



Improving living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building

Final Report of the External Evaluation

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BBF	Berea Business Forum	LFA	Logical Framework approach
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme	LSL	Lesotho Loti
CiSU	Civil Society in Development (Denmark)	MADAU	Maseru District Association Unity Association
CC	Community Councils	MAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
CCS	Community Council Secretary	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
CSP	Community Support Project	MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	MTFA	Majantja Temong Farmers Association
DAP	Decentralisation Action Plan	NCCC	National Climate Change Committee
DC	District Councils	NGO	Non-governmental organisation.
DCS	District Council Secretary	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
DLN	Danish Lesotho Network	PCM	Project Cycle Management
EDF	European Development Fund	PFSL	Private Sector Foundation Lesotho
EU	European Union	RSDA	Rural Self-help Development Association
GoL	Government of Lesotho	SADC	Southern African Development Community
CSOs	Danish Civil Society Organizations	SADP	Smallholder Farmers Agriculture Development Programme (IFAD and WB)
DLN	Denmark Lesotho Network	SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time bound
ESAFF	Eastern and Southern Africa Farmers Forum	SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges Analysis
FIDA	Lesotho Federation of Women Lawyers	TL	Team Leader
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	ToR	Terms of Reference
LA(s)	Local Authority(ies)	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
LCN	Lesotho council of Non-Governmental Organisations	WB	World Bank
LENAFU	Lesotho National Farmers Union		
LNFO	Lesotho Federation of Organisations of the Disabled		

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of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building" is a result of contributions from a multidisciplinary

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1. Executive Summary

This document presents the external evaluation of the project **“Improving living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building”**. The project is funded by the Denmark Lesotho Network (DLN), who has commissioned this external assessment and the local implementing partner is the Rural Self-help Development Association (RSDA).

The project has a duration of 3 years (01st April 2015 to 31st March 2018), and it consists mainly of the following objectives:

The **general objective** is “Improving the living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobby and advocacy and capacity building for their engagement with government on policy and priorities in support of improved productivity, and market linkages”.

The **Specific objectives**:

- Specific objective 1 (SO1): A functional national level farmer platform and farmer networks from 5 districts are well organised and engage with private sector, local Government and Government on priorities and policies that create an enabling environment for sustainably increasing smallholder farm income, food and nutrition security.
- Specific objective 2 (SO2): At least 1000 smallholder farmers are exposed and demonstrate viable agricultural practices, benefit from market linkages and are able to graduate from subsistence farming to semi-commercial status (strategic service delivery).

After two years of implementation, the partners have commissioned an external agent to assess the implementation and progress of the project, its level of success and the impact different activities have had. The assessment covers the period from the commencement date of the project in 2015 to present, the second quarter of 2017. This report is the result of the external evaluation conducted by a multidisciplinary team of international and local professionals.

The evaluation

The purpose of this external evaluation is to assess the project (effectiveness, relevance, performance and overall potential sustainability), to guide the implementation of the project towards the expected results and to provide an analysis of the comparative advantages of the RSDA in the sector. Following the ToR, the evaluation identifies opportunities and challenges in all key areas, captures all project activities and highlights good replicable experiences for the future RSDA projects.

The evaluation was conducted through a participatory, inclusive and shared learning process, engaging concerned local stakeholders and beneficiaries. The activities were carried out by four consultants that conducted individual interviews and interviews with focus groups (farmers, farmers’ groups and farmers’ umbrella associations).

The methodology

The methodology used for the evaluation utilized the following tools:

Review of project documentation. A detailed review and analysis of existing available project documents was carried out; the documents include progress reports, status reports, minutes of staff meetings, communication memorandums, training course reports and detailed analyses of available monitoring systems: Logical Framework Approach (LFA), project Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) plan, activity reports and other relevant information gathered during the implementation of the project.

Interviews and workshops. The team conducted personal interviews and focus groups with the main members of the project staff, participants, smallholder farmer representatives from the training sessions and farming network and advocacy network members.

Additionally, the team conducted individual face-to-face interviews with relevant stakeholders such as partners and representatives from government offices, including the following:

- Five focus groups from the five districts of Lesotho involved in the project (Table 1), for a total of 121 people (Table 2).
- Personal direct face to face interviews: 17 key informant interviews (Table 3).

In order to ensure full independence and rigour, the methodology was ensured to be in compliance with the OCDE/DAC¹, and it strictly followed DAC definitions.



Meeting with Farmers
Leribe District Farmers Forum

¹ The DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD (1991), Glossary of Terms Used in Evaluation, in 'Methods and Procedures in Aid Evaluation', OECD (1986), and the Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM) Terms; OECD (2000).

The scope of work and main questions

The evaluation should independently review the following:

- The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project.
- The RSDA's comparative advantage in Lesotho is its ability to provide a space for dialogue and collaboration among smallholder farmers' organizations, non-state actors in the agriculture and food sectors and the government of Lesotho.

The conclusions of the summary are presented below. The structure of this report is organized according to the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, cross-cutting issues and partners' performance). An analysis of the comparative advantage of the RSDA in the sector has also been included.

Relevance

There is a general consensus about how the project's interventions were especially relevant to both the umbrella organizations and their constituent associations. Almost all associations that were interviewed agreed on two main conclusions: 1) how the operations and governance of their organizations have improved through the project's interventions and 2) how the associations grew in quality and number of new affiliates as a result of this project.

All associations, either individually or collectively, have recorded improvements in market penetration and the marketing of products.

The DLN-RSDA partnership for the project "Improving living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building" is in line with national development policies and the funding platform strategy. The project was designed to strengthen farmer associations and umbrella organizations so as to improve farmers' access to new technologies, use of political influence to shape sector policies and abilities to participate in decision making in the areas of production, marketing and service delivery.

The project was designed in a conducive way with a good degree of consultation and many validation meetings. The absence of a baseline survey is partially justified because the previous phase of implementation, "Strengthening small scale farmer producer groups in Lesotho", was accepted by the CiSU as a solid base from which to follow up on the progress of the resources allocated to the current project. Nevertheless, from an operational point of view, a tailored survey would have enhanced the functioning of the monitoring and evaluation systems and used the Logic Framework (Annex 1 - Logical Framework and Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix) to its full extent.

Effectiveness

There were positive perceptions of effectiveness among the beneficiary organizations. Some members were able to engage with government authorities in real time on matters that affected their welfare as farmers (e.g., the amendment to Proclamation No.57 of 1952 regulating the importing of livestock). In some instances, they reported that changes in mind set planning are now made on the basis of value chains and market demands (e.g., Leribe farmers using ICT for transactions).

There has been an improvement in the farmers' capacity for lobbying/advocacy and to access markets to sell their products. The project activities have been able to promote the benefits of collectively defending rights and common interests in the dialogue with the government and other stakeholders, and at the same time, expose farmers to tools that facilitate bringing products to local markets.

The formulation of the project shows some conceptual inconsistencies in the logical framework approach, with confusion between specific objectives and result areas. Additionally, the log-frame has not been amended during the implementation phase, resulting in some difficulties in measuring effectiveness and impact. This can easily be corrected through the lessons learned from this project and further training of RSDA staff in qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

Efficiency

Farmers' associations reported that in the past, production was not linked to demand or the availability of suitable places to sell (markets); but through the project and the training received, they have learned to clearly identify their needs and substantially overcome some of them. Evidence of this response is the shift towards the production of different crops instead of focusing on the demand of just one market or buyer. The expanded networking (for example with use of ICT) has allowed for expanded market penetration and more importantly, gives proof of a clear vision on how to make a transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture.

The allocation of funding to the different planned activities has been reasonable and balanced, based on scope of work for the project. Nevertheless, the political instability present during the lifetime of the project and up to now might have an impact on the project. Advocacy and lobbying are particularly difficult when there is a high turnover of civil servants due to political instability.

There are no similar ongoing projects in Lesotho, but some components overlap with activities that are carried out by other NGOs or associations (the LENAFU, the LCN and the EESAF). The project also had some exchanges with a project funded by World Bank (WB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to support smallholder farmers.

Sustainability

Project sustainability requires considering the likeliness of continued net benefits beyond the phase of external funding support, including an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life. There are clear indications that members of the target groups are already empowered and actively engaging in the dialogue.

The activities carried out in the project can be sustained with little additional cost, but they require strong leadership and are not exempt from risks, as related costs would not be taken up by the relevant authorities. Institutional sustainability must be further explored and guaranteed.

Proof of transfer of knowledge should be improved, and twinning tours (e.g., Durban, South Africa) are important but need to be combined and adequately linked to achieve sustainable results. Without a substantial increase of highly technical programme management specialists who are action-oriented, assess the capacities or deliver one-fits-all training and seminars, the technical quality in terms of practical applicability will remain low.

Some training sessions should take place at the local level to facilitate maximum attendance by ordinary members. Also, there must be a clear and deliberate strategy to prepare those who could take the training beyond the few members attending the strategic sessions, which should be recorded on video so that they can easily be used as training resource material in subsequent local level initiatives.

It will be advisable to contemplate an extension of the project to consolidate achievements, especially to enhance leadership and further promote the strong relationships, built by the project between local authorities and the private sector and consequently catalyse local economic development.

Impact

Taking into account what the project has already achieved, it is possible to anticipate that project activities will most likely reach the expected outputs and consequently the specific objectives. The overall impact will have to be assessed after the conclusion of the project and preferably confirmed at least two years after completion so as to test resilience and capacities to adapt to political, economic and environmental contexts.

It will be difficult to translate impact in terms of exact numbers of farmers that experienced change (more participation in dialogue and capacity to access markets) and as a consequence, saw increased income (in terms of actual income and also education and health services).

A number of achievements were cited as evidence of impact, some were related to the building of a classroom or the production of indigenous seeds at the local level and its subsequent escalation to the markets.

Partnerships

In general, the DLN-RSDA partnership is fruitful, and it works according to an agreed upon framework of collaboration with fluency in exchange and timely contributions when required.

Concerning the strategic partnerships in Lesotho, it was noticed that some level of prioritization in the partnership could increase efficiency. This prioritization should be translated into the establishment of clear frameworks for partnership (Memorandum of Understanding or partnership agreements).

Comparative advantage of the RSDA in the sector

During the evaluation it was possible to verify that the RSDA currently has a high level of engagement and dialogue at local, district and national levels. This, together with the fact that the RSDA participates in all the most significant forums related to the relevant thematic areas (civil society, sustainable agriculture, climate change, environment and gender), makes the RSDA a crucial interlocutor and catalyser for change.

These activities can be expanded and translated into the regional context. Project related activities can actually potentiate the connection with other regional actors. The exposure visits and exchanges carried out not only open the way for regional economic integration in the sector, but also to forge alliances with regional civil society actors.



2. Introduction

Political overview

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy that is ruled by a king, who serves as head of state, and is governed by a 33-member Senate and a 120-member National Assembly. It is dominated mainly by the Basotho cultural group (99,7%).

As a small, lower-middle income country, Lesotho has made progress over the past decade in terms of development, but it remains vulnerable to internal and external disturbances. It has built democratic institutions with a good representation of women; in fact, it is ranked first in Africa and eighth in the world in bridging the gender gap. Furthermore, the country has adopted several gender-sensitive laws. Nevertheless, women continue to face challenges due to cultural norms that limit their ability to take advantage of newly attained opportunities.

Lesotho has strong development partnerships (such as those with the European Union, World Bank budget support, and the Millennium Challenge Account) but is unable to leverage these to their full potential due to capacity constraints, weak management and a lack of collaborative approaches.

In the last decades, Lesotho has established policies and legislation conducive to social transformation and has embarked on public sector reform. It has largely overcome disputes arising from the 2007 elections through political dialogue, culminating in the adoption of an improved electoral law in 2011.

In recent times, Lesotho's political climate has been in flux, with the country seeing its first coalition government after the elections held in 2012. An election was held in 2015 and another coalition government was formed after then Prime Minister Thomas Thabane prorogued parliament and advised the King to call fresh elections.

New, early elections took place in June 2017. The two main candidates for the prime minister post were at the centre of the country's politics for many years: one was Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili of the Democratic Congress (DC) party, leader of the government since 2015, and the other was the leader of the All Basotho Convention (ABC) Thomas Thabane, who was prime minister from 2012 to 2015. In 2014, Thabane underwent a military coup and during the last two years he lived in South Africa fearing he would be in danger in Lesotho.

Thomas Thabane's ABC won early elections in June 2017; a coalition government was formed with the Alliance of Democrats, the Basotho National Party and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho.

According to the latest budget speech (20 July 2017), there is evidence that the current government has changed the focus of the budget toward social issues, which indicates a favourable shift for RSDA activities. Nevertheless, the level of commitment in terms of allocations to the agricultural sector remains relatively low (Annex 2 - Budget speech July 2017).



3. Evaluation Methodology

The specific objective of this evaluation was to assess how the expected results of the project have been achieved to date and draw lessons for the remaining implementation period.

The evaluation followed DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance. Thus, a set of questionnaires was prepared to cover all relevant target groups (Annex 3 - Questionnaires). Based on this, the evaluation was focused on the following areas:

1. Assessing effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, impact and cross-cutting issues, and
2. Identifying possible ways forward for the RSDA after the conclusion of the project (no further support to the project from the CiSU is foreseen).

The evaluation also assessed the RSDA's comparative advantage in creating space for dialogue and collaboration among smallholder farmers' organizations, non-state actors in the agriculture and food sector and the government of Lesotho. The analysis was conducted through the application of three different tools: a) crosschecking the information collected through a desk review, b) a profound review of the data available through the existing monitoring tools (indicators of achievement), and finally, c) the comparative analysis of the information collected after the application of the tool box (table 4).

3.1 Timing and deliverables

The in-country mission, started on July 21. The **inception report** was delivered four days after the inception meeting held in Maseru with the RSDA.

The original ToR were reviewed with the RSDA and some structural changes were agreed upon with the client regarding the scope of work. The changes mainly concerned budget constraints and the availability of resources for a timely submission of the deliverables.

The suggested changes included:

1. Given the limited availability of resources, a readjustment of the ToR to remove the questions related to the analysis of the DLN-RSDA partnership from the evaluation.
2. The RSDA agreed with the proposed revision of the timetable as follows:
 - Inception Report - 21 July 2017
 - Draft Final Report - 7 August 2017
 - Receive Comments - 21 August 2017
 - Final Report - 28 August 2017

Interviews with relevant stakeholders and the field mission

Targets groups. The methodological tools were applied to five (5) umbrella organizations, in each of the five districts covered by the project.

Table 1. Target area and population covered by the project

District	Area (Km2)	Population ⁽¹⁾	N° of CCs
Mafeteng	2,119 (7%)	192,621 (10%)	12
Leribe	2,820 (9%)	147,851 (8%)	18
Berea	2,222 (7%)	250,006 (13%)	10
Maseru	4,279 (14%)	431,998 (23%)	20
Mohale's Hoek	3,530 (11%)	176,928 (9%)	14
Lesotho	30,355	1,880,661	128

⁽¹⁾ From preliminary results of the 2006 Lesotho Population and Housing Census.

These organizations included business and farmer associations. The assessment was structured into three parts:

1. The first part of the assessment was based on a general **assessment of the collectives** and their constituent associations in order to establish the baseline for analysing project interventions.
2. The second part of the assessment was based on **focus group discussions** (Table 2) guided by the methodological tools designed to analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the project's interventions.
3. The third component was composed of the **key informant interviews** (Table 3) with district agricultural officers (DAO), farmers' unions, the Ministry of Small Business, private foundations, the media and other key stakeholders (including RSDA officers).

The three sources were triangulated to ensure the reliability of information sources and consistency of responses.

The assessment covered:

- Five focus groups from the five districts of Lesotho involved in the project (Table 1), for a total of 121 people (Table 3).
- Personal direct face to face interviews: 17 key informant interviews (Table 2).

Table 2. **Focus Groups - Umbrella Associations Evaluate**

Num.	Name of Association	Num. of People
1	Berea Business Forum (BBF)	25
2	Maseru Agricultural District Association (MADAU)	23
3	Majantja Temong farmers Association (MTFA)	20
4	Letlotlo-la-Ribaneng le 'Masemousu	25
5	Leribe District Farmers Forum	28

Table 3. **Key Informant Interviews**

Num.	Key Informant	Position & Institution
1	Mr Tšenoli	Board Chairperson - Maaparakobo Lesotho Dairy Farmers Association
2	Mrs Phakoe	Chairperson - Eastern and Southern Africa Farmers Forum (ESAFF)
3	Mr. Motsau Khuele	CEO - Lesotho National Farmers Union LENAFU
4	Mr. Khotsolepheare	Value Chain Specialist - Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU)
5	Mr T. Matla	Chief Editor - SILO Magazine
6	Mr S. Motsamai	Director - Lesotho council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN)
7	Mr T. Qhezi	CEO - Private Sector Foundation
8	Mr. Lekhoe Makhate	Director of Marketing - Ministry of Small Businesses (Maseru)
9	Mr. Matela Matsoetlane	Marketing Manager - Ministry of Small Businesses (Maseru)
10	Mr. Tsiu Mphana	District Agriculture Officer (DAO) Berea District
11	Mr. Simon Leluma Bereng	District Agriculture Officer (DAO) Maseru
12	Mr. Thabang Chabeli DEO	DEO (District Extension Officer) Maseru
13	Mr. Makau	District Agriculture Officer (DAO) Leribe
14	Mrs. Mampho Thulo	Managing Director - Rural Self-Help Development Association
15	Mrs. Lineo Lekhanya	Project Manager - Rural Self-help Development Association
16	Mr. Anders Hedegaard	Project Responsible - Denmark Lesotho Network
17	Mr. Nis Skau	Board Member - Denmark Lesotho Network

The debriefing was held on 26 July 2017, when the team displayed the main conclusions (opportunities and challenges) that emerged from the desk review and interviews carried out by the consultants. Annex 6 provides the minutes of the inception and debriefing meetings as well as a detailed description of the issues discussed.

The evaluation team agreed that formal comments would be transmitted in writing before 21 August. Taking into account the delays, the final report was submitted in mid-August 2017.

3.2 Evaluation Strategy

A set of indicative evaluation questions was developed around the project's objectives and results indicators. These questions were based on the methodological framework used to address the 5 standard OECD/DAC² criteria - **1) relevance, 2) efficiency, 3) effectiveness, 4) impact** and **5) sustainability** - and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) guideline manual³ - **6) cross-cutting issues** and **7) partnerships' performance**. Also, based on these questionnaires (Annex 3), a set of strategic options for the RSDA after the conclusion of the project were analysed.

The evaluation exercise was focused on the two specific objectives defined in the project proposal:

- **Specific objective 1 (SO1):** A functional national level farmer platform and farmer networks from 5 districts are well organised and engage with private sector, local Government and Government on priorities and policies that create an enabling environment for sustainably increasing smallholder farm income, food and nutrition security.
- **Specific objective 2 (SO2):** At least 1000 smallholder farmers are exposed and demonstrate viable agricultural practices, benefit from market linkages and are able to graduate from subsistence farming to semi-commercial status (strategic service delivery).

Furthermore, the comparative value added of the RSDA in the sector was examined.

Evaluation process

The evaluation was conducted through a participatory, inclusive and shared learning process, engaging concerned local stakeholders and beneficiaries as much as possible.

This evaluation was a proactive co-thinking exercise based on identifying good practices in a way that would encourage lesson learning, but also recognize that each district, local government and smallholder farmer association is different and that it is not possible to transplant the best practice from one situation to another without a careful assessment of the problems being faced in each situation.

Combination of qualitative methods:

- a) **Qualitative methods:** in-depth personal interviews, focus groups, observations, stakeholder analyses, meetings with key project stakeholders, review of existing documents. This included some assessment of the degree of success in achieving outputs, expected outcomes and impact, as well as consultation on the more complex processes and issues that may determine whether the expected results were achieved.
- b) **Triangulation of various methodologies:** the triangulation of information was the main technique for making an informed judgment, following the rationale of the assessment that was agreed upon at the inception phase.

Stakeholders, target groups and ultimate beneficiaries

The target area of the evaluation of the project "Improving living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building" was focused on the five western districts of Lesotho: Mafeteng, Leribe, Berea, Maseru and Mohale's Hoek. (Table 1)

²The DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD (1991), Glossary of Terms Used in Evaluation, in 'Methods and Procedures in Aid Evaluation', OECD (1986), and the Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM) Terms; OECD (2000).

³Evaluation Manual. (2015). Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD; Retrieved from <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/bfec198c-62fd-46ff-abae-285d0e0709d6>

The primary and secondary target groups as well as the implementing partners to be included in the evaluation exercise were refined at the inception, as follows:

Primary target group: Smallholder farmers, smallholder farmer groups and smallholder farmer groups' umbrella organizations. The latter two include district-level organizations of smallholder farmer groups in Mafeteng, Leribe, Berea, Maseru, and Mohale's Hoek and national-level umbrellas such as the Lesotho National Farmer Union (LENAFU), the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmer Forum (ESAFF) and the National Dairy Umbrella Association.

Secondary target group: Local governments in the districts, local chiefs and leaders, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Small Businesses, the Private Sector Foundation and the media.

Discussion and adjustment of evaluation questions

A set of evaluation questions (EQs) was defined in the ToR grouped under the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. The questions were further detailed, and several questionnaires (Annex 3) were developed according to the different targets.

In addition to the evaluation approach and methodology outlined in the ToR (field visits, focus group discussions, etc.), in-depth interviews with project staff were conducted to provide evidence. A summary of the focus groups and interviews conducted is in Table 2 & 3.

At the end of the field missions, a **debriefing was held with the RSDA in order to present preliminary findings**. The meeting could not be attended by all relevant stakeholders due to time and logistic constraints. The debriefing took place on 26 July 2017 at the RSDA (Annex 4- Minutes of meeting).

The process included the use of several data collection tools (Table 4) and the information obtained was cross-checked to guarantee coherence.



Layers Inside the Poultry House
Berea Business Forum

Table 4. **Data collection tools**

Data collection Tool	Description
Desk review	Project document, status reports, minutes of staff meetings, skype meeting between DLN and RSDA, training course reports, the monitoring systems: LFA, Project M&E plan, activity reports and other relevant information gathered during project implementation. During this phase also documents providing information on Country and Sector Context were consulted
Focus groups	Focused discussions with Farmers Umbrella Organizations and Farmers, Committees (5 Districts) were undertaken to obtain insights to get collective view of the participants on how RSDA investment had promote advocacy / lobbying and exposure to transition to commercial agriculture
Key Informant Interviews	<p>Specific information was obtained through interviews to relevant stakeholders involved: Different sets of questions and checklists had been prepared for the different group of actors/stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Small Businesses; • RSDA • LCN, LENAFU, PFL, NDA and ESAAF, • DLN • SILO magazine

The methodology used by the team was based on the following principles:

1. A participatory approach throughout the review process.
2. A systematic and coherent analysis of the political, institutional, financial and socio-economic factors that influenced the support for and impact of the implementation.
3. Assessment of the implementation opportunities and challenges facing the RSDA.

4. Project Intervention Logic

The present chapter was put together considering the data presented in the initial proposal (the DLN-RSDA proposal submitted to the CiSU), the annual status reports submitted to the CiSU (covering the period 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2016) and an updated narrative report (1 January to 30 June 2017) all cross-checked with information collected in the interviews (Annex 7). For reference, the aforementioned reports are included in Annex 5 – Status report 2016 and 1 Semester 2017 report.

Based on the RSDA's historical experience with strengthening farmers' capacities, the key idea for this project was to focus on strengthening engagement and the capacity for networking between farmers, the private sector and the government in order to fortify governance. The project was formulated as the third phase of previous interventions implemented by the DLN-RSDA partnership and funded by the CiSU.

The discussions among partners, based on previous experience, concluded with the formulation and approval of the project **“Improving living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building”**. The initial duration of the project was set to three years, from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018, and the financial allocation committed for implementation was €443,587.33.

Financial Coherence

Approximately 40% of budget allocations went to advocacy, 40% to capacity building and 20% to strategic services delivery. The three lines of support are complementary and together were expected to potentiate achievement of the results.

The design of the implementation focused on “enabling the small-holder farmers' associations to monitor and evaluate the government strategies”. This strategic approach was operationalized through two main sets of actions: 1) generating policy dialogue and 2) supporting farmers and encouraging them to graduate from subsistence to semi-commercial farming.

The implementation of the intervention strategy included the following:

1. Facilitating and supporting national- and district-level farmers' platforms.
2. Helping with the selection of “champions” among farmers and holding training sessions for them and the committees.
3. Generating content through policy analysis, programme and priority analyses, public budget tracking and identifying entry points for supporting dialogue and engagement.
4. Informing and educating the smallholder farmers about context and policy processes as well as the relevant government structures for engaging.
5. Evidence gathering through practical research—people's voices and demonstration of good practices and technologies for increasing productivity and market linkages.
6. Supporting actual farmers' engagement with government and national stakeholders.
7. Supporting actual farmers' engagement with businesses and the private sector in terms of production and markets.
8. Monitoring, midterm evaluation and end of project external evaluation.

The strategy of implementation was aligned with Lesotho's development policies, the CiSU's project support guidelines and the vision of the DLN-RSDA partnership.

From the desk review, status reports and interviews conducted, the implementation of the project has adhered to the initial timeline without major modifications. It has to be mentioned that despite the political instability and its impact on advocacy/lobbying activities, the project has managed to adapt to and overcome the challenges it has faced.

It was noted and highlighted that less than 20% of the budget was allocated to strategic service delivery (supporting local fundraising and demonstrating agricultural technologies) as was expected, based on the previous phase.

Table 5. **Budget**

	Outputs	DKK 2015-2018 (1,370,006)	Achievements Jan- July 2017
1.1	By 2018, RSDA has trained at least 80 farmers , and 8 umbrellas/ networks (Berea, Leribe, Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's hoek) on good governance Leadership, policy advocacy and public budget processes.	182,572	Activities completed in 2016
1.2	By 2017, RSDA has informed and trained farmers' groups/ networks on the Food Security and other policies that directly affect production, marketing of agriculture products.	151,474	Ongoing activities
1.3	A national and District platform/fora for farmers is supported which enables them to forge common policy positions in support of 5 District forum and 8 umbrellas.	273,26	On going activities
1.4	GOL Policy and gap analysis carried out as per need to inform advocacy and monitoring of policy implementation and budget tracking supported	178,75	On going activities
1.5	Farmers Advocate and Lobby with GOL on policy, priorities and market and monitor policy implementation	48,75	On going activities
2.1	Training and mentoring services to the umbrella associations to have sustainable production methods and access to finance	155,6	On going activities
2.2	National and District platforms/commodity associations engage with private sector and service providers on priorities, market linkages and business services	185,25	On going activities
2.3	Conduct Staff monthly project progress meetings	39	On going activities

See Annex 5 for the whole work plan Implementation Reporting for the period January - July 2017

5. Evaluation results

According to the proposed evaluation methodology, this section displays the current progress of the project implementation. The analysis was carried out according to DAC criteria and the IFAD evaluation manual.

These results are based on the data and information collected during interviews (Annex 7 – Questionnaires with answers), field visits and documentary research (Annex 8).

The main conclusion of the general evaluation in this section is that the status of the project should be positively assessed, it is on track and the remaining time for implementation should be dedicated to strengthening data collection and preparing for phasing out.

5.1 Relevance

The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of the project design and coherence with respect to achieving its objectives. An assessment should also be made of whether objectives and the design address inequality, for example, by assessing the relevance of the targeting strategies adopted.

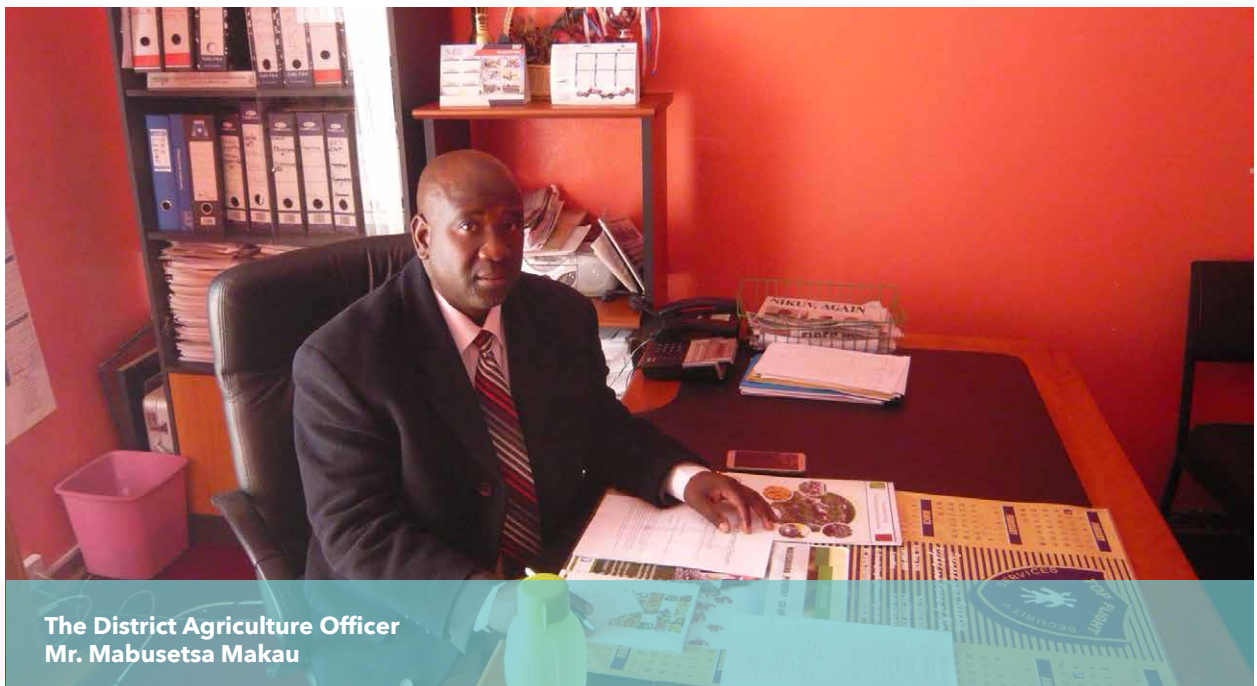
Evaluation Criteria

Analysis of the consistency of the overall design, aims and objectives of the DLN-RSDA project with:

- 1. Lesotho's national development policies,**
- 2. CiSU strategy, and**
- 3. DLN-RSDA partnership strategy.**

The government of Lesotho's (GoL) long term vision for economic and social development is set out in Lesotho's Vision 2020, the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) (2012/13-2016/17) as well as the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP). The overall economic objective of the GoL is to increase economic growth towards a sustainable level of 6 to 7 percent per annum. This growth is expected to lead to employment generation, food security, poverty reduction and wealth creation so as to improve the quality of life for the Basotho people. In the past decade (2000-2010), the economy grew at an annual rate of 4 percent and hence did not rise to the desired optimal growth rate of between 6 and 7 percent.

In order to successfully achieve these objectives, national efforts would require strong coordination, partnerships and cooperation between the government and the private sector, farmers, traders, entrepreneurs, public transport providers, employers, teachers, workers, academics, young people and students.



The District Agriculture Officer
Mr. Mabusetso Makau

At the same time, more than 80% of the agriculture sector is represented by smallholder farmers living in remote rural areas with scarce access to infrastructure and public services. The main problems that affect these farmers can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Weak farmer networks and associations,
2. Government policies that are not inclusive and are not smallholder-farmer-friendly,
3. Low and poor quality agricultural production, and
4. Limited understanding and knowledge of how the market works and very limited market linkages in Lesotho.

The common denominators identified include a limited knowledge of rights-based advocacy and a lack of access to information and knowledge sharing among the farmers' groups, local government and service providers. Additionally, there is limited access to advice on technological and farming techniques.

The CiSU's strategy (2014-2017)⁵ highlights a vision that "strong popular modes of organization and communities work to secure people's rights, promote global justice and combat the causes of poverty". This is to be achieved by serving as a platform for exchanging experiences and sharing knowledge (capacity building, mutual learning and the promotion of innovative thinking strengthen popular participation in development cooperation).

The DLN-RSDA partnership for the project "Improving living conditions and position of the Lesotho smallholder farmers in society through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building" is fully **aligned and consistent** with the above national development policies and the funding platform strategy. The actions proposed for the project are **highly relevant**, and the project was designed to strengthen the farmer associations and umbrella organizations so as to mobilize farmers' access to new technologies, use of political influence to shape sector policies and participate in decision making in the areas of production, marketing and service delivery.

⁵ CiSU's STRATEGY 2014 - 2017 (Civil society in development - together for global justice). Retrieved from <http://www.cisu.dk/eng>

Evaluation Criteria

Analysis of the relevance and appropriateness of the design of the project, level of stakeholder involvement, logical framework and monitoring and evaluation systems.

The project formulation was mainly conducted by the RSDA and was routed on the two previous phases implemented in consultations and partnership with the DLN and beneficiaries. Activities for designing the project included participatory rural assessments, problem trees, objective trees, Logical Framework Analyses and were aligned with the CiSU's strategic approach for implementation. The formulation was complemented in early and subsequent phases with technical field visits by the DLN and technical advice from a group of CiSU experts.

The preparatory process started when the DLN project group visited the RSDA in February 2014 and was completed with a joint finalization mission in October 2014. Simultaneously, a formulation meeting with smallholder farmers was conducted in order to prioritize the areas of intervention: 1) "viable agricultural practices and favourable market linkages", 2) "one farmers' voice via farmer net-work" and 3) "moving government and local governments on priorities and policies". The three identified areas were validated in subsequent meetings with representatives from the UNDP, FAO, Ministries of Trade, Agriculture and Social Development, and the five participating districts. The LFA monitoring and evaluation matrices are included in Annex 1.

The formulation of the project ensures **high levels of relevance**, following a participatory approach and responding directly to the diagnoses and challenges suggested by beneficiaries. The process was carried out in a conducive way, with extended participation of stakeholders. Furthermore, the identified areas of action coincide with the main problems identified by the smallholder farmers in Lesotho.

Recommendations for improving relevance.

Nevertheless, the LFA and related monitoring and evaluation systems could be improved with the following actions:

- 1. Baseline survey:** This was not conducted since it was not included in the budget. The CiSU accepted the integration of the data from the last report from the previous phase "Strengthening small scale farmer producer groups in Lesotho" as reference data. If possible, consolidate with relevant data from the Small Agriculture Development Project (SADP) funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the World Bank (WB). It would be valuable for the project to include further indicators of achievement and sources of information by cross-checking this data with the final report on the previous phase.
- 2. Structure of the LFA:** The phrasing of results was not done according to standards, some indicators seem to be associated with specific objectives instead of results, the number of indicators per specific objective are quite high and the cost per activity is missing.
- 3. Monitoring and Evaluation:** The design of the monitoring and evaluation systems could be improved and should be done jointly with the DLN. The exercise should seek to integrate the most relevant stories (number, frequency and location) into the monitoring and evaluation matrix considering the two specific objectives (changes highlighted in stories can be related to one or both specific objectives). Produce analysis (extract trends or unusual results) of stories to highlight the influence of the outputs in the pursuit of the specific objectives of the project.

Evaluation Criteria

The stakeholders' feedback on the status of the implementation of the project ensures the relevance of actions.

There is a general consensus that the project's interventions were **most relevant** to the situation and circumstances of both the umbrella organizations and their constituent associations. Almost all associations acknowledged that the operations and governance of their organizations have improved and the associations grew in quality and number of new affiliates. All associations individually or collectively have recorded improvements in the marketing of products and in market penetration.

There is a consensus that prior to the RSDA project, associations were struggling because of a lack of knowledge on good governance and management practices. The morale of members was low and many associations were on the brink of collapse, but the RSDA contributed to their revitalization. The associations now reportedly have money in the banks and the use of money is accounted for in a transparent manner. This is evidence of understanding and clarity about governance.

The evaluation has collected enough evidence, through interviews and focus groups.

“The project is relevant and comes at the right moment. The farmers are now involved and should be further involved in all discussions and debating forums, drafting and approving policies related to agriculture.”

**Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing, 20 July 2017.
(Annex 7- section II)**

The visible consequence is a significant improvement of livelihoods, e.g., increased sales leading to improved income and the means to meet costs of living. There is a direct positive correlation between the capacity building actions implemented by the RSDA and the improvement of farmers' livelihoods.

There is evidence that the communication about the activities and link to the expected results and specific objectives of the project was not sufficient at all times. Many of those interviewed could not establish a relationship between activities at certain moments and the expectations as per the project schedule.

The Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing (interview in Annex 7, section II) recognized the relevance of the project's actions and the timing of the project in strengthening farmers' lobbying/advocacy capacities and their access to markets (producing more and better).

“Our way of thinking has completely changed from the training we received from this project. We used to practice subsistence farming but now we know farming should be a business!

I know now that I should always have a stock of chickens so I always have supply available. While in the past I produced when I felt it was convenient to me, now I have learned to produce for business”

**Berea Business Forum Management Committee, 19 July 2017
(Annex 7- section)**

5.2 Effectiveness

The extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Evaluation Criteria

Extent to which the project improved farmers’ capacity for lobbying/advocacy and access to markets.

As a general introductory remark, there has been an improvement in the farmers’ capacity for lobbying/advocacy and ability to access markets to sell their products.

A policy and gap analysis was carried out, and the gaps and challenges for each agricultural sector in their respective districts, as well as their needs and how they are organized were identified. Farmers, through their representatives, demanded inclusive planning and implementation of government programmes.

An example of the advocacy/lobbying activities was the submission of common positions to the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, a range of stakeholders and after to both the lower and higher (Senate) House of the Lesotho Parliament to amend Proclamation No.57 of 1952 regulating livestock imports. The result was that for the first time, a livestock auction with beef animals was demonstrated at the national level, and farmers have learned and wish to see them implemented in their districts.

The farmers have been exposed to financial institutions, new agricultural technology, agriculture auction brokers, input suppliers and information through regional exposure visits and agriculture expositions. Feedback on interactions with the private sector was received from Silo, the Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho, the LCN and the LENAUFU.

“Meeting people from other countries in order to learn different know-how was crucial for achieving other goals of the project.”

Eastern and Southern Africa Farmers Forum (ESAFF), 19 July 2017
(Annex 7- section I)

The targeted farmers have been progressively trained and exposed to new and viable agricultural practices, and they benefit from market linkages through which they should be able to make the transition from subsistence farming to semi-commercial status. The project has effectively delivered training in the relevant fields of accessing national funding (e.g., in the Mafeteng District, four umbrella associations reported to have accessed government funding), finance and reporting (farmers' associations opened bank accounts and jointly handle marketing, use of ICT in business, and market analysis).

Evaluation Criteria

SMART-level (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound) programme results in foreseen areas.

The log-frame of the project, amended following the advice from the CiSU, presents a number of inconsistencies that make it difficult to use this tool to its full extent:

1. The indicators don't have baselines which makes measuring impact difficult. During the design phase, farmers were introduced to the "most significant change questionnaire" methodology.
2. There is a lack of clarity between specific objective indicators, outputs and activities.
3. Some indicators are too weak to be substantive indicators of achievement ("number of dialogue meetings").
4. Most indicators are not impact indicators but process-related outputs and are thus not the most appropriate.

The logical framework shows some lack of conceptual understanding of the logical framework approach, confusing specific objectives and result areas. Additionally, the log-frame was not amended during the pre-award phase resulting in difficulties in measuring impact.

Evaluation Criteria

Effectiveness-related achievements of project implementation (monitoring systems and stakeholders).

The perception of effectiveness from the point of view of the beneficiary organizations was evident. Incidents were cited where members were able to engage with government authorities in real time on matters that affect their welfare as farmers. In some instances, they reported a change in mind set where planning is now made on the basis of value chains and market demands.

The RSDA has linked farmers' groups with media, as in the case of the Silo Magazine which seeks to advance the cause of farmers' plans and objectives by communication with the world beyond themselves. Analysis further revealed that associations are at least in a position to leverage the Trade Fare facility as a market outlet for each of the five beneficiary associations. According to the findings, only in Maseru has this not happened, but some steps are being taken to make it happen soon.

Nevertheless, some members advanced views arguing that such empowerments have not trickled down to local groups but instead have remained at higher levels. It was apparent in discussions that communications are not effective between the umbrella leadership structures and the general membership.

From the **interviews conducted** (annex 7) it was possible to extract views on the project's achievements. These have been grouped to transmit common perceptions on the achievements. A synthesis would be that there is a clear and consistent aspiration for RSDA beneficiaries and partners to make the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture. The activities of the project on advocacy, lobbying, partnership building, networking and linking production to marketing were instrumental in initiating and motivating this aspiration.

“The project has facilitated the networking, the consultations and the connection of our members with the markets. With the Fresh Produce Market’ and the exposure visits, the smallholder farmers and small businesses have learned where the markets are placed and that they can work together.”

Private Sector Foundation Lesotho (PSFL), 20 July 2017
(Annex 7- section I)

In the following table, a summary of the project status at the results level is presented:

Table 6. **Project achievements at specific objectives level**

<p>Specific Objective 1 (SO1) A functional national level farmer platform and farmer networks from 5 districts are well organised and engage with private sector, local Government and Government on priorities and policies that create an enabling environment for sustainably increasing smallholder farm income, food and nutrition security</p>	
Specific Objective 1 Indicators	Achievements
<p>SO1.I1 Common policy positions documented for advocacy and lobbying work informed by policy and gap analysis.</p>	<p>On track and aligned to national public budget processes. Policy and Gap analysis done through desk review and information sharing meetings.</p> <p>Active participation in the CAADP and MALABO declaration processes. RSDA selected to lead the MALABO declaration peer review report to be presented by Lesotho Head of State in January 2018</p>
<p>SO1.I2 Feedback mechanisms established between farmers, Government and national stakeholders.</p>	<p>On track. Common position has been presented to Minister of Agriculture & Food Security and wider stakeholders through the National Agricultural Silo expo and the NGO week (2016);</p> <p>Partnership agreement signed for the Silo expo 2017;</p> <p>3 National level meetings were held in Maseru. Participants included 3 farmers per district for 5 districts. Two meetings held for reporting and one for analysis of GOL budget 2017/2018.</p> <p>86 Farmers engaged with Ministry of Small Businesses through event organized jointly by RSDA on the 2017/2018 budget perspectives.</p>
<p>SO1.I3 Feedback mechanisms are established between farmers and private sector</p>	<p>"On track. So far, farmers have engaged with private sector and other service providers through National and South Africa agric. expos 2015 and 2016.</p> <p>Meetings and involvement with Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho were initiated. The organization is keen to facilitate engagement of its member corporates with farmers' organizations, in this regard visit to Durban Fresh Produce Market has been co-facilitated for farmers, Government representatives and the Silo Magazine</p> <p>Partnership agreement signed for the Silo expo 2017.</p>

Table 6. **Project achievements at specific objectives level**

Specific objective 2 (SO2): At least 1000 smallholder farmers are exposed and demonstrate viable agricultural practices, benefit from market linkages and are able to graduate from subsistence farming to semi-commercial status (strategic service delivery).	
Specific Objective 2 Indicators	Achievements
SO2.I1 Participating districts have strong and proactive smallholder farmer networks/associations which are able to take common policy positions	On track. 5 District farmer platforms is now functioning (half Lesotho), have functional committees have agreed to meet on a regular basis. 3 National level meetings were held in Maseru.
SO2.I2 Farmers umbrellas are able to access finance (grants, local resource mobilization and voluntary savings and lending schemes) to small holder farmers umbrella organizations/associations	On track. Out of 13 farmers' organisations which were supported by the project to apply for Government grants, 4 were able to access the grants. Local resource mobilization is by farmers' umbrellas and district farmers Forum is continuing at different levels. Some have opened Bank accounts (Leribe) and others decided to be managed by community level;
SO2.I3 RSDA Farmers' Learning Centre has demonstrated, documented and disseminated training resource materials on new innovative agriculture technologies to smallholder farmers	On track. Electricity was installed in the Centre. Currently the facility it's mainly used for demonstration and promotion of indigenous chicken. The center distributes more than 16,000 chickens and 5000 fertile eggs annually to smallholder farmers who want to semi-commercialize using indigenous chicken annually
SO2.I4 Farmers' groups/networks are informed on Food security policy and other policies that directly affect production and marketing.	Farmers were informed on the Government Coalition Agreement, National Strategic plan, signed CAADP Compact and the 2015/16 and 2016/17 public budget; Farmers representatives engaged in the discussions with GOL concerning 2017/2018 budget perspectives for the sector;
SO2.I5 Targeted market analysis disseminated to stakeholders	The challenges and opportunities on both production and respective marketing of farmers' produce was highlighted in the report prepared by the GOL in 2016. In 2017 was used to disseminate the results of the study to the districts.
SO2.I6 Umbrella organisations/Associations engage with private sector and other service providers to access new markets.	Through dialogue meetings and participation in agriculture expos in Lesotho and South Africa, farmers' reps have been exposed to new products, have built networks and have access to agriculture Information. Meetings and involvement with Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho were initiated and produced effective results.

5.3 Efficiency

A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.

Evaluation Criteria

Extent to which the project is adequately funded in order to be able to achieve the proposed objectives and value for the money.

The funding is adequate for the project to achieve its objectives. Nevertheless, the political instability that characterized the lifetime of the project might have an impact on the project and in particular lobbying/advocacy activities.

The project's budget was reviewed to reallocate resources to reinforce the budget line for RSDA staff. This change was duly justified (low initial budget, increased cost of living and the pulling out of prospective support from donors due to the instable political environment).

It is important to note that the project has made substantial efforts in the face of significant context changes.

There are really no similar projects, but some components coincide with activities that are carried out by other NGOs and associations. The most relevant are the LENAFU, the LCN and the EESAF. The project also had some synergies and exchanges with a project funded by the World Bank (WB) and the IFAD for supporting smallholder farmers with finances. The nature of the project (lobbying, advocacy and demonstration projects) means that the ratio between the total cost and the cost of staff is high, as investments in infrastructure are small.

Evaluation Criteria

Stakeholders' feedback on the status of the project implementation with regard to efficiency.

Efficiency assesses the optimal use of limited resources to achieve maximum good. Associations have conveyed during interviews a general satisfaction with the high level of efficiency. Farmers report that the training they have received has resulted in a substantial positive impact. By not focusing on one market and through networking, farmers have expanded market penetration, and more importantly they have a clear vision of how to make a transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture.

“We used to produce without any idea of where to sell the products. From the training received, the farmers have learned to explore the market at different levels of society. Networking has helped us to reach different markets, not focusing only on one market.”

**Berea Business Forum Farmers Representatives, 19 July 2017
(Annex 7- section I)**

Almost all associations pleaded ignorance of the project budget. This notwithstanding, some groups were able to make useful comparisons with other projects from the past and present. There is a perception that other projects used more money than the RSDA but with reportedly much less sustainable achievements. In one group they asserted that these other associations are giving fish to farmers and households whereas the RSDA is teaching farmers and households how to fish. Even though the RSDA may be seen to be spending less comparatively, their impact is much greater because of the more sustainable outputs that have resulted.

5.4 Sustainability

The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the life of the project.

Evaluation Criteria

Sustainability of interventions undertaken during the programme and room for replication and improvement.

How the project should be mainstreamed with other policy support processes at the country level, beyond the current project.

First of all, the fact that the project itself was conceived and thought as an exit strategy since its implementation coincides with the third phase of a sequence of projects implemented by the DLN-RSDA partnership with CiSU funding must be considered.

The likelihood for project sustainability is low, but there are some indications that some members of the targeted groups are already empowered and actively engaging in dialogue.

The project is, according to farmers, strengthening the capacity of targeted farmers and umbrella organizations in lobbying and advocacy. These interventions can be sustained with few costs but need strong leadership. However, the chances for the activities linked to opening up the local democratic space to continue after the project ends are not exempt from risks, as the related costs would not be taken up by the relevant authorities. Institutional sustainability must be further explored and guaranteed.

Recommendation: Proof of transfer of knowledge should be improved and exposure visits (Durban, South Africa) are important but need to be combined and adequately linked to achieve sustainable results. Without a substantial increase of highly technical programme management specialists who are action-oriented and not required to yet again write history, assess the capacities or deliver one-fits-all training and seminars, the technical quality in terms of practical applicability will remain low. This is a challenge for the project but also an opportunity for the RSDA, as they have the exact profile and experience to provide training for trainers. A more in depth analysis is needed to assess the qualities and qualifications of the human resources involved in the process (this analysis goes over and above the ToR of the evaluation).

Recommendation: To ensure full project sustainability, it is advisable to consider a year extension to provide the opportunity to phase out and to consolidate the gains that have already been made, especially to the links that have been made between local authorities and the private sector and consequently to promote local economic development.

Evaluation Criteria

Stakeholders' feedback on the status of project implementation with regard to sustainability.

There was an emerging sense of confidence that certain interventions would be sustainable even when the project is terminated next year. Farmers proudly asserted that some of the technologies, like the key hole and conservation agriculture technologies would be permanent. Some, especially in Ribaneng, Masemousu and Mohale's Hoek, reported that the knowledge of selecting seeds from the harvest was a capacity that would stay with them indefinitely.

“We have learned to work in partnerships.”

**Maseru Agricultural District Association,
Mangement Committee, 20 July 2017 (Annex 7- section I)**

Associations also felt strongly about the capacity building received for advocacy and lobbying. They provided evidence of their ability to stand for their rights in any forum and to argue and promote their interest and welfare before anybody. An interesting piece of evidence was presented in Ribaneng when members of the association successfully intervened to resolve a conflict between taxi companies and bus companies regarding the transport routes from Ribaneng to Maseru. The members proudly reported how they used the conflict management skills they had acquired from the project intervention to manage and resolve the conflict. They were also quick to point out that this knowledge and capacity would stay with them indefinitely.



**Piggery project by Leribe Piggery Association
(member of Leribe District)**

Nevertheless, some aspects of the training did not seem to be sustainable. There was an apparent imbalance in the capacity and knowledge of the few members that were trained, especially committee members, and this failed to trickle down to the general membership. Also mentioned as a risk was the potential loss of trained individuals as new untrained members are elected into office.

5.5 Impact

Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions.

Evaluation Criteria

Real and prospective impact of the successful implementation of the project.

Despite the lack of a baseline for comparison, this project, upon its completion, will most likely be considered to have met the specific objectives that were outlined. Its impact will have to be assessed after the conclusion of the project and confirmed preferably at least two years after completion so as to test resilience and abilities to adapt to changing contexts (political, economic and environmental).

Since the project doesn't have a clear quantitative baseline, it will be difficult to translate impact in terms of exact numbers of farmers that experienced change (more participation in dialogue and capacity to access markets) and as a consequence, their increased incomes (more income, education and health services).

In general, the status of the project can be assessed as being on track, and the remaining time for implementation should be dedicated to strengthening data collection and preparing for phasing out.

Evaluation Criteria

Stakeholders' feedback on the status of project implementation with regard to sustainability.

A number of achievements were presented as evidence of impact at the umbrella level and below. Nevertheless, the impact analysis would be inaccurate at this point in time as the project has still not concluded. The trend of the achievements in terms of effectiveness indicate the possible sustainability of the results.

At this point, efforts should be concentrated on data collection and preparations for phasing out.

5.6 Performance of partners

Analysis of the partnership relations in terms of the project's objectives and the agreed feedback according to the systems and procedures in place.

Evaluation Criteria

The partnership between the RSDA and the DLN.

According to the information collected, both organizations consider the partnership to be solid, and there was a reference to the fact that the expectations of both partners have always been met during the last 15 years of the partnership.

It was highlighted that it was real partnership in which both organizations have contributed equally to achieving their common set of goals.

The DLN expressed concern over the dependence of the RSDA on project budgets and possible consequences if it were eventually necessary to decrease or expand the team at different levels (management, technical and operational). At same time, the DLN indicated that the RSDA Board was informed of the constraints and was looking into options for overcoming that specific challenge.

Evaluation Criteria

Partnerships between the RSDA and other actors in Lesotho.

The RSDA has maintained partnerships (most of them not formalized on paper) with several actors in Lesotho and in the sector (the LCN, the LENAFU, the ESAAF, the PSFL and others) with the objective of maximizing and amplifying the reach of RSDA activities.

It was noted that even if some were relevant partnerships, the framework of the partnership was not clearly set. Meaning that an actual Memorandum of Understanding wasn't signed and consequently detailed strategies for the partnership were not set or defined.

As the nature of the project is directly related to lobbying and advocacy and according to the interviews the ambition of the RSDA was to pursue a similar line of action, it is advisable to prioritize and strengthen partnerships that can mutually maximize results. It was noticed during the interviews that the LENAFU was rather conservative in relation to the level and extension of the activities to be carried out under lobbying and advocacy. The evaluation team considers that this difference between the RSDA and the LENAFU could interfere with the partnership if there is a solid and clear framework of collaboration.

The political instability in Lesotho can still affect the work of organizations like the RSDA and the recommendation is to foster the definition of the partnership agreements.

“The revision of the policies could be improved by being inclusive and with the adoption of the motto ‘no farmer no life and nothing for farmers without farmers!’”

Maseru Agricultural District Association,
Farmers Representative, 20 July 2017 (Annex 7- section I)



6. Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

To contextualize the findings of the evaluation, we would like to make reference to the main strategy of the project design and implementation. The DLN-RSDA partnership is focused on experience from previous projects for strengthening smallholder farmers and analyses of agriculture and food security policies. The main lines of action were based on the continuous support of networking and engagement between farmers, the private sector and the government on policy processes, priorities and required capacity support.

The RSDA, as with many other non-profit organizations, is suffering from the change in paradigm in the development and cooperation sector in light of the recent worldwide economic crisis, shifting maps of power, increasing competition for resources and the responses found to address these challenges. One direct consequence of the adopted strategies was a dramatic cut in the budget lines related to aid delivery.

At the moment, the RSDA is extremely dependent on externally funded projects, and this fact increases the vulnerability of the organization and decreases its capacity to pursue the objectives defined in the five-year strategic plan. The next strategic plan cycle will start in 2018, and the present evaluation should also contribute to it.

In general terms and according to the present external evaluation, the project can be rated as **moderately satisfactory**. At the same time, it must be said that if some adjustments are incorporated, the project could move to satisfactory by the end of the implementation period.

The justification for this rating stems from the valuation of the elements collected during the desk review (Annex 8 - List of documents consulted) and the interviews carried with the project's main stakeholders (primary and secondary target groups).

“The project has improved our work with workshops that strengthened us. We used to come to the meeting and share ideas more frequently”

Majantja Temong Farmers Association,
21 July 2017
(Annex 7- section I)

According to the cross-checked information the objectives and expected results of the project can be considered in line with the funding platform (CiSU), Lesotho's national development policies and international donors. The activities selected for implementation (training, counselling and exposure visits) and thematic areas covered (governance, social accountability, budget tracking, leadership, linking to markets, value chain analysis and better production techniques) are extremely relevant and resilient as they empower farmers and their representatives in self-organization, in increasing the level of effective participation in society and in enhancing access to the markets (production standards and linkages between producer and buyers).

Nevertheless, the project has some weaknesses, including its design (identification and formulation of logical framework: results, activities and indicators), the absence of a baseline survey to consistently evaluate the expected results and objectives and a monitoring/evaluation system that doesn't fully capture the expected changes in the target groups.

At the same time, we have to mention that the integration of the relevant cross-cutting issues, i.e., gender, the environment and climate change were not properly addressed. It's widely accepted that these are crucial for a project's success and should be considered in all phases of project cycle. Their equal integration in the project can have a positive effect on the performance and the objectives set.

The weaknesses identified make the task of quantitatively evaluating the reach of the project difficult. However, the evaluation team considers that due to the nature of the project, the monitoring and evaluation systems should have been more incisive in capturing qualitative data.

Conclusions Summary

There is a clear and consistent aspiration for RSDA beneficiaries and partners to cultivate the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture. Training and exposure has been critical in empowering the beneficiaries by inspiring motivated aspirations towards agribusiness.

It's also very evident from the discussions, especially with the Berea Business Forum, that there is a need to invest in the development of critical business infrastructure, such as market centres.

Furthermore, to sustain such infrastructure at optimal levels of performance, there is a critical need to nurture stable and sustainable production initiatives at the farm level. The key component of this in field cereal crops is the promotion of seed production, and especially of indigenous open pollinated varieties. This is the strongest in Mohale's Hoek and could anchor the national supply of open pollinated varieties of seeds (OPV). The promotion and maintenance of communication and ICT in agribusiness has emerged as a powerful innovation among the various constituents of the district aggregations which drive market links and information both locally and regionally within the country.

The creation of investment platforms in the form of a fund for the farmers is an important strategic movement for the sustainability of project interventions. Almost all associations are in the process of establishing some investment funds. In the Maseru District Agricultural Unity Association (MADAU), they have also established negotiations with commercial banks on leveraging such funds for commercial credit facilities for members.

The training and exposure strategy has clearly had an impact on the beneficiaries. However, a once off training session to a few members is less than adequate to sustain an on-going and lifelong internal capacity for training and induction.

6.2 Recommendations

Taking the previous information into consideration we would like to **recommend** a set of measures that could positively move the project towards a more successful conclusion and a rating revision:

1. Review the logical framework and monitoring/evaluation systems to include more qualitative data associated with the results that contribute to specific objectives 1 and 2. The most relevant stories captured should be inserted in the monitoring and evaluation matrix (number, frequency and location) considering the two specific objectives (changes related in stories can apply to one or both specific objectives). Produce analyses (extract trends or unusual results) from stories to highlight the influence of the outputs on the achievement of the project's specific objectives.
2. Depending on the availability and relevance of baseline data related to the Small Agriculture Development Project (SADP) funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the World Bank (WB), it would be valuable for the project to include further indicators of achievement and sources of information by cross-checking this data with the final report from previous phase: "Strengthening small scale farmer producer groups in Lesotho". The exercise would include the following:
 - a) A definition of primary target groups that are common to both projects and a request for the related baseline information available, the objective being to consolidate the reference data used at the project's inception.
 - b) If available and relevant, extract data concerning variations in income generation, household net assets and household security and nutrition.
 - c) If relevant, an evaluation and monitoring matrix and reporting.
3. For next phase or project, the evaluation team recommends improving data collection on gender, the environment and climate change adaptation integration, specifically on the same level as the results to be achieved. Further support of farmers' leaders will be required to build momentum and maximize and expand the effects of the training on the related subjects. Despite existing awareness, the evaluation considers that mainstreaming gender, the environment and climate change through ICT can only serve to benefit the farmers and the successful implementation of any project related to the sector.
4. Deliberately offer trainer's courses to be conducted and captured on video as material for internal training at the various levels. Clearly, the committees are more knowledgeable than the general membership. However, there is concern about a loss of capacity and memory.

5. Continue training and empowerment at the local level via local trainers or members of the associations themselves. We therefore recommend a staggered term of office such that there would never be zero members who have been exposed. This is a short-term strategy, while a more comprehensive strategy towards the self-training association is being developed. We recommend that the RSDA develops a way of strengthening the capacity building investment and impact beyond committees to the general membership.
6. Focus on collecting evidence that allows for the “most substantial change questionnaire” to be developed. Systematically collect more stories from the five districts to provide evidence of the changes experienced by the farmers because of the project.
7. According to information received during the field mission, there is no possibility of extending the current project. Based on this and the results of the evaluation, we recommend that further support should be raised to expand geographic coverage and to consolidate experiences and the systems in place. The knowledge management tools (access to information and generation of information) at district and community levels must be in place, available and used. For this, time and resources must be allocated and could correspond to three years’ worth of intervention.
8. Since its foundation the RSDA has been creating a profile as an advisory agency for agricultural services and throughout the years has accumulated significant know-how and has developed and extended networks. We believe that the RSDA should build and diversify their resources by developing their services in training delivery. These services would have to include the preparation of structured training modules (including video recording for future dissemination) according to the different audiences. These audiences could be from government ministries, donor funded projects or organizations from other sectors (farmers, private sector and the media). The focus would be on training potential drivers of change that could maximize effects when becoming trainers themselves. The training should be built on the existing ones, in thematic areas of governance and social accountability, and they should be easily replicated. Other themes that could be further developed include building strong and diverse partnerships, civil society mobilization, specific capacity development (value chain analysis, budgeting and management), policy reporting and analysis, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge based management.
9. Along the same line as before, the RSDA, as the service provider, should explore the possible development of a platform (ICT based) for farmers to buy and sell products. Business model to be developed but could include an adherence fee or fee over volume of transactions.
10. Explore the collection of a fee from the products sold from the demonstration farm in Mafeteng. If the products are sold at market prices, there will be margin to include a fee to be collected and sustain the RSDA’s existence.
11. Explore the potential market for indigenous products and traditional gastronomic experiences and link it to the development of community-based tourism. There is already a focus on being specialized with indigenous seeds in the Majantja Temong Farmers Association (MTFA) in Mohale’s Hoek District. This concept could be developed around the indigenous seeds and their use in preparing traditional food. Community-based tourism could be related to trekking and experiencing traditional food. An example, merely for illustration, is the project in Ethiopia <http://www.tesfatours.com/>.

12. The axis of the partnership is its ability to powerfully leverage collaboration and the pooling of resources. We therefore recommend that the RSDA prioritizes its partnership for optimizing what can be taken advantage of at each organization without disengaging in the general collaboration with other organizations.
13. Invest in fundraising campaigns and activities targeting the general public and specific stakeholders, encouraging them to become members.
14. Seek further input from the board and the DLN to guarantee that the human resources strategy that is developed can be funded and implemented.



Dried Fruits product of Leribe District Farmers Forum

7. Comparative advantage of the RSDA in the sector

The RSDA was registered in Lesotho in 1991, No. 91/85, under Societies Act 1966, as a non-profit organization with the objective of promoting self-help initiatives among rural Basotho with the aim of achieving food and nutrition security among communities of smallholder farmers. It is a leading agricultural advisory services agency that supports farmers in Lesotho by providing services, capacity building and advocacy support for sustainable climate smart agriculture, value addition and marketing of farmers' products. It is thus uniquely placed to enhance livelihoods and build climate resilient rural farming communities by helping people to help themselves, working collaboratively and in partnership with other stakeholders. Overtime, the RSDA has evolved within a space where they have institutionalized capacity to develop and maintain close working relationships with strategic partners in both government and non-governmental sectors including international partnerships in Lesotho and around the region. The RSDA's track record is characterized by a culture of team work, collaborative support and a high level of tolerance to sustain collaborative links and innovative strategies to advance their goals and objectives.

The expiring 2013-2017 strategic plan provides a mandate to enhance livelihoods and build climate resilient communities by helping people help themselves, working collaboratively (and in partnerships) with other stakeholders. The RSDA's programme is based on three pillars: i) strategic service delivery to smallholder farmers to improve productivity and competitiveness of their agriculture products, ii) capacity building, and iii) policy influence and social accountability. The theory of their programme is that each pillar cannot be implemented in isolation from the other two pillars. Strategic service delivery generates evidence for policy influence to be undertaken by the government, and it serves as a spring-board on which capacity building is focused. For example, the strategic plan highlights interventions in: i) linking social protection with agriculture for the chronically poor and people with reduced abilities; ii) the promotion of climate-smart agricultural technology packages among the farming community, which is the thread that binds all interventions; iii) market facilitation of agricultural products and iv) building social capital, good governance and social accountability as well as strengthening farmers' associations for networking, policy advocacy, information and communication. The RSDA's programme integrates gender, youth and HIV and AIDS issues, and they are able to collaborate with organizations who have a mandate with women, young people and HIV and AIDS, namely the Federation of Women Lawyers and the Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS. These programme interventions are aligned and in conformity with national policies and processes.

Since its inception, the RSDA has consciously developed and maintained close working relationships with strategic partners with the aim of developing symbiotic partnerships with non-state actors, e.g., farmers' organizations, the LCN, The Silo Magazine and the PFSL; relevant government agencies, e.g., the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation; the Ministry of Local Government; the Ministry of Small Business; the Ministry of Trade; the Departments of Meteorology and Environment; and developmental partners in Lesotho, such as the FAO and the UNDP.

The following are the most salient aspects of the RSDA's collaborative linkages in the local and regional civil society movements.

- i) The RSDA is a founding member of the PELUM Association in Lesotho and has represented Lesotho at the regional PELUM level and the PANOS Southern Africa.
- ii) The RSDA is also a member of the Conservation Agriculture Task Force chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.
- iii) Since 1992, the RSDA has been an active member of the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) and has served on the LCN Board for more than four terms during which they held the LCN presidency. While on the LCN's governing board, the RSDA has been a pillar and has helped strengthen governance of the LCN. Among other things, the RSDA was instrumental in the partnerships between the Lesotho Council of NGOs and the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.
- iv) The RSDA has represented civil society organizations in the Lesotho Fund for Community Development under the National Steering Committee for the Vision 2020 plan where it was given the task of ensuring that the civil society groups under the Lesotho Council of NGOs engage in the process of cultivating a sense of ownership among themselves.
- v) The RSDA has been a member of the PRSP task force, facilitating the process of collective responsibility in the crafting of the PRSP itself and building relationships and partnerships between the Lesotho government, the NGO community and other non-state actors in Lesotho.
- vi) The RSDA has also represented civil society organizations on the governing board of the Lesotho Agriculture College under the National Steering Committee for the National Forest Facility funded through the FAO by the Global Environment Facility in Lesotho. The committee drives national forestry policy and programmes in Lesotho and awards small grants to NGOs.

- vii) The RSDA is a member of the National Steering Committee Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme in Lesotho. The GEF Small Grants Programme accepts applications from civil society organizations and farmers from various environmental projects, offering grants to deserving candidates.
- viii) In addition, they hold membership in the SADP Competitive Grants Program Selection Committee; the National Climate Change Committee (NCCC); Project Steering Committee-Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and Senqu River Basin implemented by Ministry of Forestry; and the UNDP, and they participate in the community-based Adaptation Global Platform, as well as the Extended Humanitarian Country Team of the UN. The RSDA represents civil society organizations on the CAADP Country team and the NAIP drafting team. Currently the RSDA is on the drafting team of the Malabo peer-reviewed report to be presented by the head of state in the January 2018 African Union meeting.
- ix) The RSDA is a host of a national-level platform of non-state actors and CAADP signatories (the LCN, the LENAUFU and the PFSL).
- x) Through the DLN project, the RSDA is facilitating learning and creating one voice among the farmers' organizations at national and district levels and at selected agricultural resource levels for engagement with the government of Lesotho and the private sector.

RSDA employees possess technical expertise in government extension services. Additionally, some employees are also lecturers working for institutions of higher learning (e.g., the National University of Lesotho, the Lesotho Agriculture College, and international volunteer organizations). They use local volunteers, media outlets and regional professional institutions to access relevant skills as and when required. The RSDA's Constitution stipulates that the board of directors is the supreme governing body. Subject to its statutory obligations under the RSDA's Constitution, the board of directors has the responsibility to lead, control and set the strategic direction of the organization. Currently there are seven board members.

According to the current economic and political situation, as presented in the chapter titled Introduction, the RSDA could, at national and regional levels, consolidate its results and strategic plans. During the evaluation mission it was possible to find testimony of high levels of engagement and dialogue with district and national bodies. The current government has shown signs that favour the participation and contribution of organized civil society.

The RSDA, through its experience, attested by participation in all relevant forums and events related to civil society, sustainable agriculture, climate change, the environment and gender is positioned as a facilitator and mediator of reference. Their active participation in the CAADP and MALABO declaration processes, and their subsequent selection to lead the MALABO declaration peer-reviewed report to be presented by Lesotho's head of state in January 2018, are good examples of this position on both national and regional stages.

This can be further capitalized upon through project related activities, like exposure visits, that are organized jointly with Lesotho stakeholders in related sectors, and it can potentiate economic integration in the region by extending and bridging possible exchange opportunities.

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