

Lessons learned

Two critical lessons emerged from the assessments and are highlighted below.

A. Improving RBM and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity

A recurring theme that emerged across the five dimensions was the capacity of RBM and M&E. Participants identified these areas as appropriate for capacity development efforts to address the main gaps identified. There is a skills gap around data processing, management, analysis, and the interpretation of data. The technical know-how, skills, and tools to advance RBM, as well as to correctly interpret data and effectively communicate the same is lacking. It was also observed that the concept of theories of change is less familiar to MARD staff as it has not been emphasized in training or the day-to-day work of the ministry.

Lesson 1: An M&E database for the sector plan to be should be developed, and training for

MARD staff in the areas of sector planning and monitoring implementation.

Lesson 2: Policies and procedures around RBM should be reviewed and refined and the M&E indicator sets should be further aligned with SDGs.

Lesson 3: MARD staff should receive training and capacity building on theory of change.

B. Improving accountability

Related to M&E is the issue of providing feedback to citizens as part of policy planning and review processes. While there is some capacity to manage for results, public access to results and the processes for collating and providing feedback to the public are fairly weak. Moreover, collecting stories of good practice could help share learning more broadly.

Lesson 1: Develop procedures for giving feedback during the process of policy development. This could be a mechanism (with e.g., an e-platform) to collect, reflect on and publish information.

Lesson 2: Organize periodic seminars to share information on the outputs/outcomes of sectoral projects/programs. Relevant publications can be produced out of this.

Conclusions and way forward

The AG-Scan process illustrated the potential of increased dialogues, particularly between departments and other entities associated with MARD. It also helped to crystallize awareness of the key areas where further capacity building would contribute most effectively to furthering the goals of MARD to fully adopt an RBM approach to the SDGs.

MARD is in a good position to build on a well-established foundation of planning, implementation and reporting against established budgets and anticipated outputs. Support for development of RBM competences throughout MARD (outcome-oriented planning in agriculture and rural development, robust data collection, analysis and feeding into implementation, effective consultative processes across government and with non-governmental

stakeholders) is a clear and potentially transformative path for the future.

An equally important outcome to such competence development is a culture of exchange that would contribute greatly to bringing together a range of perspectives. This would make it easier for MARD staff to apply more holistic approaches to their work, and to have a greater impact on realization of the SDGs.

At the time of writing, IFAD is supporting MARD to refine and prioritize its capacity development needs highlighted in the AG-Scan and the resulting action plan, and to identify and source the necessary resources to put the training and sector-wide M&E systems in place to move forward on its evolving agenda.

SDGs in Viet Nam¹

Seventeen global SDGs have been nationalized into 115 Viet Nam SDG (VSDG) targets in the 'National Action Plan for Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development', based on Viet Nam's development context and priorities, building on the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, Viet Nam has paid particular attention to vulnerable groups such as the poor, people with disabilities, women, children and ethnic minorities through a number of policies aimed at promoting social equality to ensure that no one is left behind.

To date, Viet Nam is proud to have achieved a number of SDG-related results, including: (1) A substantial reduction in the national multi-dimensional poverty rate from 9.9% in 2015 to less than 7% in 2017; (2) Health insurance coverage reaching 86.4% in 2017; (3) A primary net enrolment rate of 99%; (4) Women's representation in the National Assembly in the 2016-2021 term reaching 26.7%; (5) The proportion of households having access to safe water reaching 93.4% in 2016; (6) Access to electricity by more than 99% of Vietnamese households in 2016; (7) Internet use reaching 54.2 per cent; (8) Annual GDP growth rates at 6.7, 6.2, and 6.8% for 2015, 2016, and 2017 respectively; (9) Improvements in the protection and management of the environment and natural resources and an increase in forest cover to 41.5% in 2017; and (10) A reduction in inequality and an improvement in the promotion of access to justice and information.

Moreover, sustainable development principles have been thoroughly mainstreamed into the 2011-20 Social and Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) and the 2016-20 Social and Economic Development Plan (SEDP). In the coming years, the SDGs will be fully and further integrated into Viet Nam's 2021-30 SEDS and 2021-25 SEDP.

The government of Viet Nam has created an enabling legal environment and encouraged foreign and domestic private sectors to invest and do business in line with sustainable development principles. Accordingly, the Viet Nam Business Council for Sustainable Development is an initiative aimed at enhancing connections within the business community to enable them to share and spread good practices, as well as to play an important role in realizing the SDGs.

Viet Nam is currently a lower middle-income country and is one of the most affected countries by climate change. Increasingly integrated into the world economy, Viet Nam is therefore more vulnerable to its fluctuations. As such, to successfully achieve all 17 SDGs, Viet Nam requires technical and human resources, financial support, as well as strengthened cooperation and exchange of knowledge with the international community. At the same time, Viet Nam is eager to share its own experiences and innovative approaches with other countries.

¹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19297VIET_NAM_VNR_Key_MessagesViet_Namedited.pdf

Going forward, Viet Nam will therefore need to: improve society's awareness of and mobilize all stakeholders' participation in sustainable development efforts; enhance institutional set-up and policy frameworks for sustainable development; foster cooperation between the government and the business sector, domestic organizations, and the international community in SDG implementation; issue national SDG indicators and strengthen national statistical capacity; mainstream SDGs into development policies and strategies; and strengthen the mobilization of resources, particularly from the private sector for SDG implementation.