RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF LIFT

2014-2018

Steve Gossage
September 2019

LIFT
Livelihoods and Food Security Fund
UKaid
European Union
Australian Aid
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
Canada
Irish Aid
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland
Managed by UNOPS

RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF LIFT
2014-2018

Steve Gossage
September 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study author would like to thank the many people who gave their time, knowledge and experience to support this study.

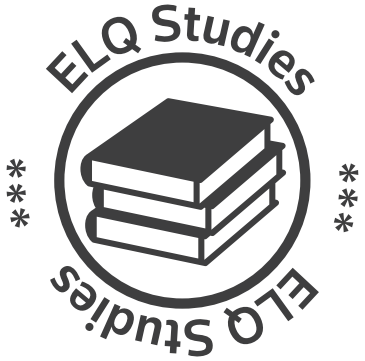
Thanks go firstly to Anne Coghlan, Andre Ling and Cassidy Travis who conceived and provided regular guidance and support for the study.

Particular thanks go to Pwint Pwint San for collecting, organising and providing the various project documents, progress reports, and mid-term and final evaluation reports that were used for the first round of the study. Thanks are extended also to Aung Than Oo who took over the collection and organisation of documents for the second round of studies, and set up and maintained the project document on-line repository for all such documents.

Thanks go also to the other ELQ researchers who shared their research, insights and suggestions, particularly during LIFT's 'Resilience Week'. Special thanks are due to the LIFT Programme and FMO staff who enthusiastically gave their time, insights and experiences to the study. All these contributions are duly acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this report are those of the study author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the LIFT.



Evaluation & Learning Question Studies

PREFACE

LIFT is a multi-donor fund with the purpose of strengthening the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor households in Myanmar. LIFT was established in 2009 when it focused predominantly on rehabilitation work, supporting the recovery of households affected by Cyclone Nargis.

A second strategy 2012-2014 recognised the progress made towards recovery and emerging opportunities in the country and shifted towards a more development-oriented approach that prioritised increasing food security and incomes through non-farm income generating activities.

A major strategy revision was undertaken for 2014-2018. This phase was characterised by a regional approach to programming in the Delta, Dry Zone, Rakhine State and the Uplands that aimed to address major contextual variations in development across the country. The strategy was underpinned by LIFT's differentiated strategies intended to assist rural people 'step up', 'step out or 'hang in'. Recognising that progress towards food security did not specifically address significant nutritional deficits, particularly for women and children, LIFT explicitly included a stronger focus on nutrition. A new stream of work focused on migration was developed as part of the broader 'stepping out' strategy. There was also a shift towards private sector engagement through the financial inclusion and agriculture portfolios.

Under its 2014-2018 strategy, LIFT's overall purpose was to strengthen the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor people in Myanmar. LIFT's contributions to resilience are measured through four Purpose-Level Outcomes:

(1) Increased incomes of rural households
(2) Decreased vulnerability of poor rural households and communities to shocks, stresses and adverse trends
(3) Improved nutrition for women and children
(4) Improved policies and effective public expenditure for pro-poor rural development

These outcomes were achieved through LIFT's programmes that aimed, in combination, to deliver on the following Programme Outcomes:

(1) Improved nutrition, sanitation and hygiene practices
(2) Improved market access and market terms for smallholder farmers
(3) Increased sustainable agricultural and farm-based production by smallholder farmers
(4) Increased and safe employment in non-farm activities for smallholders and landless
(5) Increased access to adequate and affordable financial services by smallholders and landless
(6) Safeguarded access to, and sustainable use of, natural resources for smallholders and landless
(7) Strengthened local capacity to support and promote food and livelihoods security
(8) Generation of policy relevant evidence regarding pro-poor development

Gender and inclusion are integral parts to all interventions and LIFT seeks to promote positive impacts for women and gender equality.

At the end of 2018, LIFT had reached more than 11.6 million people, or roughly 33 per cent of Myanmar's rural population, and has been active in 247 of the country's townships.

As LIFT strives to be a collective and influential voice for innovation and learning, greater emphasis was placed on the generation of evidence and knowledge that can inform development policy and practice in Myanmar. When implementation of the 2014-2018 strategy began, LIFT developed a monitoring and evaluation for accountability and learning framework that, amongst other things, sets out the key evaluation and learning questions that LIFT seeks to address. These questions cover key aspects of LIFT's performance: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, value for money, policy influence, and gender. They are intended to assess LIFT's performance and serve as tools to organise and synthesise LIFT's learning in relation to each of the key evaluation criteria.

This report is one of the studies in this series.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

MAIN DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAHW	Community Animal Health Worker
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CfP	Call for Proposal
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAR	Department of Agricultural Research
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DRD	Department of Rural Development
DZ	Dry Zone
ELQ	Evaluation and Learning Question
EoP	End of Project/Programme
Eval.	Evaluation
FFS	Farmer Field School
FMO	Fund Management Office
FPE	Farmer Producer Enterprise
GoM	Government of Myanmar
HH	Household
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IP	Implementing Partner
LBVD	Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department
LIFT	Livelihood and Food Security Fund
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Microfinance Institution
NRM	Natural Resources Management
QDS	Quality Declared Seed
R&S	Relevance and Sustainability
SAI	State Agriculture Institution
SELQ	Sub Evaluation and Learning Question
SSA	Small-Scale Aquaculture
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
VC	Value Chain
VDC	Village Development Committee
VfM	Value for Money
VRF	Village Revolving Fund
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Relevance and Sustainability Study is one of a series of studies that aims to answer the six LIFT Evaluation & Learning Questions (ELQs) identified for the LIFT Strategy 2014-2018. The six ELQs relate to relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, gender and policy support.

This Relevance and Sustainability Study focuses on two ELQs:

(1) Relevance ELQ – "To what extent have the LIFT strategy and LIFT interventions been relevant to the needs of the people it intends to reach?"

(2) Sustainability ELQ – "To what extent has LIFT identified and established socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable approaches for achieving the purpose and programme outcomes?"

The study also contributes to a sub-set of the six LIFT ELQs that focuses on resilience.

The ELQ sub-questions this study focussed on relate to different aspects of the relevance and sustainability of LIFT-supported projects, and to some extent to LIFT's programmes that generate and support these projects.

Study approach and methodology

The Relevance and Sustainability Study was based on a desk review of available mid-term reviews, final project evaluations and other documentation, with supplementary information from brief interviews with key programme staff and useful feedback from the Resilience Week presentations to the FMO, Fund Board and the resilience studies research team. The study was carried out in two rounds. Round 1 was a formative study carried out in 2016/17, from which the methodology and assessment tools were developed in line with accepted practice . Twenty-three projects were reviewed in their early stages. Round 2 was a summative study carried out in the first half of 2019 that used mid-term reviews or final project evaluations. Round 2 assessed 50 projects including re-assessments of projects reviewed in Round 1. The main limitations of the study were the availability of mid-term reviews and final evaluation reports, and the consistency and detail of their assessments of relevance and sustainability.

Relevance

The relevance of projects across the portfolio was found to be strong, with 86 per cent of reviewed projects being rated as 'relevant' (50 per cent) or 'highly relevant' (36 per cent). Only 14 per cent (seven projects) were found to be only 'partly relevant'.

The project relevance assessment focused primarily on relevance for the ultimate beneficiaries. Four sub-ELQs relate to the relevance of objectives, relevance of the design to achieve the objectives, adjustment of the project to keep it relevant during implementation, and actually addressing the needs of beneficiaries. The first three are critical and contribute strongly to the fourth sub-ELQs. Two other sub-questions focus on relevance to LIFT's strategy and to government.

The main strengths were in having objectives relevant to the ultimate beneficiaries (all projects) and relevant to the LIFT Strategy (all except one 'partly relevant') and government (all except two 'partly relevant'). This is not surprising considering the strong focus on project objectives and the needs of beneficiaries in design and appraisal, and the requirement that projects align with the LIFT strategy and its outcomes.

The main areas of weakness were in the relevance of the project design to the different intermediate actors and the context; and the level and effectiveness of adaptive management to adjust for deficiencies in design or a changing context and keep the project relevant throughout its lifetime. Around one-third of projects were found to be only 'partly relevant' in terms of design, and 6 per cent were found to have 'poor relevance'. The main reasons for this were:

- Project designs being too complex and too ambitious for some of the intermediate actors, or beneficiaries, or even the implementing partner (IP).
- Lack of a viable technology, clear logic or business model that could reliably generate the benefits needed to engage and motivate the intermediate actors and ultimate beneficiaries.
- Lack of clear identification of the technologies to be piloted and refined before roll-out, and appropriate approach and methods to do this.
- Insufficient understanding of the context leading to the project logic being based on incorrect assumptions.

Twenty-eight per cent of projects were found to have been only partly effective in their adaptive management and one project performed poorly. This depended mostly on the ability of the project to set up effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and management systems that could be used to interpret data and understand what was happening in the field, allowing for decisions to be reached about adjustments in implementation. Several factors impacted on projects' ability to develop and use effective systems:

- The IP's level of M&E and management capacity
- The balance of knowledge and decision making about implementation between an IP's headquarters and field offices
- The IP's level of openness to change project design
- The level of flexibility "allowed" by LIFT.

Largely as a result of the design shortcomings and weak M&E and adaptive management systems, around one-third (34 per cent) of projects were found to have only partly addressed the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries and one project performed poorly in this respect.

Some variation was found in the relevance of projects across the different sectors. While this reflects the challenges of the different sectors, the level of achievement of relevance depended mostly on the designs and adaptive management structures used in the different sectors. The agriculture sector projects performed the least well in achievement of relevance but suffered from over-complicated designs with multiple ambitious components and top down non-adaptive management that became fixated on targets. The best performers were the social protection and financial inclusion projects that were much more focused on a single component and worked with existing or strengthened organisations to using their own strengthened monitoring and management systems.

Some improvement is needed therefore in project designs and adaptive management. IPs and LIFT already spend a significant effort on design so such improvements should be strongly targeted to get optimum designs for the effort spent. More effort should be spent however on developing appropriate adaptive monitoring and management, tools and systems. This will be able to correct quickly for any design issues or a changing context, to ensure relevance throughout projects.

Sustainability

While the relevance of projects across the portfolio was found to be strong, the overall performance in the achievement of project sustainability across the portfolio was relatively weak. Only half of the reviewed projects were found to be 'mostly sustainable' (42 per cent) or highly sustainable (8 per cent). The remainder were found to be only 'partly sustainable' (48 per cent) and 'mostly unsustainable' (2 per cent).

Projects' sustainability was assessed primarily by assessing the likelihood that the main real-world entities (CBOs, businesses, etc), system changes (specific value chain linkages, etc), behaviour changes (adoption of agricultural, nutrition, etc practices), or other outcomes that the project should develop or improve, and should continue in some way after the project, actually did continue. This was qualified by a whole-project and longer-term assessment of possible net negative social, environmental or

economic effects of a project as a whole, that would reduce the overall sustainability assessment. Such effects were found to be low and sustainability of the projects reviewed was based almost entirely on the likely sustainability of the various entities and systems supported, and the continued adoption or behaviour change of beneficiary farmers and households.

The degree of sustainability achieved in projects was found to depend significantly on two factors: (1) the inherent challenges for sustainability from a combination of factors relating mostly to the sector and the geographical location and current context for the project, and (2) the way the projects were designed and implemented.

The sector, and to some extent the geography and context, are major determinants of the stakeholders and partners who the project will work with, and the kinds of changes that the project will need to address. Agriculture projects will tend to work with poorly organised farmers or production groups in less developed areas (e.g. Uplands) but may have the option of working with private sector actors in better connected and developed areas (such as the Dry Zone). Financial inclusion projects can work with a growing number of competent microfinance organisations in many areas but may need to expand services through the same partners in other areas. Some social protection projects work well in communities with a strong sense of social cohesion and organisation with community partners who can do more with a little organisation and investment. The goals and challenges for sustainability obviously vary according to such factors.

The way the project is designed and implemented depends to some extent on the challenges to be addressed and partners available in the different sectors and locations, but also on the understanding, approach and capacities of the IP. Key factors are how complicated a project is (e.g. the number of different components and real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes addressed), the extent to which the project provides direct support compared to more collaborative facilitation, and simply the extent to which projects have considered and integrated sustainability into their project design and (adaptive) management.

The two sets of factors are themselves linked to some extent. Agricultural projects tended to be more complicated and ambitious, and provide direct support sometimes done by the projects themselves, all of which tended to reduce sustainability. Financial inclusion and social protection projects tended to work with one key partner and provide facilitation, rather than direct support, to help them develop improved or extended services. All these things tended to favour sustainability. Financial inclusion projects had sustainability hardwired into the project from the start through having microfinance organisation partners that recognised, aimed for and measured progress towards financial and institutional sustainability.

The study confirmed and articulated that sustainability depends on having a relatively small number of understandable and identifiable success factors. Projects should have a model that works in its context to generate benefits that motivate people to make the model work. This required having the appropriate ownership arrangements, so the benefits go to the right people, and the systems and capacity in place for the model to work. The model and context also need to be matched (right time and place) for the model to work. And the project should work in the most appropriate way to develop these success factors within the time available.

A major issue for many projects was that they did not consider sustainability sufficiently in the design stage or early enough during implementation. Many projects did not clearly identify the specific real-world entities systems, for instance, that the project should change and clearly depict in their 'actor-centred' Theories of Change (ToCs) as envisaged in the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) planning process introduced during the 2014-2018 strategy period. Sustainability was often not addressed until issues were raised by the mid-term reviews. Sustainability should be built into the design and not through separate exit strategies. A number of projects more or less ignored sustainability, viewing sustainability as unachievable in a three-year period.

Sustainability should be built into the design and worked towards from the start. The best projects worked with reasonably competent, motivated and potentially viable organisations (e.g. microfinance organisations, social protection community groups, private sector agro-input dealers, a committed government ministry embarking on a new high priority policy area), that worked with the IPs from the outset of the project.

Spread

'Spread' is a general term that is used here to include concepts of diffusion, spill over effects, multiplier effects, leverage, replication, scaling up (or out), going to scale, systematic change etc that leads to increased impact. This study made a brief overview assessment of the likelihood that the real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc that the projects introduced or strengthened would be able to extend benefits to new beneficiaries. The general conclusion was that while the potential for spread was moderately good, the likelihood that this would happen was relatively low. Very few projects specifically considered spread, which has the potential to improve projects' overall impact.

Contribution to Resilience

The study also made a quick assessment of how each project had contributed to resilience and the influence of relevance and sustainability.

Projects were found to **contribute to resilience** at two main levels. Firstly, at the household level, improved livelihoods and employment situations allowed households to improve their general asset base, and knowledge, skills, networks and organisational capacities and thereby improve their ability to cope with, and recover from, shocks and stresses. Secondly, at the community level, when strong and sustainable community and private organisations are strengthened in terms of leadership, organisational skills and networks, they contribute to the ability of communities to work together and respond better to shocks and stresses (i.e. improved resilience). Projects therefore contributed to resilience by helping households and communities to build the coping, adaptive and transformative capacities they need to deal with shocks and stresses.

The **sustainability** of the entities, systems, etc that support improved livelihoods and employment means that the impact on households' and communities' resilience can also be sustained. If there is little sustainability, then there will be little long-term improvement in resilience. **Relevance** is a pre-requisite for project success: firstly, to reach and usefully support the ultimate beneficiaries, secondly, to secure LIFT funding, and thirdly, to secure government acceptance and support at local, regional and national levels.

Forty-two per cent of the projects reviewed were assessed as having made little or no specific consideration of resilience. The remaining projects did make specific mention of resilience and aimed to make a general and limited contribution to it. Only six projects had a specific focus on resilience. There is much scope for improvement through strengthening the focus on resilience in design and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing partners

(1) IPs should build a strong and clear understanding at the design stage of the various entities, systems and behaviour changes that the project should establish or improve, and how these will generate benefits for the ultimate beneficiaries. These should be refined and finalised at the stage of developing the final ToC and MEAL Plan. This understanding and the entities etc should be reflected in the ToC, planning, budgeting and reporting structures, that should all be aligned as far as is practical.

(2) IPs should develop adaptive management systems appropriate to the nature of the project and build these into project design. There should be a degree of flexibility in the monitoring systems to be able to quickly observe change.

(3) IPs should strive for further improvement of project relevance through appropriate design and adaptive management. The design should use the ToC understanding of the real-world entities that the project aims to work with and outline how this should be achieved.

(4) IPs should make major improvements in project sustainability through its specific inclusion in project design and adaptive management. Sustainability should be built into the project design and worked towards from the start. Projects should assist partners to improve rather than doing things form them. Start things as they will continue.

(5) In some cases, IPs should be able to consider longer term projects broken into meaningful standalone conditional phases, with prior agreement in principle from LIFT.

(6) IPs should improve their plans for 'spread' and focus on its achievement. As with sustainability, 'spread' should be considered in project design, and the plan developed, monitored and managed adaptively during implementation.

(7) IPs should improve their plans for achieving resilience in projects. Many projects had resilience as a high-level goal, but could do more to understand how resilience should be achieved in their project situation and adjust their design to integrate features that increase the level of resilience achieved.

(8) IPs and FMO should support projects, MFIs and other intermediate service provider organisations to institute simple basic environmental screening and mitigation to reduce the (generally small) risk that some of the agricultural technologies supported may have adverse environmental effects.

Recommendations for LIFT

(1) LIFT should strengthen the ToC and MEAL planning support available for IPs so as to make truly actor-centred ToCs and address the above recommendations for IPs.
(2) LIFT should support more adaptive management as appropriate to the specific needs of each project. This should be considered and built into the design and include specific consideration of the need for piloting before rollout if appropriate.
(3) LIFT should consider including some longer-term projects through conditional phased projects to implement longer term strategies.
(4) LIFT should strengthen its online repository of project documents and reports using a standardised folder structure and naming convention.
(5) Strategic Partnership support should be used primarily to help the NGO or CSO partner to establish or strengthen one of their specific functions that fairly directly benefits the ultimate beneficiaries.

INTRODUCTION

1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

LIFT

LIFT was established as a multi-donor fund in 2009, in response to the devastating effects of cyclone Nargis in 2008. LIFT started operations in 2010 with a one-year, post-emergency recovery and rehabilitation-focused programme in the Ayeyarwady Delta (the Delta). In this report this period is referred to as 'LIFT 1'.

A second strategy 2012-2014 recognised the progress made towards recovery and emerging opportunities in the country and shifted towards a more development-oriented approach. In this report this period is referred to as 'LIFT 2'.

A major strategy revision was undertaken for 2014-2018. This phase was characterised by a regional approach to programming in the Delta, Dry Zone, Rakhine State and the Uplands that aimed to address major contextual variations in development across the country. Thematic programmes covering nutrition, gender, civil society, financial inclusion and migration were also implemented in this phase. The Relevance and Sustainability Study reviewed projects in this phase of LIFT, which in this report is referred to as 'LIFT3'.

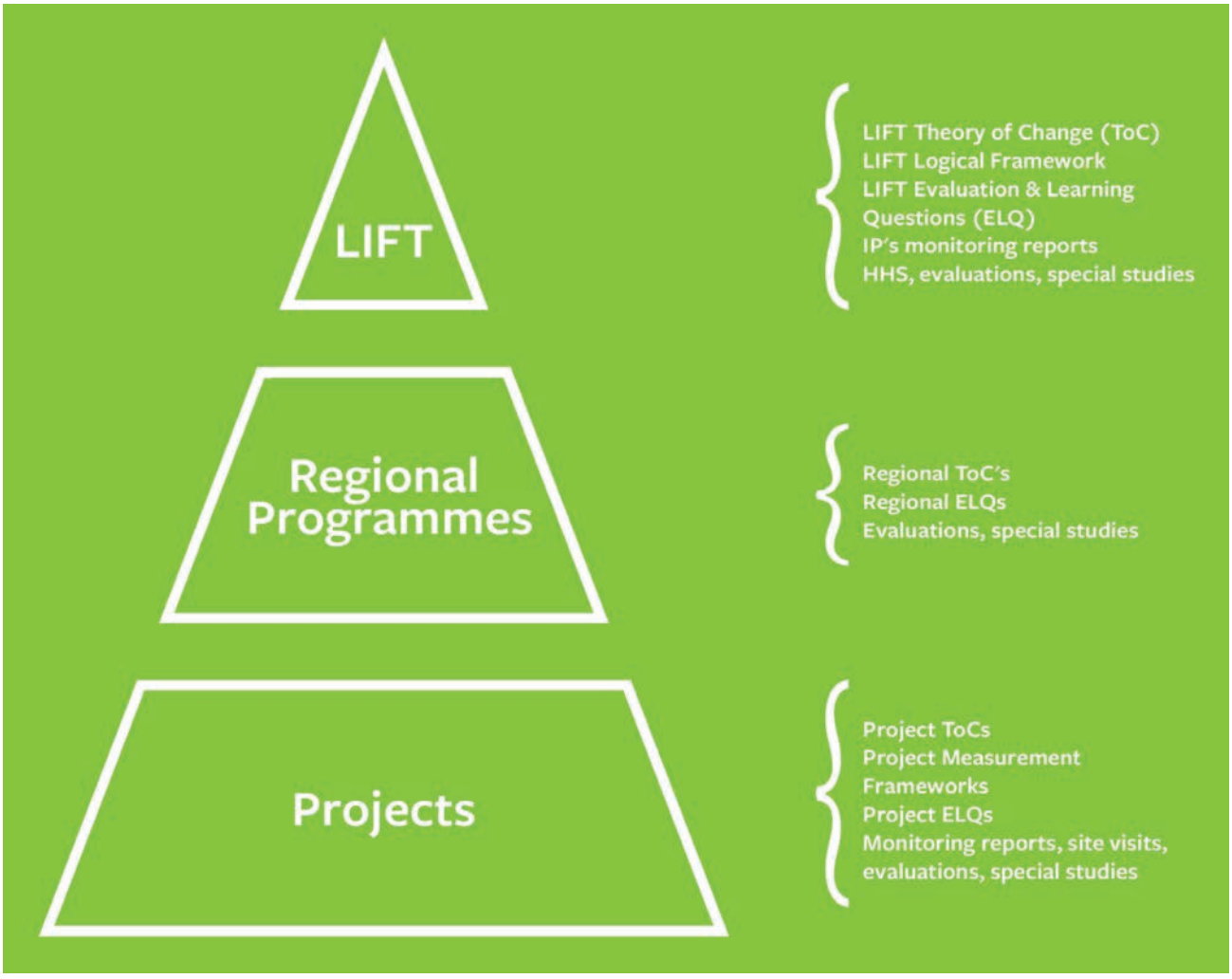
LIFT is implemented mostly through a number of three-year (or shorter) projects developed by different implementing partners (IPs) usually in response to focused calls for proposals (CfP). A number of projects are given relatively short no-cost extensions or longer costed extensions or funded through a second phase. LIFT's IPs include local and international NGOs, UN organisations, private sector organisations, research bodies and government.

LIFT's Evaluation and Learning Questions and the Resilience Studies

As part of its 2014-2018 strategy, LIFT strengthened its monitoring and evaluation for accountability and learning (MEAL) system. The MEAL approach introduced the use of project Theories of Change (ToC) diagrams and narrative descriptions, and measurement frameworks (table with indicators and targets), to replace logical frameworks at the project level. Diagrammatic ToCs were also prepared for the regional programmes and at the overall LIFT level, the overall logical/measurement framework was retained and an overall schematic ToC diagram introduced.

The strengthened MEAL approach introduced a series of Evaluation and Learning Questions (ELQs) at project, programme and LIFT levels. Project-level ELQs focused on key areas of uncertainty in the project ToC as well as areas of interest for practice or policy influence. LIFT-level ELQs were based on the high-level DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability) developed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee as well as gender and policy. The six LIFT-level ELQs and all their sub-ELQs are provided in Annex 4. Figure 1 summarises the overall LIFT MEAL framework. This is described fully in LIFT's MEAL Plan Guidelines for IPs (LIFT, April 2016).

Fig. 1 Levels and compronents of the LIFT MEAL framework (2016)



Source: LIFT MEAL Plan Guidelines for IPs (April 2016)

To evaluate and answer the six LIFT-level ELQs, LIFT initiated a series of studies. A closely linked subset of these, including the Relevance and Sustainability (R&S) Study, focused on resilience. The other resilience studies were the Income and Assets Study, the Vulnerability Outcome Study and the Nutrition and Food Security Outcome Study.

While the R&S study focussed on the LIFT-level relevance and sustainability ELQs, the other resilience studies focused on the effectiveness ELQ, with resilience being the focus of LIFT's Purpose in its ToC (Annex 3). The various ELQ studies, and the ways in which they were linked and generated learning are shown diagrammatically in Annex 5.

The R&S and the other three resilience studies were implemented through two rounds: a formative study carried out in 2016/17, and a summative study carried out in 2018/19. The income, vulnerability and nutrition studies used survey data and research conducted at the household level; and used the two survey rounds as their baseline and endline studies. The R&S Study was focussed at the project level and used the two rounds in a slightly different way.

Background on the R&S Study, Round 1

The R&S Study Round 1 was carried out mostly during 2017. Round 1 developed the tools and methodology for assessing relevance and sustainability of projects in a reasonably consistent way in line with established practice to answer the respective ELQ sub-questions. The assessments were based on a structured review of available project documentation, progress reports and mid-term reviews or final evaluation reports. Preliminary findings from assessment of the first batch of projects were presented together with the other resilience studies during LIFT's Resilience Week in May 2017.

At that time, the LIFT 2014-2018 projects were mostly in their early stages. Progress reports did not say much about relevance or sustainability and there had not been any mid-term reviews or final evaluations. Some final evaluations from the previous strategy period were used to test and refine the tools. The results from this round were indicative but did not provide a proper baseline for sustainability. The findings were useful to helping improve LIFT's focus on, and achievement of, project sustainability. The relevance and sustainability tools (described below) were in principle included in the task notes for mid-term reviews and final evaluations, partly to improve the consistency in focus on relevance and sustainability ELQs, but also to provide consistent data for Round 2 of the R&S Study.

Round 1 reviewed a total of 23 projects, with seven of these being completely from the 2012-2014 strategy period and selected because they had final evaluation reports. A detailed report was produced in December 2017. This included a detailed presentation of the approach and rationale for the

development of the relevance and sustainability assessment tools and how they should be used. Detailed guidelines were also prepared by LIFT with a complete description of the tools.

The R&S Study, Round 2

Round 2 was carried out in two parts. Part 1 was carried out from January to March 2019 and fed preliminary findings into the second Resilience Week held in February 2019. This reviewed a total of 25 projects and the Interim Report for the Study of LIFT's R&S ELQs was produced in March 2019. Part 2 was needed to increase the number of projects, particularly those with mid-term reviews and final evaluations, to enable more reliable generalisations for different types of projects. A number of projects did not have their reviews or final evaluations until early to mid-2019. Round 2 covered a total of 50 projects.

1.2 Purpose and scope of the study

The Task Note for the R&S Summative Study is provided in full in Annex 1. This is Round 2 of the overall Relevance and Sustainability as described above.

The purpose of the study focuses primarily on the assessment of the Relevance and Sustainability ELQs and their respective sub-questions.

- Relevance ELQ 1: "To what extent have the LIFT strategy and LIFT interventions been relevant to the needs of the people it intends to reach?"
- Sustainability ELQ 3: "To what extent has LIFT identified and established socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable approaches for achieving the purpose and programme outcomes?"

The R&S study aims also to link with and enrich the evaluation of ELQ 2 that relates to LIFT's effectiveness in contributing to resilience.

- Effectiveness ELQ 2: "To what extent has LIFT contributed to strengthening the resilience of poor people in Myanmar and helped them to 'hang in', 'step up' and 'step out'?"

The objectives of the study, as provided in the task note (Annex 1) were:

- Provide an assessment of LIFT's portfolio of projects in terms of relevance and sustainability, including considerations of scalability and spreadability.
- Characterise the strengths, weaknesses and other aspects of performance in each sub-question area, across projects, to generate insights and learning about performance in terms of relevance and sustainability.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to LIFT IPs, the FMO and the Fund Board on how to better ensure relevance, sustainability and spreadability."

The study is therefore based almost entirely on the assessment of the relevance and sustainability of the projects in LIFT's portfolio of projects, drawing as appropriate from the findings of Round 1 and Round 2.

The task note indicates that the study should be carried out in two parts, with the first part providing preliminary findings to support LIFT's Resilience Week in March 2019. The second part should continue with the assessment of the relevance and sustainability of additional projects and analysis of all the reviewed projects together with the findings from Round 1 as appropriate. The final report should include recommendations for LIFT IPs, the FMO and the Fund Board on how to better ensure relevance, sustainability and scalability.

1.3 This report

This report is the final report for the Relevance and Sustainability (R&S) Study. It focuses mostly on Round 2, but uses the tools and methodology developed by Round 1 and draws on some of the findings from Round 1. For the sake of brevity, this report refers to rather than repeats the detail of the rationale, tools and methodology developed in Round 1.

The study's approach and methodology is presented, followed by the findings of the review of the 50 projects assessed and their achievement of relevance and sustainability. This is followed by a synthesis of findings and conclusions. Finally, the report presents the main recommendations from the study.

Approach and Methodology

2

2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach and methodology

The R&S Study was based on a desk review of available project documentation with supplementary information from brief interviews with key Programme Staff and useful feedback from the Resilience Week presentations to the FMO, Fund Board and resilience studies research team. The **basic approach, conceptual framework and tools** for the methodology were developed during Round 1 of the R&S Study and are fully described in the report for Round 1 of December 2017 (updated in August 2018).

The **primary documents for the review of a project** were the mid-term review or final evaluation reports. The main supporting documents used were a project's Descriptions of Action (project documents), Theory of Change (diagrams and narrative), MEAL Plans, and narrative annual or semi-annual reports. Exit plans would have been useful for sustainability but none were provided.

The documents were collected and placed in an **online document repository** by LIFT staff. The basic folder structure of the repository was developed using Dropbox during Round 1 and the documents for many projects were uploaded. This was migrated to the LIFT Google Drive and the required documents for new projects and latest documents for the previously uploaded projects added by the LIFT IT and M&E Database Officers who now maintain this repository. It proved quite challenging and time consuming to locate and collect all the required documents but the document repository worked very well once established. The fairly detailed and consistently named folder structure obviated the need for most of the time-consuming renaming of the different report files, and made it easy to find the files needed for the review.

Project relevance and sustainability were assessed using the relatively simple **relevance and sustainability assessment table tools** developed during Round 1 of the R&S study. The rationale and use of these tools is explained and described in the R&S Study Round 1 report and the R&S Guidelines. A summarised version of these guidelines is provided in Annex 6. The key points explaining how the tools work to assess relevance and sustainability are also presented at the start of each of the main sections that present the findings on relevance (section 3.2) and sustainability (section 3.3). This is done to improve understanding of how the findings were derived and what they mean.

The study found significant variation in the way evaluators assessed project relevance and sustainability and presented their findings. LIFT has therefore **used these R&S tools in the more recent final project evaluations**, to try and achieve greater consistency. LIFT systematically included the LIFT-level ELQs (including relevance and sustainability) and the relevant sub-questions explicitly in the task motes for mid-term reviews and final evaluations from early 2019.

The **study has assessed a total of 50 projects,** representing 63 per cent of the 79 projects eligible for review. Completed R&S tool assessment sheets were only received however for around five of these. A total of 26 projects were assessed using final evaluation reports while 20 had mid-term reviews and four had only progress reports.

Data management in Round 2 was structured using the same Excel data entry file for each project assessed. There were separate worksheets for project descriptive and summary data, relevance, sustainability and scalability, with multiple controls for the type of data that could be entered. This made it relatively easy to extract all the recorded data to large Excel spreadsheets for manipulation, analysis and the preparation of graphics as needed. Once set up, the data management system worked very well and made it easy to update project assessments and extract findings.

The **brief interviews with key LIFT Programme staff** were used to cross-check the findings in a general way, and to get an overview of how programmes supported project relevance or sustainability. The programmes themselves were not assessed.

The project **data was analysed** using Excel pivot tables, graphics and basic statistical analysis. SPSS was used for some statistical analysis but only in Round 1 due to time limitations. Much time was spent looking for possible trends and associations and analysis of the rich qualitative data from the project reviews. All this helped to understand which types of project were likely to achieve different levels of relevance or sustainability and the contextual, design and management factors that could influence the project achievements. The various understandings and findings were **synthesised** to build these kinds of understandings and find ways through which the achievement of relevance and sustainability could be improved. The findings and recommendations are presented in this report.

2.2 Limitations of the study

The main limitations for the R&S Summative Study (Round 2) were:

- The timely availability of mid-term reviews and final evaluations, particularly with the completed R&S tool assessment sheets. It took considerable effort and time to get hold of these reports. This was partly because many were not carried out until early to mid-2019 and the draft reports were not released quickly. It also seems that the mid-term review and final evaluation reports and some other documents were not systematically uploaded to the LIFT intranet drive and it was not always easy to find the documents needed. It is to be hoped that the new Google Drive document repository is used to systematically store project documentation and evaluation reports in a timely, well-structured and easily accessible way. This needs further work by LIFT.
- The consistency of the mid-term review and final evaluation assessments and presentation of relevance and sustainability in the reports. Consistency in such assessments is notoriously difficult and varies according to the evaluator's understanding, level of focus and level of optimism. The final evaluations were generally much better and easier to extract findings. The more systematic use of the relevance and sustainably guidelines and tools would improve this consistency. The effect of low consistency was that more detailed review and cross checking of documents was needed and this took more time.
- The delayed availability of mid-term reviews and final evaluations also meant that any ideas about making a purposive selection of projects to represent different types of projects was simply not practical. The review included all projects for which reports were received in good time. A total of 50 of the 79 eligible projects were reviewed.
- The migration of project documents from the Drobox repository to the new LIFT Google Drive repository for Round 2 was initially challenging and quite time consuming.

The main effect of most of these limitations was to increase the time and effort needed to get reliable assessments and information from each of the projects. In the end however it is felt that a reasonable number of projects was reviewed and the assessments were reasonably reliable and certainly informative enough to draw the conclusions made.

Finding from the Review of Projects

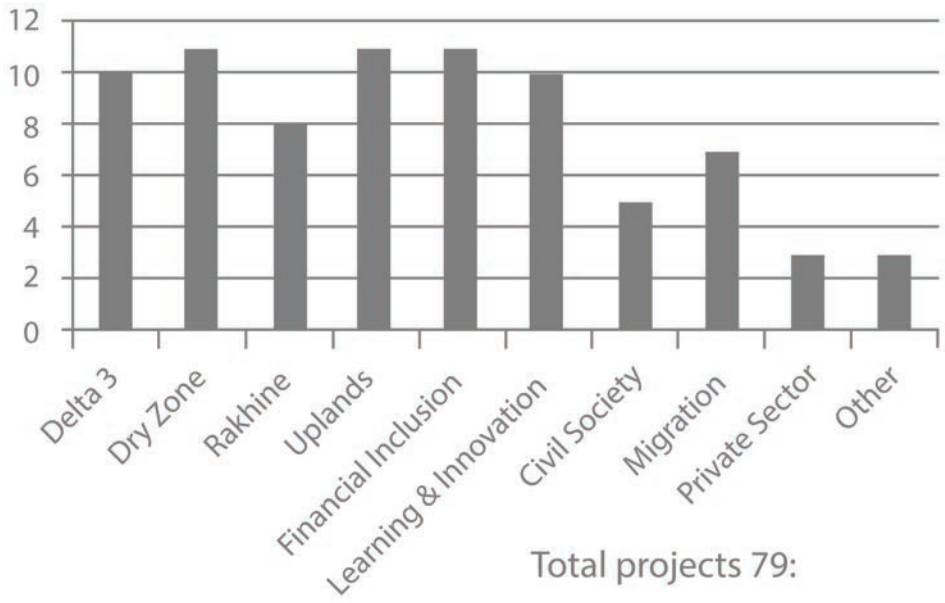
3. FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF PROJECTS

3.1 The selection and characterisation of the projects reviewed

3.1.1 The LIFT portfolio of projects

LIFT's project database lists around 159 projects that started after October 2010. This is regarded as LIFT's portfolio of projects. A total of 79 of these projects fall under the 2014-2018 strategy period and are therefore eligible for inclusion in this study. The 79 projects considered as eligible for review were projects that ran until after the end of 2016 or started before July 2018, had a duration longer than one year and budget greater than USD 200,000. The number of these projects under each of the LIFT programming areas are shown in Figure 2. This shows a reasonable balance of projects across programme areas, with the Delta 3, Dry Zone, Uplands, Financial Inclusion and Learning and Innovations Programmes all having 10 or more projects.

Fig. 2 Number of projects per programme LIFT 2014-2018



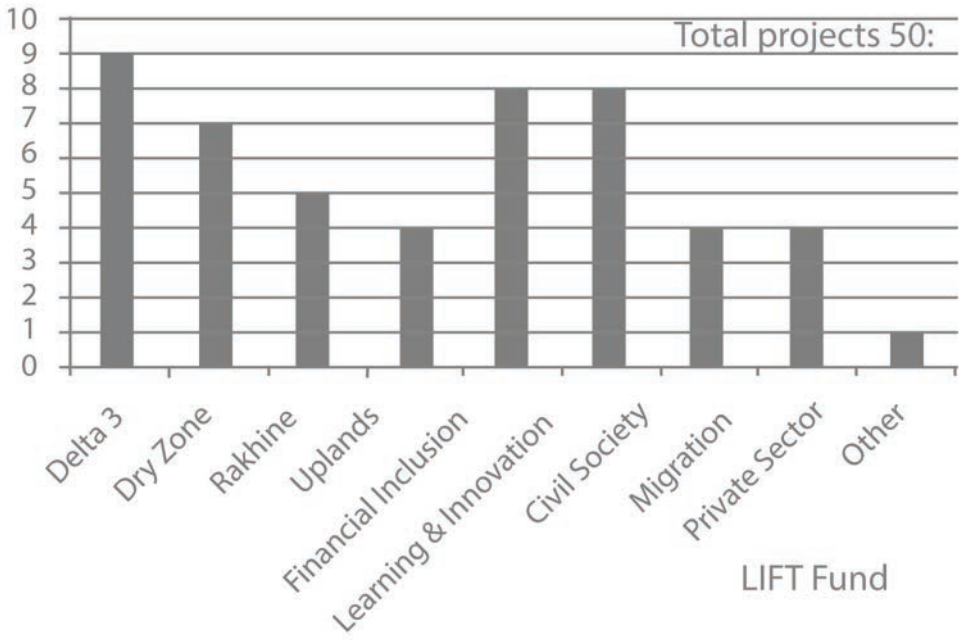
Source: LIFT project database

3.1.2 Selection of projects

The selection of projects was based primarily on the availability of final evaluations (by preference) or mid-term reviews, and to a lesser extent, the availability of projects' Description of Action, Theory of Change and latest progress report. The study aimed to review as many projects as possible in order to adequately cover the various types of projects.

The R&S Study reviewed 50 of the 79 eligible projects. The distribution of projects reviewed by the type of LIFT programme is shown in Figure 3. Comparing this with Figure 2 and considering that 63 per cent of the 79 eligible project were reviewed, the selection can be taken as a reasonable representation of most of projects in LIFT's portfolio 2014-2018. It should be noted however that this is not a statistically representative sample.

Fig. 3 Number of projects reviewed per programme area



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Round 2 included 11 projects that started before 2014 and continued into the 2014-2018 strategy period.

The study was provided with a total of 24 final evaluations that were all reviewed. A further 28 projects had mid-term reviews while two had only the supporting documents. These last two had been reviewed during Part 1 in anticipation of having final evaluations that had not been done before the study ended. Since projects tend to address their relevance, sustainability and other shortcomings identified during their mid-term reviews, there can be some differences between their likely relevance and

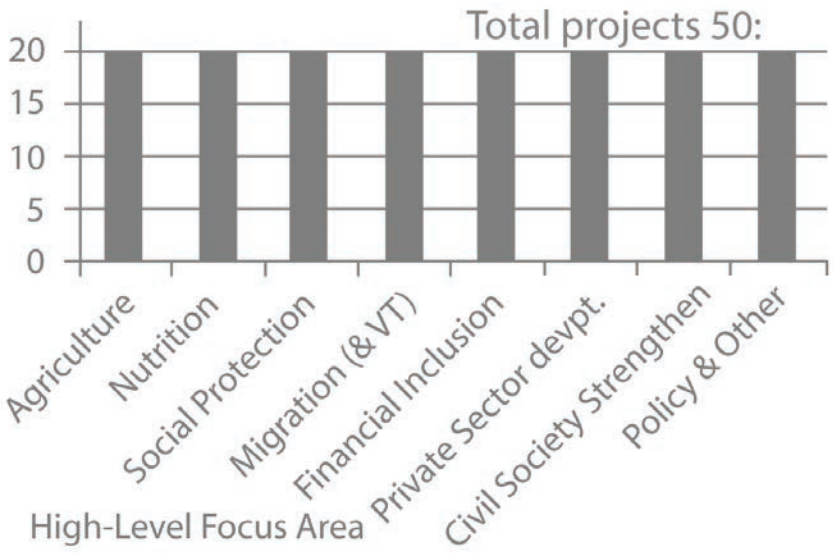
sustainability as assessed mid-project and at final evaluation. This is discussed later.

3.1.3 Characterisation of the projects reviewed

A wide range of projects were supported by the various LIFT programmes shown above. These can be described in terms of a number of key characteristics. These characteristics may also have some influence or relationship to the achievement of relevance or sustainability. This is discussed in subsequent sections.

A primary characteristic of a project is its overarching 'high-level focus area'. This can be thought of as the project's primary 'sector'. These major categories were identified by LIFT and adapted by the R&S Study. The number of projects covering different 'high-level focus areas'/'sectors' is shown in Figure 4. This shows that a relatively high proportion of projects were categorised as being primarily to do with agriculture. It should be appreciated that this includes projects that focus on fisheries or natural resources management, and projects that may also have significant components for nutrition, off-farm employment, vocational training, migration, etc.

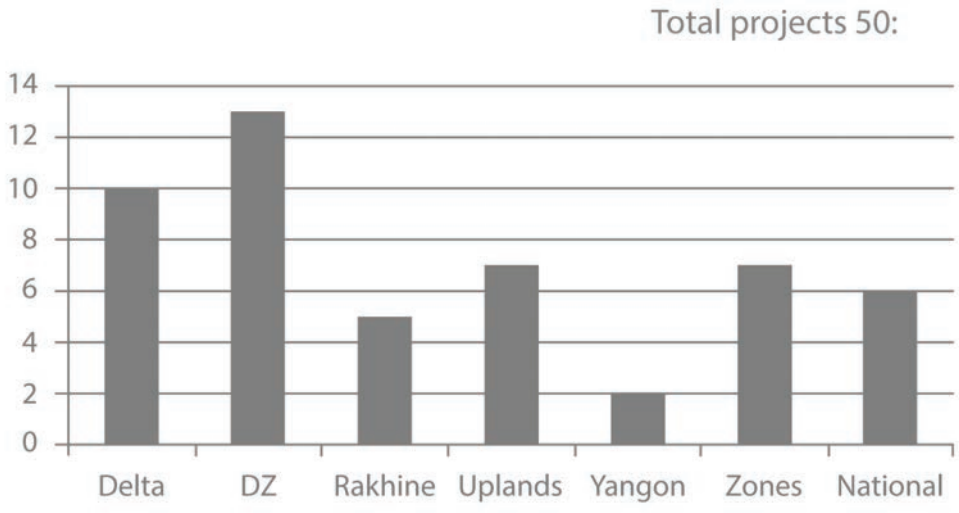
Fig. 4 High-level focus area (sector) of the projects reviewed



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Thirty-four of the projects (68 per cent) were led by international NGOs and 32 per cent were led by national NGOs. Thirty-one of the projects (62 per cent) were new projects while the remaining 19 were follow-on projects, building on the IPs' previous project experience. The geographical distribution of projects is shown in Figure 5.

Fig. 5 Geographical distribution of the projects reviewed



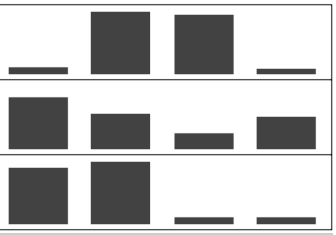
Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Twenty projects were assessed as primarily focused on 'hanging in', 23 were focused on 'stepping up' and seven on 'stepping out'. Many projects involved a mix of these livelihood strategies. Projects were also categorised according to the basic approach to providing of support in terms of the degree of facilitation compared to direct support. A reasonable balance of 18 projects were assessed as mostly having a facilitation approach, another 18 provided mostly direct support and 14 provided a mixture of these two types of support. The level of facilitation used in a project is often an important factor for achieving sustainability. This is discussed below.

Projects were also categorised in terms of fairly standard gender, nutrition and resilience markers according to the level of integration of, and intended contribution to, gender, nutrition and resilience. This depended on the project design as well as the way it was implemented. The four-category approach for gender and nutrition markers as presented in Table 1 are easily understood and applied; and they are internationally recognised. The simple resilience maker follows the same basic levels. This is not a rigorous assessment but helps to characterise the nature of the projects and reflect on any possible linkages with relevance or sustainability.

Table 1. No. of projects at different gender, nutrition and resilience marker levels

Type of Marker:	Marker Level: 0	1	2	3
Gender Marker	3	23	22	2
Nutrition	19	13	6	12
Resilience	21	23	3	3



Marker level:	Description:
0	Very little or no specific consideration of or contribution to gender, nutrition or resilience.
1	Project aims to contribute in a general and limited way; but no specific analysis, strategy and plan.
2	Project aims to contribute significantly. Has specific analysis, strategy and plan with mainstreaming.
3	Gender, nutrition or resilience is the principal purpose or a main component of the project.

Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

The obvious difference between the shape of the distribution of gender, nutrition and resilience marker levels shown in Table 1 appears to reflect LIFT strategies as well as the nature of the three subjects. The gender distribution hwown 'U' shape that shows that most projects aim to make a general or significant contribution to gender while two have their primary focus as gender. The nutrition distribution has more of a 'U' shape, which shows that many projects have a low focus on nutrition (mostly because this would be marginal to the focus of the project) or make a general contribution to nutrition, while 12 have a major focus or component on nutrition. This reflects the relatively recent emphasis made on nutrition-sensitive (e.g. agriculture) and nutrition-specific projects. The resilience distribution is heavily skewed towards having a low or only general contribution to resilience. This reflects the complex nature of resilience and the rather generalised approach in LIFT's strategy. This does not mean that projects did not contribute to resilience but does indicate there may be scope for improvement with more purposive analysis and planning. This is discussed later.

3.2 Achievement of relevance in projects (ELQ1)

The overall relevance of each project was assessed looking at six factors that relate to LIFT's ELQ sub-questions relating to relevance.

1. Relevance of project objectives to the ultimate beneficiaries.
2. Relevance of project design to different actors (intermediate beneficiaries) and the context, so that the objectives can be achieved.
3. Adaptation of the project design to adjust for inadequate design or changes in context; this relates to "adaptive management". This allows the project to maintain its relevance.
4. Actually addressing the needs of beneficiaries.
5. Relevance to the LIFT Strategy.
6. Relevance to government and country policies, etc.

The first three factors are a completely linked sequence and relate to: (1) having a worthwhile project (in what it is trying to achieve), (2) having a design that should allow the project to achieve its objectives, and (3) adjusting the design to keep the project relevant throughout its lifespan. This means that the project should be kept relevant throughout its lifetime and is therefore more likely to achieve its objectives in full. The fourth factor confirms that the project has actually addressed the needs of the beneficiaries. This should be done if the project is relevant at the start and continues to be relevant. The last two factors make sure that the project will be supported by LIFT, and the government.

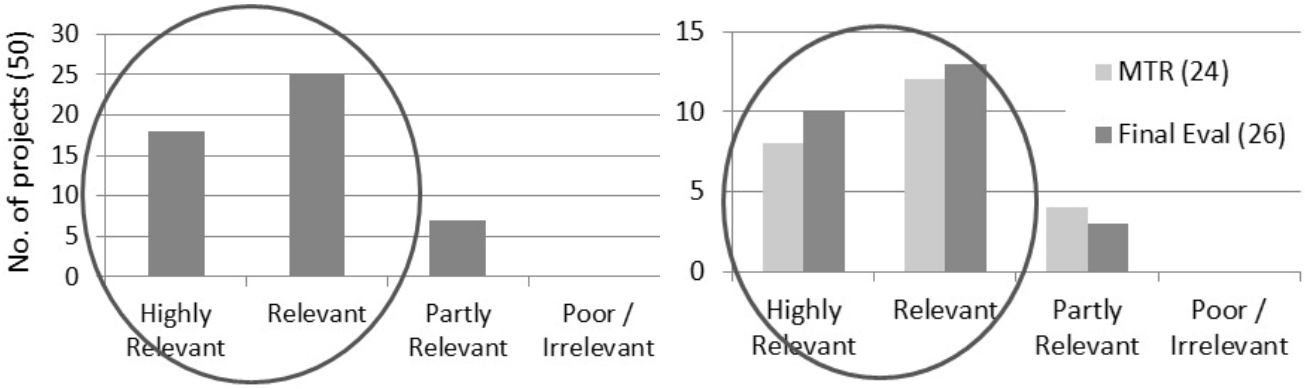
Project relevance was assessed in terms of four rating levels that are recognised and used internationally. These relate closely to the level of shortcomings and, at the mid-term stage, the intensity of corrective actions that would be needed to maintain relevance. At the end of the project, this would be a summative assessment of overall relevance throughout the project.

1	**Highly relevant**: almost no or only minor shortcomings. **Highly satisfactory.**
2	**Relevant (mostly)**: modest shortcomings that would need small corrective actions (if mid-project). **Satisfactory**.
3	**Partly Relevant**: significant shortcomings that would need significant corrective actions with extra monitoring and supervision (if mid-project). **Less than satisfactory**.
4	**Poor and mostly irrelevant**: serious shortcomings that would need urgent and major corrective action or closure (if mid-project). **Unsatisfactory**.

3.2.1 Relevance of projects across the portfolio

LIFT has performed well in terms of achieving project relevance across all reviewed projects. This is considered to likely apply across the whole project portfolio. The number of the assessed projects with different grades of overall relevance is shown in Figure 6a. This shows that almost all reviewed projects (86 per cent) were 'relevant' or 'highly relevant', with the majority of these being 'relevant' (50 per cent). All these projects are regarded as having satisfactory relevance. A small number (seven projects or 14 per cent) were assessed as 'partly relevant'. This is considered as less than satisfactory. No projects were assessed as 'mostly irrelevant'.

Fig. 6 Achievement of project relevance across the portfolio



a) For all 50 reviewed projects

b) For projects at MTR or Final Evaluation stages

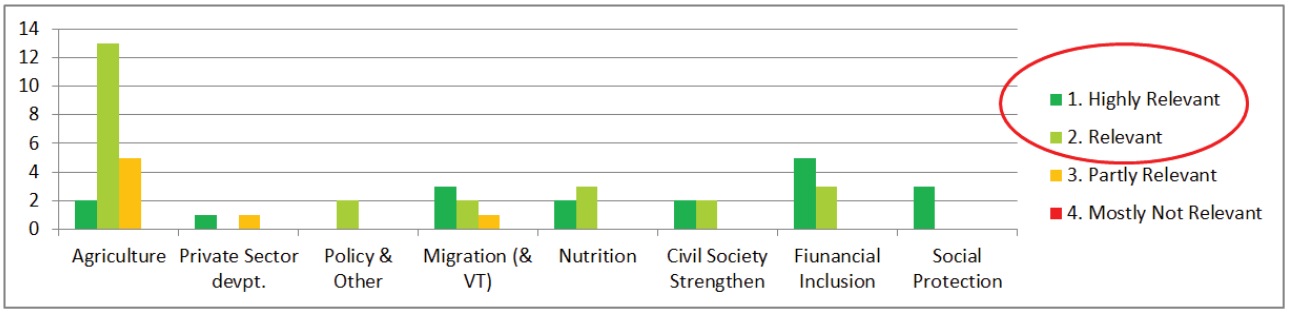
Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

In considering this, it should be appreciated that around half of the projects (24) were reviewed at the mid-term review stage while just over half (26) were reviewed at their final evaluation stage. It became apparent during the review that projects did tend to have performed better by the final evaluation stage, as would be expected. This is essentially because of the review and corrective actions introduced after mid-term reviews, as well as some other factors. The second graphic (Figure 6b) shows the performance of projects at mid-term review and final evaluation stages separately. It can be seen that the number of 'partly relevant' projects was reduced and the number of 'highly relevant' project increased slightly by final evaluation. Because of the availability of reports, the study only reviewed three projects at both mid-term review (during part 1) and final evaluation (part 2) stages. All three showed definite signs of improvement from the mid-term to their final evaluation.

3.2.2 Major factors influencing overall project elevance

The achievement of project relevance according to their primary high-level focus area/sector is presented in Figure 7 in order of increasing average relevance rating score. The data for this is provided in Table 2. This shows a definite variation by sector, with the social protection, migration, financial inclusion and civil society projects having proportionately more 'highly relevant' projects and fewer 'partly relevant' ones. The agriculture projects seem to have struggled most to achieve relevance, with more 'partly relevant' and only a few 'highly relevant' projects. This reflects a number of factors relating much to the generally more challenging environment, and the complexity, of many agricultural projects. This, and other factors that may affect the achievement of relevance, are discussed below.

Fig. 7 Achievement of project relevance by project high level focus area/sector



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Table 2: Achievement of relevance in different sectors

No	Primary Sector: In order from least to most relevant	Number of porjects assessed as:				Average Relevance Score
		Highly Relevant	Relevant	Partly Relevant	Poor / Irrelevant	
1	Agriculture	2	13	5		2.2 (least R)
2	Private Sector devpt.	1		1		2.0
3	Policy & Other		2			2.0
4	Migration (& VT)	3	2	1		1.7
5	Nutrition	2	3			1.6
6	Civil Society Strengthen	2	2			1.5
7	Fiunancial Inclusion	5	3			1.4
8	Social Protection	3				1.0 (most R)
	Total	18	25	7	0	1.78

Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

The achievement of relevance was also found to vary to some extent by the degree of facilitation compared to direct support. Projects with direct support tended to have lower relevance.

The variation in achievement of overall project relevance by other major project characteristics (type of IP, geographical area, etc) did not show convincing patterns. This seems to be because most projects achieved a high degree of relevance overall. Some variation by different project characteristics was observed for specific components of relevance (the ELQ sub-question areas) as discussed below.

3.2.3 Achievement in each of the Relevance ELQ Sub-Question areas

The overall relevance of a project is determined by considering and balancing the performance across the various sub-question areas outlined above. Table 3 shows the number of projects that were assessed as (1) highly satisfactory/relevant, (2) satisfactory/relevant (3), partly satisfactory/relevant or (4) mostly unsatisfactory/irrelevant, in relation to each of the sub-questions. Looking at each of these sub-questions in more detail, allows us to understand more about the areas where projects are doing well or less well in striving to be relevant.

The multiple column charts show the same data graphically to give an overall impression of performance across the reviewed projects. This clearly shows that most projects achieved a high level of relevance in terms of their objectives (Q1), the LIFT Strategy (Q3) and government (Q6). There were some weaknesses however in the level of relevance of several project designs to be able to achieve the objectives (Q2), the level of adaptive management that would be able to correct for inadequate design or changes in the context (Q3), and the level to which these project actually addressed the needs of the beneficiaries.

It should be noted that project relevance is determined largely by Q1, Q2 and Q3. Q4 is in part a consequence of these, and Q5 and Q6 are needed for the project to get finance (from LIFT) and acceptance by government. Thus, the weaknesses in Q2 and Q3 are of particular interest for improving relevance.

Table 3: Summarise performance of projects in ELQ Sub Question areas

	Relevance and ELQ Sub Questions	Port-folio perform ance	Highly R / Relevant / Partly R / Poor R	Number of Projects: Highly Rel	Rel-evant	Partly Rel	Poor Rel
Q1	Relevance of project objectives to beneficiaries.	High		41	9	0	0
Q2	Relevance of project design to different actors and the context.	Mod-erate		6	24	17	3
Q3	Adaptive management to correct for inadequate design or context changes.	Mod-erate		11	24	14	1
Q4	Actually addressed the needs of beneficiaries.	Mod-erate		10	22	17	1
Q5	Relevance to the LIFT Strategy	High		40	9	1	0
Q6	Relevance to government and country policies, etc.	High		27	21	2	0

Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

It should be noted that project relevance is determined largely by Q1, Q2 and Q3. Q4 is in part a consequence of these, and Q5 and Q6 are needed for the project to get finance (from LIFT) and acceptance by government. Thus, the weaknesses in Q2 and Q3 are of particular interest for improving relevance.

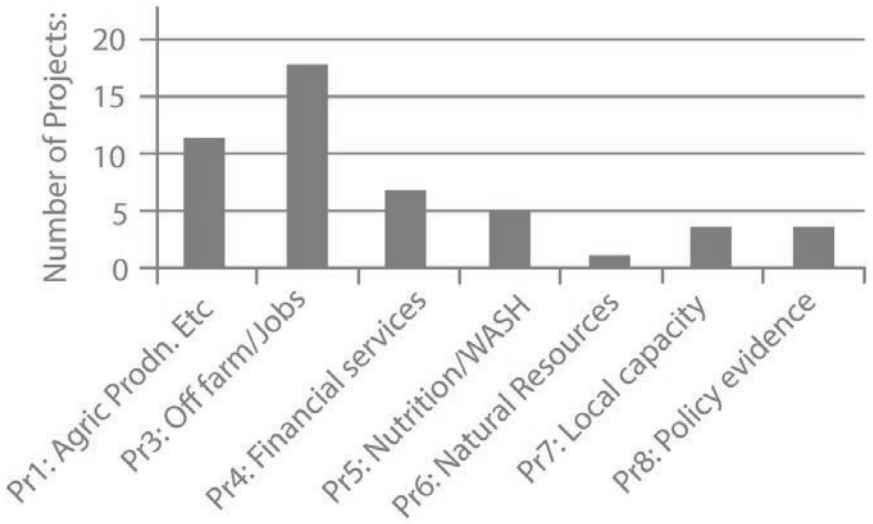
Q1: Relevance of project objectives to the beneficiaries

This relates to the LIFT ELQ Sub-Question "Have the target beneficiaries and their needs been accurately identified?" In overall terms, LIFT projects have performed well in this ELQ sub-question area. Most projects (82 per cent) were found to have objectives that were 'highly relevant' for the intended ultimate beneficiaries, and the rest were considered to have 'acceptably relevant' objectives. The ultimate beneficiaries are the various groups of poor and vulnerable households (e.g. smallholder farmers, landless households, etc) targeted by LIFT.

This is probably not surprising considering the strong focus on project objectives and the needs of beneficiaries in design and appraisal, and the requirement to align with the LIFT strategy and its outcomes. Thus, a number of projects focus on the improvement of agricultural production, market linkages and income, or improvements in nutrition and hygiene knowledge and behaviour change, which are all highly relevant for poor and vulnerable households. Other projects focus on the private sector, microfinance or policy support, which should benefit the ultimate

beneficiaries indirectly. Such objectives can also be highly relevant.
High relevance of the project objectives for the ultimate beneficiaries should also probably not be surprising since project proposals respond to LIFT calls for proposals that target important areas of the LIFT strategy, and this is designed to address the needs of these beneficiaries. When developing project proposals, implementing partners (IPs) often take one or more of the LIFT Purpose-Level or Programme-Level objectives as the high-level objectives of the project. IPs also generally consult and sometimes develop the project with local partners and beneficiaries, and often have extensive experience in the intended project areas. LIFT programme staff reviewing proposals also have a good knowledge of their programme area. The primary areas of focus for the reviewed projects correspond with the LIFT Programme Outcomes as shown in Figure 8. These are all considered to be relevant in principle to the ultimate beneficiaries.

Fig. 8 Primary LIFT Programme Outcomes



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Q2: Relevance of project design to different actors and the context

This relates to the LIFT ELQ Sub-Question "Have interventions been designed in an appropriate manner given the context?" Relevance of the project design to the different actors and context is essential to ensure that they will participate in the project as intended and the project starts with a good chance of achieving its objectives.

As can be seen from Table 3, this was the weakest of the three slightly weak areas for project relevance, with only 60 per cent of projects having 'satisfactory' or 'highly satisfactory' designs (and 40 per cent having only 'partly satisfactory' or less).

The reasons for the shortcomings in relevance in the project designs varied enormously, almost as much as the variety of the individual projects. It was possible however to identify a number of tendencies in project design that led to reduced relevance. Major factors include:

- Project being too complex and too ambitious for some of the intermediate actors, or beneficiaries, or even the IP.
- Lack of a viable technology, clear logic or business model that can reliably generate the benefits needed to engage and motivate the intermediate actors and ultimate beneficiaries.
- Clear identification of which technologies should be piloted and refined before rollout, and appropriate approach and methods to do this.
- Insufficient understanding of the context leading to the project logic being based on incorrect assumptions about the context. This would include the inappropriate application of an innovation that has been successful elsewhere.

Some projects may suffer from several such issues at the same time. Agriculture-focused projects for instance, which had the weakest relevance score on average, tended to be too complex and overambitious, but were also weak on clarity in the logic and in the viability of some of their technologies and business models. The complexity and lack of clarity also made them difficult to understand and implement. One food security-focussed project in Rakhine had components for farming, village savings and credit, nutrition, water supply, mangrove establishment and disaster risk reduction in a particularly challenging area. Two rice value chain focused projects also included components for vocational training and income generation of employment for landless, savings and credit and nutrition. The value chain business models did not mesh strongly enough with the interests of some of the private sector intermediate actors.

A hydroponics vegetable project in the Dry Zone aimed to introduce hydroponics technology to households in these very dry areas. The technology worked but was not easily adopted. The project design assumed this would work and did not include a proper piloting phase. This weakness in not uncommon. The hydroponics project adjusted its focus during implementation to focus mostly on nutrition.

The design of a handicraft social enterprise development project that should have been owned by dispersed groups of women, was not clear on how the business should be set up or where the business would find sufficient market to make it viable. This project also had a component on

accessing social services that was only indirectly linked to the social enterprise and an added complication.

Two projects stand out with issues relating to their understanding of the context at design stage. An upland agriculture project aimed to develop appropriate upland farming practices and introduce these and nutrition-sensitive agriculture to the State Agriculture Institute curriculum and farmers. The need and approach for piloting some technologies were not clearly specified in the design, and the designers did not fully account for the interests and scope for action of the State Agriculture Institutions. A honey production project design was based on mistaken assumptions about honey production being home-based, and did not take account of the need for migratory bee keeping that would make it difficult to achieve the high participation of women as anticipated.

The above challenges reflect the complex nature and constraints of rural livelihoods and the agriculture sector in particular, but these do need to be reasonably well understood and taken into account. Of course, it is not always possible to fully understand the context and the nuanced interests and motivations of different actors. Where there is a need for piloting or there are uncertainties, a certain amount of flexibility can be built into the design as discussed below.

It is also important to be realistic. LIFT programming has tended to encourage IPs to aim for high and possibly overambitious targets. IPs, for their part, tend to be over-optimistic and can under-estimate what they can achieve if working in a new technical or geographical area. Some IPs seem to have a longer timeframe and expect to continue beyond the three years normally provided for a project.

The financial inclusion and social protection projects and civil society strengthening projects have performed the best in terms of the relevance of their designs. Although there were not many of these projects from which to generalise (only eight, three and four respectively), it seems clear that these are substantially different in nature from those projects mentioned above. Most of these projects have a clearer model and tend to be less complex, with relatively few components and intermediate actors who operate more as partners. Several financial inclusion projects work with one existing microfinance organisation as a partner, to help them develop their business model to reach new and probably more vulnerable households and then expand their coverage. These projects essentially have one component and one MFI partner who is generally competent and knows their market well. One social protection project partnered with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to develop and rollout policy for the elderly. This is a comparatively well focused project and has one competent and a very committed and interested partner. The approach of embedded staff and a collaborative and flexible approach were particularly appropriate. The two other social protection projects worked

with village social protection committees and revolving loan funds in receptive communities. The civil society strengthening projects also work with interested partners and are comparatively well focused and reasonably clear in what they were trying to do. It should be noted also that all these projects have a kind of 'facilitation' approach, where the project works with specific partner organisations that provide services to the ultimate beneficiaries.

Q3: Adaptive management to correct for inadequate design or context changes

This relates to the LIFT ELQ Sub-Question: "To what extent have interventions and approaches been adapted or flexible to respond to changing circumstances?" This is a crucial area for overall project relevance, since it allows projects to correct for weak designs or if the context changes.

It is not necessarily feasible to have a perfect understanding of the context. Considerable effort may be needed to do so, that would be better spent on implementation. Imperfect designs should not matter if the project has strong monitoring to build a good understanding of what is happening, and the willingness and ability to adjust the design and implementation accordingly. Some projects actually need more of a process approach, with piloting and refinement before expansion of a particular intervention; or collaborative development of technologies, systems or capacity with partner organisations.

Table 3 indicates however that this was also one of the three areas of slight weakness although slightly better than design, with 70 per cent of reviewed projects having satisfactory adaptive management compared to 60 per cent for design.

The ability to set up effective M&E systems, and management systems that can interpret the data, understand what is happening in the field, and make and implement sensible decisions to adjust implementation, depends on a number of factors.

- The level of understanding and M&E and management capacity of the IP
- The project implementation set up with respect to the balance of knowledge and decision making between the IP's headquarters and field offices
- The level of openness of the IP to change (the degree of "fixation" on their design)
- The level of flexibility "allowed" by LIFT

It might be thought that international IPs might do better since they mostly have stronger M&E and management capacity. However, two main factors run counter to this:

- Stronger IPs tend to design more complex projects that take longer to set up and have ambitious targets in which the IP becomes buried for the first half of the project. This would apply to the Delta rice value chain and Rakhine food security projects mentioned above. Both were implemented by competent international IPs but were unduly complex and became too buried in chasing targets to see if things were working.
- International IPs often set up their projects with a strong headquarters office that supports a generally weaker field office. While this has some advantages, it can distance the main decision makers from the realities of the field. Some of the Tat Lan IPs ran into this issue.

One of the best projects for adaptive management was probably a nutrition education project in the Dry Zone that was run by a national IP directly from its field office. This had very strong roots into the communities through a direct consultative community approach involving the IP's senior staff.

In several of the weaker projects, the IPs became "fixated" on the models built into their design and seemed reluctant or unable to change when the activities did not seem to be working well enough. This would include three of the projects mentioned above with design issues: (1) the uplands agriculture project (trying to change the SAI curriculum), (2) the honey production project (based on home-based production when a migratory beekeeping was needed), and (3) the handicraft social enterprise project (that struggled to see how their project-run setup could become community owned). All these projects were slow to address the issues and did not do so until their mid-term reviews highlighted the problems and corrective action was agreed with LIFT.

The level of flexibility "allowed" by LIFT has also been important. Under previous LIFT strategies (prior to 2015) projects had logframe tables that were heavy on milestone output and outcome targets that IPs were strongly encouraged to achieve. This continued in the 2014-2018 but shifted considerably during this period with the introduction of the MEAL framework, a much stronger focus on learning, and much improved LIFT Programme monitoring. IP contracts with LIFT are still based to some extent on project output and outcome targets, but LIFT is more open to change. IPs may be reluctant to shift from their designs but projects can take a lot of effort ant time to set up. The end result is a mix of the above.

The projects that performed best in terms of adaptive management, tended to be relatively simpler (less components) and work in a more collaborative and facultative way with competent and committed local partners. These include the above-mentioned Dry Zone nutrition education project, two social protection projects working with community social protection committees with revolving funds, MFI strengthening and expansion projects, the Dry Zone livestock policy and implementation

project and a partnership project supporting co-management policy and capacity.

Although most projects performed well in terms of relevance, there is scope for improvement in design and adaptive management; and these two areas are linked. Most projects already spend much time and effort on the design and this can delay start-up. The level of understanding of the context and perfection in design will necessarily be limited. Designs should probably shift to being more focused (less complicated) and facilitative. Much improved adaptive management will also be needed to go with this. This is discussed further below and appropriate recommendations made.

Q4: Actually addressed the needs of beneficiaries

This relates to the LIFT ELQ Sub-Question: "To what extent have the interventions actually addressed the needs of the target beneficiaries (including men, women and different social groups)?" This is important to cross check that the relevance in relation to the objectives, design and adaptive management has worked and the project actually addresses the real needs of beneficiaries. This is closely related to effectiveness.

Table 3 indicates however that this was the third of the three areas of slight weakness with regard to relevance, with only 64 per cent of reviewed projects addressing the needs of beneficiaries in a satisfactory way compared to 60 per cent for design and 70 per cent for adaptive management. More than one-third were partly satisfactory or less in addressing the needs of beneficiaries.

The reasons for lower performance relate to a number of factors including the relevance of the objectives, design and adaptive management as discussed above, as well as external factors that delayed or prevented beneficiary needs being addressed, or having a very indirect route to address beneficiary needs through, for example, policy or legislation.

Most of the projects that were weak in this area were weak because of weaknesses in the design, adaptive management of both of these areas. Examples of these projects were provided above.

The Tat Lan phase 2 projects were significantly constrained in addressing the needs of beneficiaries by the serious challenges of the area. That is why the projects were needed. Several agriculture projects suffered from lack of viable and adoptable technologies combined with weak adaptive management that was too slow to adjust. In this respect, it must be remembered that agriculture extension-focused projects depend on timely start-up to catch the first season and can often not bring changes until the following season. This needs a more agile design if the project is to succeed in only three years (and miss the first growing season).

Remedial action here would focus on addressing the design and adaptive management discussed above, as well as other areas for improvement relating to efficiency and effectiveness of projects.

Q5: Relevance to the LIFT Strategy

This relates to the LIFT ELQ Sub-Question: "To what extent has LIFT appropriately followed and implemented its strategy?" For the implementation of projects, this concerns the extent to which projects have supported the implementation of LIFT's strategy. This is important for the project to ensure that it is fully supported by LIFT and receives investment funding from LIFT. This is linked to the project's relevance to beneficiaries and the government since LIFT's strategy was designed to be relevant for them also.

Table 3 indicates that almost all projects (98 per cent) were satisfactory in terms of relevance to LIFT's strategy, with most of these being 'highly relevant'. This is not surprising since, as mentioned above, projects respond to LIFT's calls for proposals that are mostly based on the LIFT programme strategies that are based on the LIFT strategy, with some being based directly on LIFT's strategy. It was also mentioned above that almost all IPs take the LIFT programme or strategy outcomes as the higher level objectives for their proposed projects.

Q6: Relevance to government and country policies, etc.

This is not a specific ELQ sub-question but relates indirectly to the LIFT ELQ sub-question on relevance to LIFT's strategy, since the LIFT strategy is expected to be relevant to the government and country policies etc. This was included in the assessment of project relevance since it is commonly included in such assessments. Relevance to the government is needed for acceptance of the project and any necessary collaboration. The degree of relevance needed depends to some extent on the level of collaboration with government needed for the project.

Table 3 indicates that almost all projects (96 per cent) were assessed as satisfactory in relation to relevance to government, with about half of these being 'highly relevant'. This is not surprising since projects are designed to be relevant to LIFT's strategy, which is relevant to the government.

3.3 Achievement of Sustainability in projects (ELQ 3)

Overall project sustainability is assessed in two stages:

- Stage 1 identifies the improvements in the real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes, etc that should continue after the end of the project and assesses the likelihood that each of these will actually continue. These entities and systems are essential for generating the benefits for the ultimate beneficiaries. This assessment considers the financial, social, institutional, environmental, etc issues at the entity or system level. This also gives information on the development of sustainable models (ELQ sub-questions).
- Stage 2 takes a whole project and longer-term perspective to take account of the 'externalities' and 'whole project' effects that may be missed by the Stage 1 entity-level analysis. Stage 2 assesses any net adverse social, environmental or economic impacts that may result from the project as a whole. If found, these may downgrade the overall sustainability found from the stage 1 analysis. This also gives information on environmental risk of agricultural technologies (ELQ sub-question).

What 'sustainability' means needs to be defined and understood for each project. For many, sustainability means that the organisations or other types of entity set up or strengthened or improved behaviour changes made through project support, should continue on their own after the project. For studies or policy support projects or components, sustainability means that the work done by the project is used to influence or support the development of policy or practice. For capacity building components or projects (e.g. Civil Society Strengthening and partnership programmes) it means that the improved capacities and systems are actually used and continue to be used, to bring some kind of benefit to the ultimate beneficiaries.

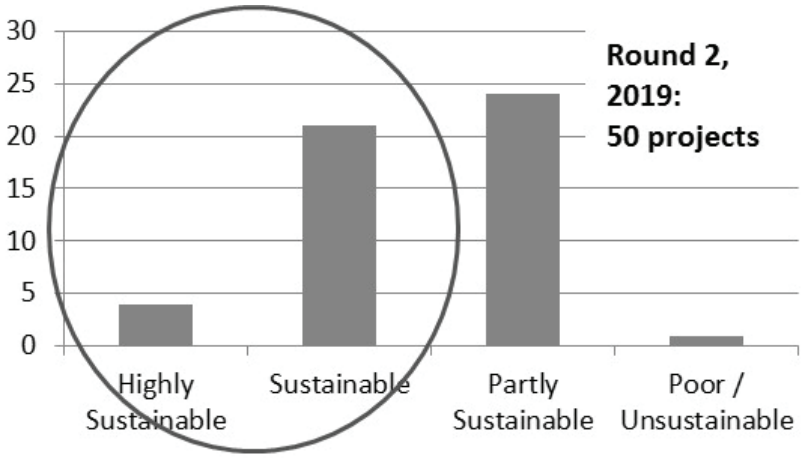
Sustainability was assessed in terms of the same types of levels that were used for relevance and are widely recognised and used. As for relevance, these relate closely to the level of shortcomings and intensity of corrective action that would be needed mid-project or give a summative assessment of likely sustainability after the end of the project.

1	**Highly sustainable**: almost no or only minor shortcomings. **Highly satisfactory.**
2	**Sustainable (mostly)**: modest shortcomings that would need small corrective actions (if mid-project). **Satisfactory**.
3	**Partly sustainable**: significant shortcomings that would need significant corrective actions with extra monitoring and supervision (if mid-project). **Less than satisfactory**.
4	**Poor and mostly unsustainable**: serious shortcomings that would need urgent and major corrective action or closure (if mid-project). **Unsatisfactory**.

The performance in achievement of overall project sustainability in the assessed LIFT strategy period has been relatively weak. Figure 9 shows the number of projects that were assessed as having achieved different levels of sustainability. This is for the current Round 2 summative study and was based on a mix of 50 projects at mid-term review and final evaluation stages up to June 2019.

This shows that only half of the projects were found likely to have satisfactory or better sustainability, with only four of these assessed as being highly sustainable. The other half of the projects were found to have less than satisfactory sustainability, with most being only partly sustainable. One was assessed as poor or mostly unsustainable. This means that around half the projects had significant shortcomings that reduced the level of sustainability achieved. This may affect all or only some of the project components so that some parts of some projects may be fully sustainable.

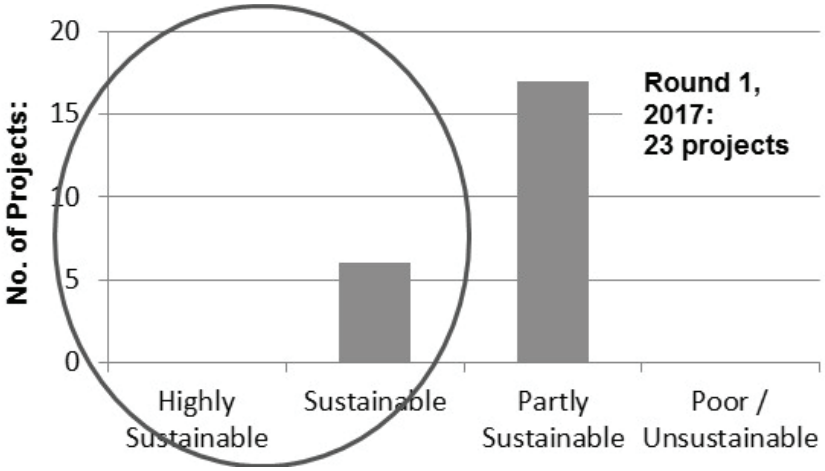
Fig. 9 Project sustainability across the portfolio: Round 2, 2019



Source: Round 2 assessment of 50 projects at MTR or Final Evaluation stages up to June 2019

Although this shows relatively weak performance in overall portfolio terms, it shows a marked improvement over the assessment made for the Round 1 (formative) R&S Study covering 23 projects up to June 2017. This is shown in Figure 10. Only around one-quarter of these projects were assessed as having satisfactory sustainability, with none being highly sustainable. The other three-quarters of the projects were found to be only partly sustainable.

Fig. 10 Sustainability of 23 projects assessed during Round 1, 2017



Round 2: 50 projects from a mix of projects at MTR or Final Evaluation stages up to June 2019

Although this shows relatively weak performance in overall portfolio terms, it shows a marked improvement over the assessment made for the Round 1 (formative) R&S Study covering 23 projects up to June 2017. This is shown in Figure 10. Only around one-quarter of these projects were assessed as having satisfactory sustainability, with none being highly sustainable. The other three-quarters of the projects were found to be only partly sustainable.

The difference between the Round 1 and significantly improved Round 2 assessments appears to be due to a number of factors.

- The Round 1 formative study used 12 projects that had started during the previous LIFT Strategy (2011/12 to 2014/15) and were therefore aligned in some way to that strategy. Seven of these were completely from that strategy and selected because they were the only projects with final evaluation reports, and this was needed to help develop and test the methodology. The rest continued into the 2014-2018 strategy period and became more aligned to that.
- Round 1 also used a mix of eight pre-mid-term review annual reports, eight mid-term review reports, and the seven final evaluation reports (from the previous strategy). Each of these types of reports had different levels of focus on relevance and sustainability and were carried out at different stages during the life of the project. This significantly affected the amount of information gained from the reports, and its usefulness for assessing the relevance and particularly sustainability likely to be achieved by the end of the project.

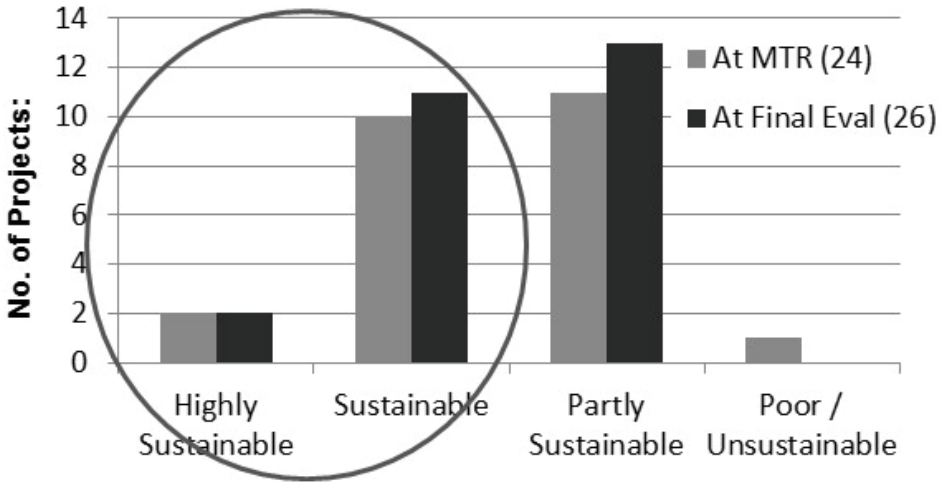
The final evaluations were found to be by far the most useful documents in assessing relevance and particularly sustainability. This was because: (1) they had a much stronger focus on relevance and sustainability (partly because of specific inclusion of the ELQs in the evaluation terms of reference), and (2) they were carried out at the end of the project and so reflected the end of project situation. At the same time, it was clear from the review that projects focused much more on sustainability, and relevance issues where they existed, after the mid-term reviews highlighted problems. Thus, relevance and particularly sustainability were found likely to improve towards the end of the project.

At the same time, it was evident from the reviews across the two strategies, that there were considerable improvements in the quality of the designs and capacity of IPs from one strategy period to the next. In addition to the change in focus, well written LIFT Programme strategies, and much clearer documentation all round, the 2014-2018 strategy (the one under review) introduced the use of programme and project theories of change and the Monitoring and Evaluation for Accountability and Learning (MEAL) approach that was much more focused on learning. This introduced the LIFT ELQs with their specific focus on relevance and sustainability, etc. All this meant that the strategy under review had a stronger focus on relevance and sustainability than the previous one.

Although this shows relatively weak performance in overall portfolio terms, it shows a marked improvement over the assessment made for the Round 1 (formative) R&S Study covering 23 projects up to June 2017. This is shown in Figure 10. Only around one-quarter of these projects were assessed as having satisfactory sustainability, with none being highly sustainable. The other three-quarters of the projects were found to be only partly sustainable.

The improvement from mid-term review to final evaluation can be seen from Figure 11.

Fig. 11 Sustainability of Round 2 projects at MTR and final evaluation stages



Source: R&S Study data

This shows the achievement of sustainability for Round 2 projects assessed at mid-term review (24) and final evaluation (26) stages. Note that this is a comparison of different projects and not the same projects as assessed at mid-term review and final evaluation stages. This shows a relatively small improvement however, which indicates the stronger effect of improvement from the previous strategy to the one under review. The review assessed only three projects at mid-term and final evaluation stages and the findings are consistent. The relatively small improvement appears to indicate also the difficulty of solving sustainability issues towards the end of the projects. It is clearly better to start working towards sustainability from the beginning.

3.3.2 Major factors influencing overall project sustainability

Success factors needed for sustainability in projects

Projects achieve sustainability through their various interventions leading to improvements in real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc. that are able to continue on their own after the end of the project. Each real-world entity etc. needs a number of things to be able to do this. At a very generalised level, the essence of these sustainability **success factors** is:

- Each real-world entity, system change or behaviour change etc. needs a **model** that is viable and works in its **context**, to generate the **benefits** that **motivate** all the various actors who need to be motivated to do something to make the model work. Motivation is crucial and essential. If the benefits are not sufficient to motivate all actors then things will not work well. **Motivation** requires that each real-world entity, system, etc. has the right **ownership** (with appropriate responsibility and control), so that the benefits get to the right people; and motivate them to make the system work.
- Each real-world entity, system, etc. also needs to have all the appropriate **capacity, tools and systems** (the **means**) in place to enable it to function (and generate the benefits).

- For this to work, the context should support (provide an **opportunity** for) the model to work. The **model should fit the context**. This means being in the right place at the right time.

- The project **design** and the **way it is implemented** are also crucial. The design should identify a model that is appropriate for the context and actors and have an appropriate approach to implementation that enables the actors to build their capacity and make things work as above, as quickly as possible. This usually requires helping beneficiaries doing things themselves (not for the project to do it for them: e.g. facilitation) and starting things as they will continue.

At the same time, the entities etc. themselves, and the project as a whole (the combination of entities and changes acting together in its context) should not have any adverse impacts on wider society, the environment or the economy. There should be no external or hidden costs that are borne by others or future generations. This would mean for instance that there are no losers from the gains of the project beneficiaries, the environment is not over-exploited and damaged for the benefit of project beneficiaries, or over-prediction does not damage the market and reduce prices for others.

It is interesting to note the similarity between the key success factors for

sustainability as outlined above, and the three key requirements commonly recognised for someone to be considered a suspect likely to have done a crime; that is **motive, means and opportunity**. The link is through behaviour theory, which is a part of criminology, as well as the underlying methodologies to achieve change (e.g. through the ToC) in a project or programme.

Given the complexity of the above, it can be appreciated that there are a number of factors that can influence overall project sustainability, as well as the sustainability of each entity, system, etc. The main ones are discussed below in relation to the findings from the 50 projects reviewed. After that, the achievement of sustainability in some of the main models supported by these projects, and the ELQ sub-questions, are explored.

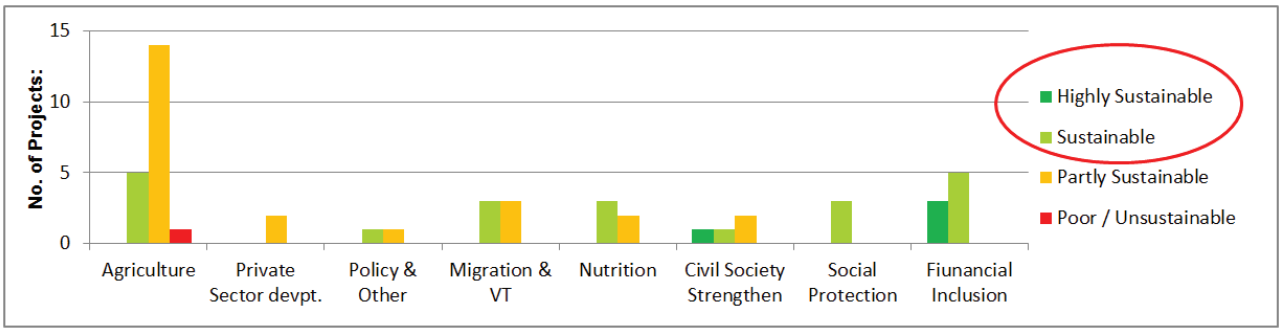
Nature of the project: the project high-level focus or "sector"

The high-level focus or sector in which a project works is expected to have a major influence on the likelihood of project sustainability in a number of ways. The sector determines the type and nature of the models, businesses, actors etc. that the project can work with. Each of the models has associated opportunities and challenges related to the associated technologies, markets, actors, etc. The actors themselves have different interests, capacities and motivations.

The achievement of project sustainability according to their primary high level focus areas recognised by LIFT (this can be thought of as a sector), is presented graphically in Figure 12 in order of increasing average sustainability (by rating score). The data for this is provided in Table 4. Although the number of projects assessed in each sector can be low, this shows a definite variation across the sectors. The financial inclusion and social protection projects did best with only sustainable or highly sustainable projects. This reflects their generally simpler structure and strong focus on one type of partner who was highly motivated and took on the functions needed.

The civil society strengthening, nutrition, migration and vocational training and policy sector projects had around half of the projects assessed as only partly sustainable while this proportion was significantly worse for agriculture and private sector development projects. This reflects the more complex and risky nature of these sectors with several actors and entity types. The agriculture projects in particular tended to cover multiple actors from producers to traders and processors along the value chain. This is discussed further below.

Fig. 12 Achievement of project sustainability by project high-level focus area/sector



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Table 4: Achievement of project sustainability in different sectors

Primary Sector of each project	Highly Sustainable	Sustainable	Partly Sustainable	Poor / Unsustainable
Agriculture		5	14	1
Private Sector devpt.			2	
Policy & Other		1	1	
Migration & Vocational Training		3	3	
Nutrition		3	2	
Civil Society Strengthening	1	1	2	
Social Protection		3		
Fiunancial Inclusion	3	5		
Total	4	21	24	1

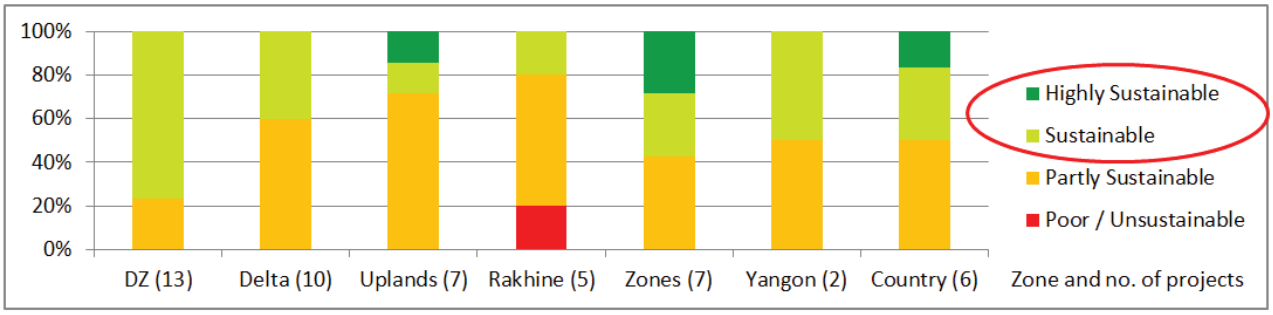
Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Geographical area and its context

The sustainability across projects in each geographical area in shown in Figure 13. This is shown as proportions to make it easier to see the relative difference. Each project was assigned to the geographical zone to which it most relates. "Zones" means a mix of LIFT's main zones (Delta, Dry Zone, and Uplands). Figure 13 clearly shows differences across the different geographical areas as would be expected. This is thought to relate mostly to the challenges and opportunities in each area. The Dry Zone generally has a stronger commercial base and economy with more opportunities for private sector engagement in e.g. agriculture. The various upland areas covered by the Uplands Programme are generally much less well developed with weaker physical and social infrastructure and capacity of the CSOs

and private sector actors. The Delta has its own special challenges including very high landlessness. Rakhine has particularly severe constraints, which have prevented operation of projects in some areas. The LIFT geographic programmes that supported these main zones have significant differences that reflect these geographic opportunities and challenges. These also influence the beneficiaries, intermediate actors, partners and models that projects can work with, and the challenges facing sustainability.

Fig. 13 Achievement of project sustainability across different geographical areas



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

Project design and complexity

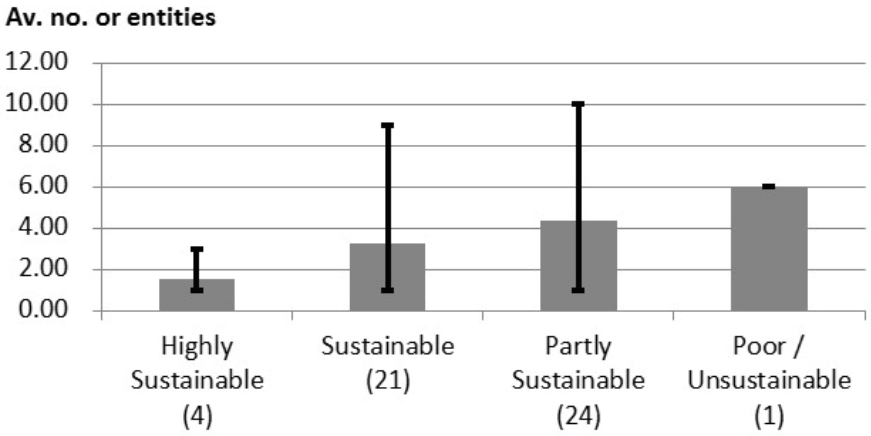
Projects may be complicated (in the sense of having many parts), or complex (in the sense of having many interacting parts that are more difficult to predict). The number of real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes, etc. that projects should support to improve is a proxy for how complicated a project is.

A total of 184 separate entities, etc. were identified for the 50 projects (with an average of 3.7 and ranging from 1 to 10). The average number of entities, etc. per project at different levels of sustainability is shown in Figure 14, together with the maximum and minimum number of entities per project. This shows a clear relationship between the number of entities per project (complexity) and its level of likely sustainability, with the simpler projects tending to achieve higher sustainability. The same was found for relevance.

This is consistent with the impression gained during analysis. This appears to be mainly because the simpler projects (which have fewer entities) tend to have a small number of stronger entities that are partners supported by the project in a more facilitated way to improve something they do or do

something new for the benefit of more ultimate beneficiaries. Thus microfinance institutions may be helped to develop and expand appropriate lending packages to support landless households with micro-enterprises or migration. Several projects helped community social protection schemes to improve and expand their income and services. One project was embedded in the Department of Social Welfare to help them develop and rollout their old age support programme. All these institutions were supported to develop their own viable services and are very well placed and motivated to continue after the project. The fewer the number of entities also make projects much easier to implement.

Fig. 14 Average no. of entities per project



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

The way the project is implemented

It is clear that the way the project is set up and implemented and the underlying project approaches used, will be important in determining the level of sustainability likely to be achieved. It seems appropriate to focus on four linked aspects here.

The 'Facilitation – Direct Support' continuum

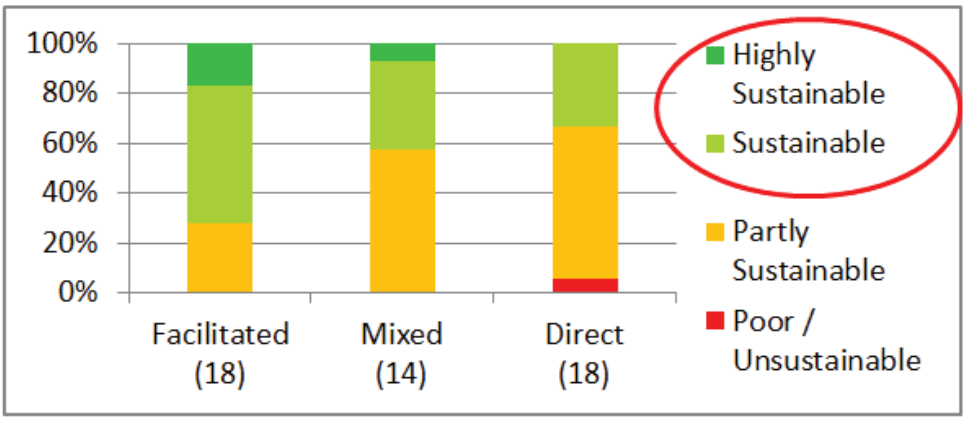
The 'facilitation approach' is an elusive concept that is best understood by contrasting it with the 'direct support' approach. In the more common direct support approach, projects do things directly for beneficiaries. This would include the provision of extension etc. training, or directly setting up and running (with the community) a farmer production enterprise, volunteer advisory service, savings and credit organisation or village revolving fund. The facilitation approach would involve a much lighter touch approach where the project would stimulate or catalyse (facilitate)

partner organisations to do something new or better. This targets "leverage points" in a system and aims for system change. This would include things like: helping agri-input dealers to develop and extend their business model to include advisory services: helping an interested and capable microfinance partner to improve their range of loan products to better suit landless households and expand this to new areas; or helping nascent community social protection groups improve their services through capacity and increasing capital. The provision of free inputs would be close to direct support. Subsidised inputs or the free provision of public good inputs would be closer to facilitation. As can be appreciated there is a kind of continuum from the pure facilitation approach to the pure direct support approach.

It should be noted also that embedded in the facilitation approach is the idea that it is nearly always much better to "**start something as it should continue**". This contrasts with the approach where the project sets up something (such as a farmer advisory service, farmer producer enterprise, credit services) and expects to "hand this over" to the community. It is almost always better to start going as they should continue, particularly in a short three-year project.

When reviewing each project, the general project approach was assessed in terms of where it would fall on the continuum between more or less facilitated to more or less direct support. Figure 15 shows the assessed level of sustainability compared to the degree of facilitation.

Fig. 15: Sustainability from facilitation



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

This clearly shows that projects that followed more of a facilitation approach were more sustainable (72 per cent compared to around 40 per cent sustainable or better).

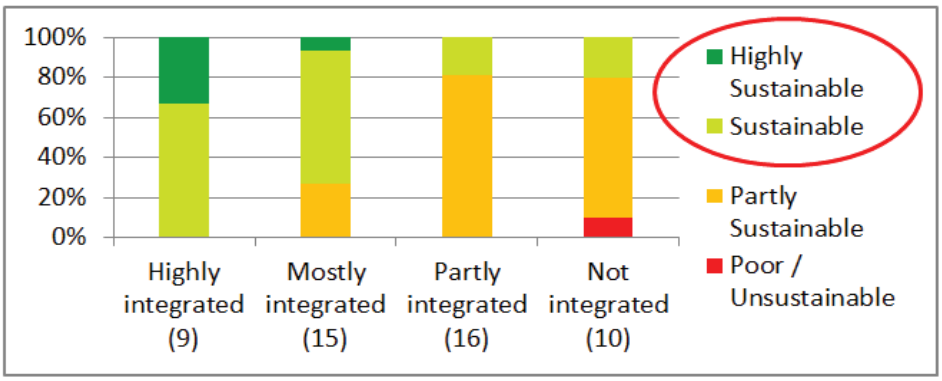
The facilitation approach implies that the project needs to find interested and capable partners. This tends to be easier for microfinance projects than for agriculture or social development project working in poor, remote and weakly developed areas (e.g. remote villages, upland areas). This can make it difficult to use a pure facilitation approach. The basic ideas such as

The facilitation approach implies that the project needs to find interested and capable partners. This tends to be easier for microfinance projects than for agriculture or social development project working in poor, remote and weakly developed areas (e.g. remote villages, upland areas). This can make it difficult to use a pure facilitation approach. The basic ideas such as stimulating, catalysing, starting as things will continue, helping people to do things better etc. still apply however. The provision of any free inputs should be carefully scrutinised and justified.

Integration of sustainability into project design and implementation

The study also assessed each project on the level of focus on, and integration of, sustainability into the project's design, monitoring and learning systems and (adaptive) management decision making. This was assessed on the familiar four-point scale. Figure 16 clearly shows that the more that projects integrated sustainability into their design and implementation, the higher the level of sustainability they were likely to achieve.

Fig. 16: Integration of sustainability



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

While the above may seem obvious, it was surprising how little some projects were aware of the need for, concerned with, or had strategies for, achieving sustainability. The IPs' apparent awareness, knowledge and experience of sustainability was also roughly assessed and closely followed the above (as would be expected). Some IPs simply disregarded sustainability and were of the view that the project timeframe was too short for what they wanted to implement to be sustainable. They had a vague intention of continuing in the area to support their beneficiaries but this was not well founded.

What tended to happen in such a situation was that the sustainability issue was raised at the mid-term review stage. If the project was thought likely to be extended, then sustainability was deferred. If extension was not likely then the idea of an exit strategy was introduced. Either way, it is argued here that this is not the way to implement a project if sustainability is important. It is further argued that sustainability is essential. If the wonderful things set up by a project (e.g. producer organisations, seed producer networks and associations, etc.) are not sustainable and continue beyond the end of the project, then their value is very much reduced and could in some cases be negated.

This needs urgent corrective action. IPs should build sustainability fully into their project designs (where possible using a facilitation approach) and integrate approaches to achieving sustainability from the start into their monitoring and learning, and management systems. There should be no need for the development of an exit strategy towards the end of a project because it is an integral part of the design and implementation.

At the same time, IPs should work within the timeframe allocated for the project to make sure that what is set up has a good chance of being sustainable. If they think that they will continue in some way to support the developments initiated by the project after the end of the project, then they should have a longer-term strategy or framework (that has sustainability firmly integrated within it), and make sure that the LIFT-supported project achieves something sustainable within this longer-term strategy or framework.

LIFT for its part, should consider supporting a conditional phased approach for projects that need a longer timeframe for projects that need this to achieve sustainability in worthwhile societal changes. This would be needed for projects that work in the more challenging, less well developed areas or stimulate change in more conservative policy areas or sectors. LIFT already does this in practice since it often grants no-cost or costed extensions to projects that need more time. The problem is however that continuing support against conditions (e.g. sound implementation and securing progress) is not agreed beforehand to provide the basis for sound planning.

Adaptive management

As with relevance, mention must be made of the need for more adaptive management. If sustainability is to be achieved, it must be built into the project and worked towards from the start. Movement towards sustainability in the entities and systems and behaviour changes worked on by different projects can be difficult to see with conventional "hard" monitoring, and more flexible learning-focused monitoring should be included. Such learning should be a part of adaptive management that closely follows changes and makes adjustments as needed. Adaptive management is an important part of the facilitation approach.

Project management structure

As was mentioned in the discussion on relevance, the projects with more learning-focussed monitoring and adaptive management systems work better with stronger field offices that are well connected with its beneficiaries. The more centralised and hierarchical project management structures (with headquarter-based decision-making based on remote monitoring) can struggle to quickly understand and respond to the more subtle changes taking place.

Finally, it should be noted that the most appropriate management structure and levels of adaptive management and facilitation etc. should be chosen to match the needs of the project. Projects with a competent partner who is implementing a project with a well-tested business model (e.g. microfinance expansion or some kind of infrastructure project) may need more straightforward systems and approaches to achieve sustainability.

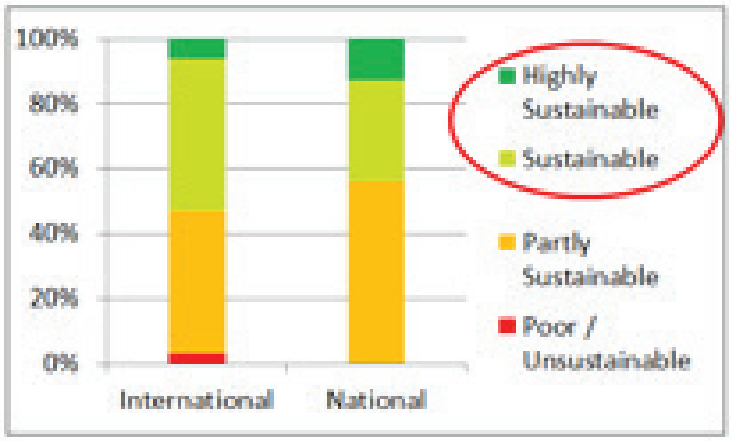
Other factors influencing project sustainability

While the capacity, experience and ability of the IP must be an important factor in a project's ability to achieve sustainability, the findings from the study did not show a clear difference between international and national IPs (that is assumed to reflect these things). As mentioned in the discussion on relevance, international IPs can develop more complicated (multi-component) projects, have more centralised and hierarchical management structures and not have as strong connections with the field and beneficiaries. Some projects with international IPs produced very well written and convincing proposals based on an insufficient understanding of the context. On the other hand, some projects from national partners also had their flaws. Clearly there is a balance and each partner should be considered on their own merits and in line with the project they propose to implement.

Other factors influencing project sustainability

IPs often say that the timeframe of their project is too short to achieve sufficient sustainability. LIFT projects are mostly of three-years' duration though some are shorter and some extended. The study did not find any clear pattern relating to the length of the project. A total of 19 projects were judged to have followed on from similar projects or built on previous experience of the IP. It might be expected that these would achieve higher sustainability, but this was not found. It seems that there are many factors at work.

Fig. 17 Influence of IP type



3.3.3 Sustainability of different types of entity and models (SELQs 1 to 3)

Overall project sustainability was found to depend in all cases on the sustainability of the **improvements in the real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes, outcomes** etc. that the project was intended to generate. Overall project sustainability was downgraded in line with the level of risks to sustainability for each of these entities, etc., and their importance in the project. Thus 'partly sustainable' could mean that there were significant risks to sustainability for at least some of the more important entities, etc., or there were lesser risks for all entities. No projects had their sustainability downgraded further for shortcomings in project-wide social, environmental or economic sustainability.

Overview of sustainability for each type of entity or model

A total of 19 different types of real-world entities etc. were identified as listed in Table 5. The projects reviewed were found to have supported

improvements in a total of 124 different real-world entities, systems, etc. (excluding household adoption, policy support and some others). The level of likely sustainability of each of these was assessed as high, medium or low. The details of these assessments are summarised in Table 5, together with the generalised assessment of sustainability for each entity type.

Table 3: Summarise performance of projects in ELQ Sub Question areas

No	Type of real world entity, system, etc where improvements should continue	Sustainability			Total				Gerneralised Assessment
		H	M	L		H	M	L	
1	Microfinance institution / organisation or related model, including access.	9	1	0	10				Highly OK
2	Community-based savings and credit groups.	4	1	0	5				OK
3	CSO: that is registered and reasonably well organised (more than a network).	8	1	1	10				OK
4	Learning and Information systems, document repository, etc.	4	2	0	6				OK
5	Private Sector Business: e.g. seed production, machinery, etc.	12	7	0	19				OK
6	Community-based Village Revolving funds for credit and / or social protection.	3	1	1	5				OK
7	Community Based Organisation / Groups for nutrition.	3	2	0	5				OK
8	Private Sector Business for extenson.	2	1	1	4				Partly OK
9	Other Community Based Organisation:	4	3	2	9				Partly OK
10	Government Service Provider: e.g. for health, agric research, education, training, etc.	7	10	0	17				Partly OK
11	Government Extension Service Provider:	1	2	0	3				Partly OK
12	Community Natural Resources Management models.	1	1	2	4				Poor
13	Community-based Value Chain Organisation: farmer producer enterprises, etc.	2	5	2	9				Poor
14	Community-based Value Chain Organisation Extension Services.	0	3	2	5				Poor
15	Network or System: Groups or entities working together for a common interest.	0	7	4	11				Poor
16	Social Business: community-owned businesses.	0	2	0	2				Poor
	Total:	**60**	**49**	**15**	**124**				
	Percentage of total entities, etc:	**48%**	**40%**	**12%**	**100%**				
17	Households / Ultimate beneficiaries: behaviour change or IGA business.	29	16	3	48				OK
18	Policy or programme / practice.	4	1	0	5				OK
19	Other.	1	5	1	7				Poor
	Total:	**94**	**71**	**19**	**184**				
	Percentage of total entities, etc:	**51%**	**39%**	**10%**	**100%**				

The reasons for achieving or not achieving sustainability of the intended improvements in each entity, system of behaviour change were many and varied, but tended to depend on the generation of identifiable 'success factors'. These were outlined in section 3.3.2 as: (1) a model that works in its context to generate benefits that motivate the people concerned, (2) having the appropriate owner (e.g. institutional home) with real ownership, (3) the systems and capacity in place to continue. Because the models selected tended to be at least theoretically feasible and sustainable (due to the project selection process), achieving sustainability depended also very much on the favourability of the actual context, and the implementation approach of the project.

At a very generalised level, the main single most important reason for downgrading sustainability of the various entities, systems or behaviour changes was related to the profitability of the business model, institutional strength (capacity and ownership), the adoption of improved practices or behaviours, or a combination of reasons. The specific reasons for reduced sustainability tended to be very specific to each entity and its context and varied considerably.

While Table 5 gives us a generalised assessment for the likely sustainability of the 19 identified types of real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes, etc., to learn more about how well and why specific entity types are working we need to look at the individual entities, etc across the different projects. The first three of LIFT's sustainability ELQ sub-questions ask exactly this question for some specific types of entities and models: (1) private sector service providers, particularly those that support agricultural value chains, (2) models for improving the position of farmers in agricultural value chains, (3) models for the management of common natural resources. The following sections look at these types of entity and model in more detail in order to answer these ELQ sub-questions.

LIFT commissioned an assessment of LIFT experience in agricultural development, nutrition sensitive agriculture and agricultural markets titled Agriculture and Rural Markets pillar of LIFT post-2018 in June 2018 (by F Geilfus). This carried out a wide-ranging review of the strengths and weaknesses of 29 agriculture-related projects to feed lessons learned into the development of the next LIFT strategy in this thematic area. This included review of many of the different entities, systems and models used by different agricultural projects. The following sections draw on this study to fill in the gaps and enrich or help to substantiate the findings on the sustainability of different entities etc. from the R&S Study as discussed below.

Overview of sustainability for each type of entity or model

A total of 19 different types of real-world entities etc. were identified as listed in Table 5. The projects reviewed were found to have supported improvements in a total of 124 different real-world entities, systems, etc. (excluding household adoption, policy support and some others). The level of likely sustainability of each of these was assessed as high, medium or low. The details of these assessments are summarised in Table 5, together with the generalised assessment of sustainability for each entity type.

Sustainability ELQ Sub-Question 1: Private sector service providers

> *"To what extent has LIFT established viable business models for private sector provision of services (e.g., extension/advisory services) or products (e.g., improved seeds, farm machinery), including through public and private partnerships?"*

This ELQ sub-question is aimed at the various public and private service providers that support agricultural production, processing and marketing, etc. These are therefore agricultural value chain actors that are supported mostly to help improve the productivity and profitability of farmers. This ELQ sub-question area is therefore very strongly linked to the SELQ area below. This section considers the main types of agriculture-related service provider.

Agricultural extension services

A large number of projects had a primary or secondary focus on agriculture. Almost all of these supported some form of extension or advisory services for farmers. These included project-established, government, farmer organisation and private sector extension service providers.

Project-established extension services: A majority of the agriculture-focused projects provided extension training and support to groups of farmers organised by the project, using their own staff, and often together with staff from the Department of Agriculture (DoA). This was commonly done through some variation on the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach. Projects commonly used a contact or lead farmer 'training of trainers' (ToT) approach where the lead farmers received more intensive training and would then go on to train other members of the groups. In some cases each farmer in the group was expected to train a small number of their neighbours. Although the project had some idea that such systems would be continued in some way by the farmers, and some lead farmers probably did continue to help their neighbours, none of these "systems" were considered by the R&S study to be sustainable. The main issue seen by the study was that most projects did not fully appreciate how short-lived such extension systems would be after the project and did not adequately

consider what could be sustained and take steps to enhance this.

Strengthening government extension services: Projects that provided extension through their own established systems (as above) generally used staff from the Department of Agriculture (DoA) to support the extension. Projects needed to provide transport and often allowances for these staff and many provided some training to enhance the capacity of the DoA staff. While these engagements undoubtedly helped to improve the capacity and experience of the individual DoA staff, this did not amount to a significant improvement in the DoA extension system. Project intentions in this direction were not well articulated or properly thought through.

One project had a specific focus on introducing nutrition specific agriculture and appropriate upland agricultural technologies to the DoA in Chin State through introducing these things into the **State Agriculture Institution curriculum and Chin State DoA practice.** The curriculum change did not take root and the DoA capacity strengthening tended to improve individual capacities without system improvements, and therefore had limited impact.

A number of projects supported building the capacity of **Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW)**, usually in collaboration with the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD). This appears to have been relatively successful where these were strongly linked to the LBVD and the capacity of the LBVDs were also strengthened. This approach had more of a system improvement focus that improved the likely sustainability and impact. One of these projects worked in partnership with the national LBVD and helped it to develop policies and strengthen its information base through national livestock surveys. These efforts were judged to have been mostly sustainable. This project provided some support to the development of the new CAHW regulatory framework that was approved during the period, and its rollout. This new CAHW framework greatly contributed to the likelihood that CAHWs established or trained in collaboration with their local LBVDs will be sustainable. This represents one of the more successful models for a government-community extension system. The key for sustainability and impact was to help the LBVD with policy, system and capacity development so that the improved system is in place in a sustainable, interested and sufficiently capacitated organisation. In terms of the success factors for sustainability his had a benefit generating model (community veterinary service delivery) with appropriate ownership (LBVD), with the systems, capacity and a supporting regulatory framework in place.

Some **Farmer Producer Organisations** (FPEs: see below) also tried to provide extension services. Although these may be expected to work if the FPEs have the resources and expertise to provide extension information needed by farmers (demand), The FPEs were generally too weak and the

extension services provided relied mostly on continuing direct project support. These systems tended to be only partly sustainable or unsustainable.

Private sector extension services: Three projects tried to initiate small farmer extension/advisory services through facilitation of the private sector. One worked though agro-input service providers in the Dry Zone with training and support to develop capacity, tools and extension networks to reach groups of farmers and establish demonstration and teaching plots and provide extension linked to sales of inputs. This approach has shown considerable promise and appears to be mostly sustainable. These business models will need to be adjusted as the rather dynamic and competitive market evolves. This is an example of good practice as far as sustainability planning is concerned.

Another project tried to work with a single large agricultural supplier company (Awba) in the Delta to help them develop the tools and systems to provide extension advice to farmer groups in connection with sales. The Awba company lost interest and pulled out of the arrangement when it found that the system developed with the project took up too much time and effort of their extension agents. It appears that the project was too top down and tended to direct rather than facilitate.

The third project worked with two main large established vegetable seed and irrigation suppliers to support vegetable production in the Rakhine and southern Shan State. The number of farmers declined when vegetable production proved less profitable than expected and a number of farmers dropped out, reducing the motivation for the companies to keep providing the services.

Thus, private sector extension appears to be very promising but needs to be developed very carefully through a strongly facilitated approach with diverse partners and the project playing a relatively light touch approach.

Agro-input dealers: Agro-input dealers were supported mainly to develop extension capacity and programmes to work in tandem with their provision of inputs, as discussed above. Linking farmer producer enterprises to these to improve farmers' position in the value chain is discussed below.

Smallholder farmer quality rice seed production businesses: A number of projects focused on or included components to develop quality declared rice seed (QDS) as a locally available substitute for officially certified rice seed, or certified seed itself, for sale to local farmers or traders. QDS was referred to be some projects as seed from their Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) or the Collective Assurance System (CAS). All these projects were in the Delta. Quality seed production was the primary purpose of one project but a component of other projects that also supported rice production and the rice value chain. Quality seed production usually

included the introduction of new (e.g. short duration) rice varieties. Farmers were usually organised into groups in different villages that were clustered together.

The projects showed that farmers are capable of, and interested in, growing good quality rice seed, and that there is a growing market locally and with interested traders and millers. The QDS farmers need however to link to the DoA and Department of Agricultural Research to get the appropriate registered or certified seed for multiplication and for testing and certification if they are going for certified seed. In all cases, the projects started through directly training the farmers and supporting them with seed, testing, access to markets, etc. Projects initially gave little thought to how the farmers would continue (sustainability) and initiated groups such as seed grower associations at the township level to support the clusters and groups. The rather prolonged heavy dependence on projects and late attention to forming potentially sustainable organisational arrangements meant that while some farmers are likely to continue, the groups and many others will fall by the wayside.

All the above clearly indicate many of the classic features of poor sustainability planning (late consideration, not starting things as they should continue, etc.) illustrate the reasons for the recommendations provided in section 4.5.

The Delta Programme initiated the Rice Seed Sector Development (RSSD) Programme which should help greatly to provide the framework and supporting structures to support such groups. The success of this initiative remains to be seen.

Fish hatcheries for aquaculture: An aquaculture project that aimed to develop, pilot and rollout appropriate aquaculture technologies for small-scale aquaculture farmers in the Delta and Dry Zone, also addressed gaps in the value chain, including the supply of fingerlings for farmers to grow. The project supported the upgrading of government and some private hatcheries, and the establishment of local fingerling nursery farmers.

These farmers were involved in small-scale aquaculture and had the ponds and interest to produce fingerlings from fry purchased from nearby hatcheries. These local nursery farmers started by collecting the fry on motorcycles themselves. They found that there was strong demand for the fingerlings and there was the potential to run a good cash flow business. These aquaculture farmers helped to drive the production model that proved to be viable in the current market context. The aquaculture project had a very clear and explicit phased (though ambitious) approach with piloting /research, consolidation and expansion phases that considered sustainability from an early stage and mostly started things as they should continue. For these reasons, the fish nursery farmers were considered likely to be sustainable at the project's mid-term review stage. This is an example

of reasonably good practice as far as sustainability planning is concerned.

The Department of Fisheries has a growing interest in aquaculture at the policy level and the market appears to be strong enough. Although there will be challenges, the government and private hatcheries are mostly to partly likely to be sustainable.

Microfinance services: A number of microfinance organisations were supported through the Financial Inclusion Programme to develop finance access instruments appropriate for farmers in different areas and extend the area of coverage. As discussed above, the general project approach had almost all the features needed for sustainability and represents a good practice model. The projects worked with an existing microfinance organisation to help it do something better, the basic microfinance model was proven to work in the context to deliver sufficient benefits (for the MFIs and farmers), and the projects used a relatively light touch facilitative approach and helped the organisations to develop the tools and capacity and set things up as they should continue. Sustainability was built into the design.

Some farmer producer enterprises (FPEs) also aimed to provide small cash loans and 'inventory credit' for their members. The sustainability of these facilities depends on the sustainability and competent management and governance of the FPEs. The operational and organisational capacity of some FPE is weak and there are risks to sustainability. One project established a dedicated Small Producer Credit Service to provide credit to FPE members and other farmers. This was set up and run by the project and only shifted to a potentially sustainable, but rather complicated association-based structure, towards the end of the project. This brings significant risks for longer term sustainability without further support.

A number of projects supported the establishment of Village Revolving Funds (VRFs) and Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLAs). These were primarily targeted at small loans for micro-business inputs or household needs and emergency loans, often with an element of social protection but could also be used for agricultural inputs. Such loans were limited to some extent however by the size and timing of the loans. VRFs and VSLAs generally have strong ownership and governance and provide a number of useful services. They currently fill a gap not covered by MFIs but there are some risks for long-term sustainability. They are regarded by many as an interim stage that introduces villagers to organised credit before they can make use of more formal and professional microfinance.

As indicated by the Geilfus (2018) report and seen by the R&S study, project attempts to link farmers to formal MFI credit have not worked well. The Financial Inclusion Programme approach is much more effective.

Agricultural machinery/mechanisation services: LIFT has tried to

support mechanisation of agriculture through two main strategies. One Financial Inclusion project provided partial loan guarantee funds that leverages additional Yoma Bank finance and allows for easier terms that together extended access to hire-purchase financing for agricultural mechanisation. While this tended to support the larger or medium-sized farmers, these farmers were able to hire out surplus capacity to neighbouring small-scale farmers. This innovative initiative appears to have been mostly successful and, since it is underpinned by Yoma Bank, sustainable.

Two of the larger projects with farmer producer enterprises also tried to support the purchase of agricultural machinery for onward hire to members, using hire purchase arrangements. The initial experiences (at mid-term review stage) were that the financial returns were weak. Considering the challenges of running such a scheme through a producer- type of organisation, it seems likely that the risks for sustainability will be too high, at least at the present levels of technical and organisational capacity and governance of the average producer enterprises.

Sustainability ELQ Sub-Question 2: Improving the position of farmers in value chains

> The specific ELQ Sub-Question is: *"To what extent has LIFT strengthened formal and informal organisations and institutional arrangements for improving the position of farmers in value chains (related to inputs, advisory services and the processing and sale of produce)?"*

All agriculture production-focussed projects work in the context of the value chain, and at one or more parts of the value chain. The majority of projects supported farmer production at the upstream end, often with some linkages to markets towards the downstream end. A high-level objective of the Delta 3 Programme was improving the position of farmers in the rice value chain. Two of the larger Delta 3 agriculture projects had a central focus on improving the position of farmers in the rice value chain, with the core strategy of these projects being to support more moor less formalised farmer producer enterprises, linking to key value chain actors (quality seed producers, input suppliers, traders, millers, etc.), and working with some of these to improve their capacities for collaboration with other farmer groups. Other agriculture projects supported the same basic strategies but generally in a less structured way. The following sections looks explicitly at the FPE and linkage to value chain actor parts of these projects.

Farmer Producer Enterprises (FPEs): The two projects with the strongest focus on FPEs initiated farmer organisations for collective operation in the earlier Delta Programme and made these more formalised during Delta 3

(2014-2018). This involved various strategies including technical, organisational, management and finance training, setting up FPE management and governance structures, a start-up capital grant to operationalise a FPE fund for inventory credit and small loans, construction of storage facilities, development of different services such as inventory credit, extension training, bulk purchase of inputs and storage and sale of crops, machinery hire, etc.

Both projects tended to be over ambitious in terms of what FPEs could manage and directly support (coaching, technical backstopping, etc.). Some of the arrangements required linkages to value chain actors through formal agreements that were often negotiated mainly by the project. The projects did not think much about sustainability until the issues were raised during mid-term reviews. The shift to simplified operations by the FPEs themselves took place gradually during the second half of the project period, and not all FPEs were able to build strong enough capacity, systems and operations, and to some extent a proper appreciation of governance and ownership. This meant that there were significant risks for sustainability for at least some of the FPEs and they could only be regarded as partly sustainable. In all probability, some form of organisation with some of the services are likely to continue for many FPEs. The above represents classic shortcomings when compared to the key success factors identified in section 3.3.2, and would be directly addressed by the recommendations (e.g. building sustainability into the design and starting things as they should continue) as presented in section 4.5.

Linkages with private business value chain (VC) actors and markets: A key part of the FPE strategy was to link them with key value chain actors through formal agreements for specific types of collaboration. This was mainly with agro-input dealers, millers and traders (rather imprecisely defined) for inputs on credit, collective buying and selling, extension advice, etc.; and with millers, agricultural companies, etc. for different types of contract farming. Other projects also tried to link their farmers to markets through similar arrangements.

Almost all projects with the notable exception of the agri-input service provider project mentioned above, worked with, and from the perspective of, the farmer groups, rather than the private sector value chain actors. It appears that IPs tended to be the lead negotiators on behalf of farmers and did not develop a truly collaborative partnership with the private sector actors to help them expand their business arrangements with FPE for mutual benefit. It appears that IPs tended not to have a full understanding of the value chain actors, and this was a new area for FPEs. At the same time, it appears that the millers and traders in the Delta tended to be happy with their position and were not so open to such collaboration. They seemed to have an effective monopoly of the rice paddy market. The combined result was that several agreements were somewhat limited and

millers and or farmers withdrew after time. Farmers also made other arrangements to sell their crops. Thus, while the probably ambitious plans of projects did not work out quite as planned, farmers seem to have learnt from the experience and some elements will continue.

What was referred to as 'contract farming' turned out in the end to be relatively low key arrangements for inputs or seed on credit to be paid back through sale of the produce. More conventional ideas of contract farming remain to be developed.

Sustainability ELQ Sub-Question 3: Models for the management of common natural resource

> The specific ELQ Sub-Question is: *"To what extent has LIFT established sustainable models for the management of common assets / natural resources?"*

This sub-ELQ focuses on models for community-based natural resource management (NRM) of common property resources. Although this was a specific LIFT Strategy Programme-Level Objective (Pr 6), few IPs took on the challenge and only four projects of this type were reviewed. These were: (1) a strategic partnership for fisheries co-management in the Delta, (2) a fisheries co-management component of an ambitious area-based project in Rakhine, (3) a community mangrove forest component of another ambitious area-based project in Rakhine, and (4) a community forest management component in an ambitious area-based project in the uplands.

Fisheries Co-management: The establishment of the fisheries co-management zones for communities in Rakhine involved the identification and demarcation of zones, development of management plans and rules, establishment of Village Fishery Workers Groups and establishing agreements for compliance by the fishing stakeholders. This was always going to be ambitious and challenging, particularly in Rakhine and only over a three-year project. The projects had to work in a relatively top-down and directive way given the short time frame and the understanding, skills, capacity and change in mindset could not be fully achieved. None of these arrangements were assessed as sustainable. Some elements may continue but face the counter forces of fishing industry stakeholders.

The strategic partnership for fisheries co-management in the Delta has shown more promise however. This worked with decision makers to operationalise inland fisheries policies and allocate co-management area licences to communities. The partnership also worked with the previously established Ayeyarwaddy Regional Fisher Network, the Department of Fisheries and communities to operationalise policies. This was a more

comprehensive and long-term approach and was more facilitative in working with the key stakeholders to implement their parts of the jigsaw in a proper way. This means that sustainability was built into the design, the project had a clear benefit generating model (community access to fisheries), ownership was created and operations were established in the way they should continue. This has many aspects of good practice in a challenging area. However, further support will undoubtedly be needed in such a challenging area.

Community mangrove forests: The community mangrove forests was just one of several challenging components in the Rakhine area-based project. This involved allocating land for mangrove rehabilitation/ management, establishing community mangrove forest user groups and development and implementation of the plans. While the approach tended to be a little top down, the ownership was clear. In the end however the project had to be suspended due to security issues and the design was never tested. A similar initiative in the previous Rakhine Programme appeared to have strong community support and was judged to have been mostly sustainable.

Community forestry: The community forestry initiative in the uplands was one of the components in an ambitious project in the challenging upland areas. This involved establishing community natural resource management (NRM) committees for NRM planning, the identification of areas for community forests, the establishment of forest user groups, and development and operationalisation of forest management plans. Given the relatively new concepts and low capacity of these upland communities and the short three-year timeframe of the project, the project seems to have worked in a fairly top down way and the understanding, capacity, systems etc. needed had not been developed by the time of the mid-term review. It seems unlikely that the project will have the time to build the required systems and capacities and less ambitious goals would probably have been more appropriate. It seems that the IP intends to continue to work with and support these communities but this is not assured.

Conservation agriculture and other forms of climate-smart agriculture for individual farmers: Although this does not really qualify as "community-based management of common natural resources", the Geilfus report makes the very good point that promoting conservation agriculture and other forms of climate-smart agriculture in an appropriate way for individual farmers is an important area of NRM that requires further attention with some urgency. This R&S Study fully supports these ideas and so they are highlighted here.

3.3.4 Social environmental and economic sustainability of projects (and SELQ 4)

Following the stage 1 assessment of the sustainability of each of the real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes, etc. and making a preliminary assessment of project sustainability, the methodology makes a wider whole-project and longer-term perspective assessment to take account of the 'externalities' and 'whole project' effects that could reduce project sustainability due to net negative social, environmental and economic impacts. This assessment normally takes the form of an initial screening followed by a more detailed review of any risks that are identified. The R&S Study mostly used the findings from the mid-term review or final evaluation reports, although these generally did not say much about the wider social, environmental and economic risks. The assessment of environmental effects includes possible environmental risks from the promoted agricultural technologies. This is the fourth ELQ Sub-Question.

No projects had their preliminary assessments of sustainability downgraded due to net negative social, environmental or economic effects.

Risks to social sustainability: All projects were expected to have net positive social impacts. Most projects are designed to benefit poor and vulnerable households. In a small number of projects there could theoretically be a small and localised risk to some people in communities due to privileged access to natural resources (e.g. water for aquaculture in the Dry Zone) by the supported households. This was in all cases minor and localised and generally mitigated by community consultation and participation. There could potentially be risks to poor and vulnerable households from unwise use of credit taking them into debt and the various negative outcomes that could come from that. Negative impacts from microcredit and debt were observed by LIFT's Vulnerability Study (Griffiths 2019) but the direct contributions from LIFT projects seems unclear. This is an area of ongoing discussion and the microfinance organisations have taken some mitigating measures such as poverty monitoring and savings and insurance schemes for beneficiaries. None of the evaluations of the financial inclusion projects shed much light on this area.

Risks to economic sustainability: Projects that included production, market access, employment and income generation may have theoretically made a small positive contribution to building the local economy. The scale is expected to be small however. No negative effects on the local economy were reported or otherwise identified.

ELQ 1 Sub-Question 4: Environmental sustainability of agricultural technologies

> The specific ELQ Sub-Question is: *"To what extent have agricultural technologies (activities?) promoted by LIFT been environmentally sustainable?"*

A small number of projects theoretically had potential minor and localised positive environmental effects from such interventions as climate-smart agriculture, developing technologies to replace shifting cultivation (upland areas), soil conservation (agriculture), mangrove conservation, etc.

A few of the mid-term or final evaluation reports did mention some possible risks from the promoted technologies but none identified any specific net negative impacts. Some financial inclusion project reports mentioned the carbon dioxide emissions from air travel and suggested mitigation through purchasing emissions offsets.

It is clear however that a number of the agricultural projects had potential for minor negative environmental effects from the promoted agricultural technologies. More specifically, this would include misuse of fertiliser or pesticides, overfishing due to uptake of more effective fishing gear and boats, use of large agricultural machinery, overuse of scarce water resources, etc. In all cases, the risks appeared to be small and localised. Most projects seemed to be taking some steps to mitigate against possible risks but this did not seem to be systematically analysed and addressed. There is scope for projects to improve the way they do this by using more systematic analysis and mitigation. The microfinance institutions should also be encouraged to introduce simple screening and migratory advice. It is expected that most if not all risks can be reduced to acceptable levels through simple mitigation.

3.3.5 Achievement of Spread

Once sustainability in an entity has been achieved, a follow-on question of interest is the possibility for the continuing generation of benefits to reach, or spread to, additional beneficiaries. This can be thought of as the **natural or self-spread** generated by the continuing entity, system or behaviour changes that the project initiated or strengthened. As mentioned previously, 'spread' is a general term that is used here to include concepts such as diffusion, spill over effects, multiplier effects, leverage, replication, scaling up (or out), going to scale, systemic change, etc.; and leads to increased impact. Different mechanisms for such self-spread are possible and have different potential to reach beneficiaries. The basic types of mechanism would include for instance:

- Household to household sharing of knowledge: spread is likely to be to neighbours and so relatively low.
- Farmer organisations, private businesses, etc. may be able to increase their membership or client base: the potential is generally higher since the catchment area is larger.
- New business entities or community/interest group organisations may be able to establish themselves by for example, copying a profitable business model and securing the credit needed. This is much more difficult to stimulate but has higher potential if the business model is easily copied.
- Leverage and recycling of finance: Then microfinance institutions can continue to support their client base and expand through leveraging finance from elsewhere. This has high potential. Village revolving funds etc. will be able to recycle their capital and lend to increased numbers of beneficiaries, but the catchment is generally limited to the village population.
- Changing a policy or practice can have far reaching benefits although difficult to do.

Once the mechanisms for self-spread for an entity is understood, ii should be possible, and would be desirable, to do things during the project that can enhance this self-spread and improve the likelihood that it will be continued after the end of the project. This could significantly improve the eventual impact of the project.

An order-of-magnitude assessment of the potential for self-spread (reaching additional beneficiaries after the end of the project) and the likelihood that this would happen was made for each project. This is an extension of the same analysis of entities, etc. as was used to assess sustainability.

Table 6 presents the number of different sectors (high-level focus areas) of projects that were assessed as having different combinations of the level of potential (high, medium or low), and level of likelihood (high, medium or low) that they will achieve something close to their potential for spread. Figure 18 shows the same data graphically.

The **potential for spread** across the 50 projects reviewed was reasonably good, with 40 per cent of projects assessed as having high potential, 26 per cent as medium potential and 34 per cent low potential for spread. The spread potential depends almost entirely on the mechanisms (as outlined above) that entities have for spread and is more or less built into the project. This inherent spread potential can be influenced through the selection and basic design of the projects.

The **likelihood that projects can achieve their potential** was relatively low however. Only 20 per cent were assessed as having a high likelihood,

with 40 per cent medium and 40 per cent low. The likelihood that a project can achieve its potential spread depends in general on the strength of the entities and having the systems and capacities needed to make these mechanisms work. This is therefore something that can and should be improved by projects.

Exactly what this means depends on the specific type and functions of the entity. Thus, microfinance organisations should understand their clients' needs, develop appropriate loan packages and advertise to build their customer base. Agro-input dealers should do something similar and develop innovative specific approaches to better reach their target farmers. Farmer producer organisations seed associations, etc will need to decide on their target membership and gear up their services for the numbers they think they can reach and adequately accommodate. This would include their advisory or extension services. Localised community volunteer groups may wish to spread their message more widely or stimulate the formation of new groups. This would need a strategy tailored to their needs and local opportunities. All this is sound business sense for the various business models; and should be done but is often overlooked.

Since the likelihood for spread depends much on the strength of the entity, those with high sustainability can be expected to do better. A fairly close relationship between the two was found in the study. Projects with a poor likelihood for being sustainable will have a poor likelihood for spread. If an entity is not sustainable and fades away, then there cannot be much spread.

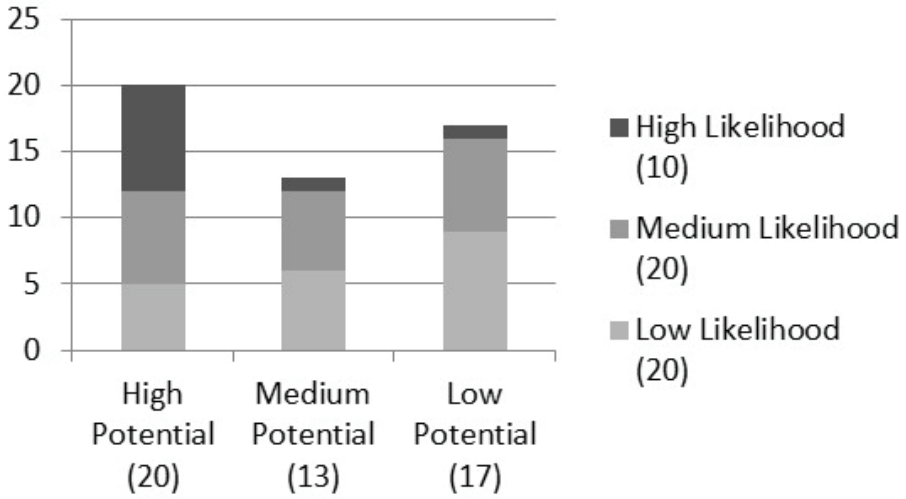
Table 6: Number of projects with different levels of Self-spread Potention and Likelihood

Likelihood for Self-Spread	Potential for Self-Spread:			Total # & % of projects
	High Potential	Medium Potential	Low Potential	
High Likelihood	◘ Financial Inclusion x 7 ◘ Social Protection x 1 ► Total: 8 projects.	◘ Financial Inclusion x 1 ► Total: 1 projects.	◘ Nutrition x 1 ► Total: 1 projects.	10 (20%)
Medium Likelihood	◘ Agriculture x 2 ◘ Migration & VT x 2 ◘ Nutrition x 1 ◘ Civil Society x 2 ► Total: 7 projects.	◘ Agriculture x 3 ◘ Nutrition x 1 ◘ Civil Society x 1 ◘ Social Protection x 1 ► Total: 6 projects.	◘ Agriculture x 2 ◘ Private Sector x 1 ◘ Migration & VT x 1 ◘ Nutrition x 2 ◘ Social Protection x 1 ► Total: 7 projects.	20 (40%)
Low Likelihood	◘ Agriculture x 2 ◘ Policy x 1 ◘ Migration & VT x 1 ◘ Civil Society x 1 ► Total: 5 projects.	◘ Agriculture x 5 ◘ Migration & VT x 1 ► Total: 6 projects.	◘ Agriculture x 6 ◘ Private Sector x 1 ◘ Other x 1 ◘ Migration & VT x 1 ► Total: 9 projects.	20 (40%)
Total # & % of projects	20 (40%)	13 (26%)	17 (34%)	50 (100%)

Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

The degree of spread in terms of the number of additional beneficiaries who benefit is determined in general terms, by the combination of spread potential and spread likelihood. Thus, a high likelihood of achieving a high potential should result in the highest number of additional beneficiaries. A low likelihood with a low potential would generate few or no additional beneficiaries.

Fig. 18 The likelihood of projects to achieve their natural potential for self-spread



Source: Relevance and Sustainability Study data

The projects assessed as having the highest likely spread (high potential and likelihood) were seven financial inclusion projects that had potential for growth and strong organisations with plans to do so; and one social protection project that worked in a very collaborative way to help the Department of Welfare develop and rollout policies and an elderly pension programme. The poorest projects (having low potential and low likelihood) were six agricultural projects, a private sector social enterprise project, a multi-component vocational training and migration focussed project, and a project that supported M&E development. All these projects tended to be very locally focussed and worked through a direct support modality and did not have any plan for stimulating spread.

While this assessment is only at a very approximate, order-of-magnitude level, it does indicate that there is a good possibility for improvement: that is to work purposively towards improving the likelihood of spread and increasing the number of beneficiaries, and therefore the impact of the project (and therefore also its value for money). However, projects must first be sustainable.

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

4. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

4. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Programme-level efforts to support R&S

The various LIFT Programmes also contribute in their own right to the achievement of relevance and sustainability of their projects.

Programmes are designed to address the LIFT Strategy in a coherent way according to the specific geographic (e.g. Delta, Dry Zone, Uplands) or thematic (e.g. Civil Society Strengthening, Migration) focus of the programme, and its stage of development and wider context, and the availability of interested and capable IPs.

LIFT Programme Units develop a Programme Strategy in line with the LIFT Strategy and ask IPs to design proposals in line with this, usually through a call for proposals. LIFT Programmes then attempt to create a coherent programme of mutually supportive projects from the acceptable proposals.

Thus, the Delta 3 Programme has focused strongly on the rice value chain as well as income generating initiatives for the many landless households, vocational training for new enterprises, employment (often with migration), nutrition and hygiene. At least in part because of the poor connectedness of the Delta, a number of projects had a geographic focus and tried to cover multiple thematic areas (agriculture, landless, income generation, etc) and not overlap with similar projects. The rice value chain part was based to some extent on the growing private sector with millers, traders, input suppliers, etc linking to farmer organisations. It turned out that the rice private sector was less open than expected and the lack of a healthy competitive market constrained the ability of projects to build effective value chain business arrangements. The area coverage of IPs was inherited to some extent from the first recovery efforts of LIFT in 2010-11 and from the Delta 2 Programme (2012-14).

The Dry Zone (geographic) Programme focused on similar thematic areas but had a different approach. This was based on the relatively strong connectedness of the area, access to markets, the strong and competitive business sector, and of course, the very dry climate and resulting constraints on agricultural production. The Dry Zone went for more thematically-focussed projects that covered relatively large areas and supported the same communities as other projects with different thematic focuses. Thus different projects covered agriculture, livestock, nutrition, social protection, etc. often in the same areas. This meant that the projects tended to be more focussed on a few key components, and therefore less complicated. As mentioned in section 3.3.2, complicated projects tended to have more

sustainability challenges. Dry Zone projects were able to work with a more open and competitive private sector and tended to be more facilitative.

Upland projects had a much more varied environment comprising a number of different upland areas spread across the country. Remote communities with steep land and poorly developed infrastructure, private sector and markets were common features across the uplands. Knowledge of proven appropriate technologies for communities in different situations was also a challenge. Upland projects therefore faced stronger development challenges and tended to have to use direct support rather than facilitation approaches. It also proved difficult to find strong IPs with the necessary experience and local knowledge. All these factors tended to constrain the ability to achieve sustainability amongst other things, particularly over the relatively short three-year time span of many projects. While the relevance and need for such projects can be very high, so are the challenges.

LIFT has also tried to build the capacity of civil society since its early days. The strategy started by engaging national NGOs and other organisations as IPs to implement small projects, or work in consortia with international NGOs in larger projects. The capacity was found often to be too low and LIFT supported a Civil Society Strengthening Programme in the 2014-2018 period. This supports competent international NGOs to build capacity and provide sub-grants for township-level CSOs in different areas to run small projects that help them to grow and provide useful grass roots development benefits at the same time. This is a good example of strengthening an existing organisation and starting things as they should continue (provided development funding is available) with good prospects for sustainability.

As mentioned earlier, the Financial Inclusion Programme's projects tend to work with existing microfinance organisations and help them to improve their services and/or expand coverage. This is another good example of helping an existing and competent organisation to do something better, with very good prospects for sustainability.

Through these various strategies, LIFT's Programme Teams have attempted to design coherent programmes from the acceptable proposals submitted by IPs. The programmes aim to have the projects coordinating with each other and working together, such that (1) the projects reinforce each other and provide a more relevant support package and sustainability of entities at the community level (e.g. vocational training from one project needs migration support or microfinance benefits from another), and (2) address some issues that are of wider interest at the township level and beyond (e.g. how to mobilise/facilitate private sector and community involvement to get agricultural value chains working across a township). The programmes have achieved these things to varying degrees in the different areas. This study focused on the relevance and sustainability of the projects

and did not specifically assess the programmes. The programmes have nevertheless affected what individual projects have achieved to some degree.

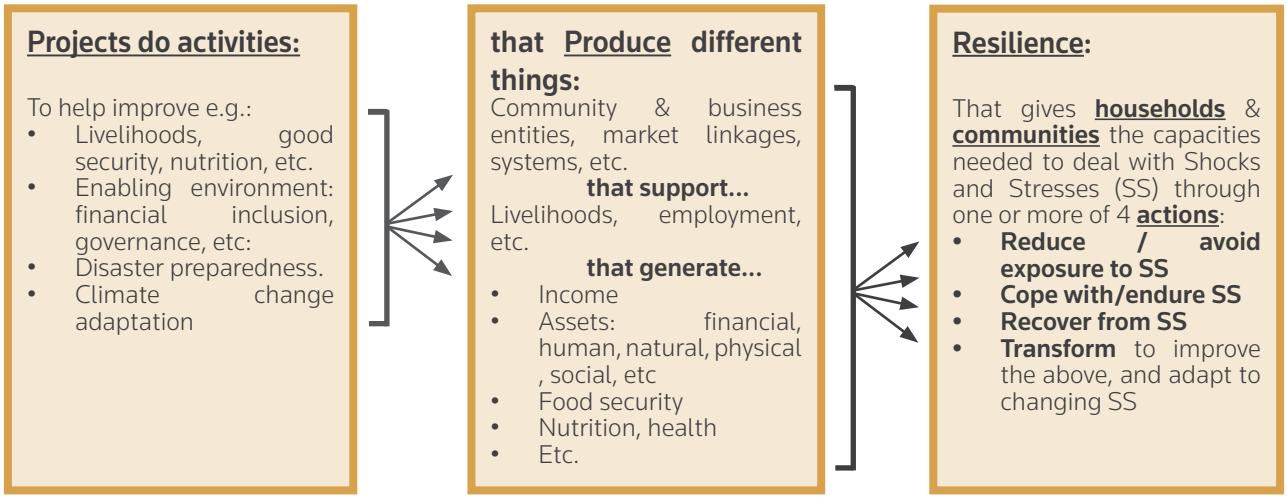
LIFT's programmes also supported the achievement of relevance and sustainability in their projects through support for design, field monitoring, mid-term reviews and management advice and decisions on corrective actions, etc.

4.2 Contribution of projects to resilience and the role of R&S

While doing the assessment of each project for its relevance and sustainability, the study also made a relatively superficial assessment of its likely contribution to resilience. The main mechanisms through which projects contribute to resilience were identified in Round 1 of the R&S Study and are summarised in Figure 19.

The essence of this is that projects have many different types of activities or interventions that produce a variety of things that bring benefits to the ultimate beneficiaries. These things include the various community organisations, businesses, market linkages and other factors that support their livelihood enterprises, the income, savings and assets that such livelihoods bring, and the knowledge and skills that allow them to improve and sustain their livelihoods, food security, nutrition, hygiene, health and general well-being. These things in turn give households and communities the various capacities they need to reduce, cope with, or recover from the various shocks and stresses that may come from sickness, accidents, crop failures, livestock diseases, market fluctuations, or different environmental disasters such as drought, flood, cyclones, etc. If households, communities, businesses, etc. can survive and recover from these shocks and stresses, they are said to be resilient. The various capacities they need to survive these shocks and stresses are often referred to as coping, adaptive or transformative capacities. Projects contribute to resilience essentially by strengthening these capacities.

Fig. 19 Schematic diagram for how projects contribute to resilience



Source: Prepared by the R&S study

Almost all the projects reviewed were found to contribute to building the capacities needed for resilience in one way or another, and to varying degrees. This can be considered to operate at two main levels: the household level and the community level.

At the **household level**, improved livelihoods and employment situations allow households to improve their general asset base, knowledge, skills, networks and organisational capacities, etc. Agriculture-focused projects help to improve production and income that helps people improve their houses, assets, savings etc. Non-farm livelihoods and skills training for employment also improve incomes. Financial inclusion and village savings and credit projects help to support the operation of livelihoods and income-generating activities or provide loans to help families through difficult times. Some microfinance, village savings and credit groups and social protection organisations include contributions to a social fund to support members deal with emergencies. Nutrition and hygiene projects help to improve growth and development of children and general health and resistance to diseases. All these things help give households some of the capacities they need to cope with, and recover from, different types of shocks and stresses.

Secondly at the community level, the strong and sustainable community and private organisations, and strengthened, leadership, organisational skills and networks developed, all contribute to the abilities of communities to work together and respond better in the face of different types of shocks

and stresses. These are the community-level capacities that build resilience.

As part of the assessment of each project for its relevance and sustainability and likely contribution to resilience, the study also made a quick assessment of the extent to which each project had given specific consideration to resilience and integrated a specific focus on resilience into project design and implementation. This was captured as the resilience marker (similar to the more common gender and nutrition markers) as touched on in section 3.1.3 and Table 1.

Surprisingly, perhaps given LIFT's purpose-level focus on resilience, 21 of the 50 projects reviewed were assessed as having made little or no specific consideration of resilience, while around 23 other projects made specific mention of resilience and aimed to make a general and limited contribution to it. Only around six projects made some kind of specific analysis of resilience and had a specific focus on resilience. Three of these had resilience as a specific purpose of the project. Three of the projects that made a more specific analysis of resilience were fairly complex agriculture and food security projects, while two were social protection projects and one nutrition project. Only one of these had a component with a specific focus on resilience to disasters through disaster risk reduction and management.

While the resilience marker assessment was rather superficial and not completely reliable, the general trend is clear. This is that most projects had some general idea of a focus on resilience but did not give much thought about the best ways or how to do this for their specific geographic or thematic area. This reflects the generally woolly understanding of resilience that currently prevails.

What this means however is rather important. This is that there is much scope for improvement through strengthening our understanding of, and focus on, resilience. This would involve some sort of specific analysis of resilience for each project situation and integrate appropriate adjustments into project design to improve the resilience outcomes or make a specific focus on resilience. This would be similar to the now well understood concept of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific projects.

4.3 Relationships between relevance, sustainability, spread and resilience

Relevance is a pre-requisite for project success and enables it to reach the beneficiaries, secure LIFT funding, and secure government acceptance and support. If the project is not relevant, it may not be of sufficient interest to the ultimate beneficiaries or intermediate actors to motivate them to engage and do what they need to do to make the project work. Relevance is necessary for the stakeholders to engage so that the project has a chance of achieving its objectives. Other factors, and particularly the context need also to be favourable. Thus, relevance is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the project to work i.e. achieve its objectives and be effective.

Sustainability requires that the various real-world entities, systems and behaviour changes that should continue after the end of the project are actually established or strengthened sufficiently by the project. This is the same as saying that the project should achieve its output and outcome objectives; or that the project is effective. Sustainability therefore depends on project effectiveness which in turn depends on project relevance, although these necessary project qualities are not sufficient on their own.

As mentioned in Section 3.3.2, sustainability of each real-world entity, system or behaviour change requires a model that works in its context to generate sufficient benefits to motivate the people concerned. **Motivation** is also a key feature of relevance, whereby the approach and potential benefits from the project are sufficient to interest and motivate the ultimate beneficiaries and intermediate actors to engage. Sustainability also requires that the real-world entities and systems etc. also have adequate systems and capacity for the model to work, and this all occurs in a place and time where the context is sufficiently favourable. Motivation is a crucial key that directly links relevance and sustainability.

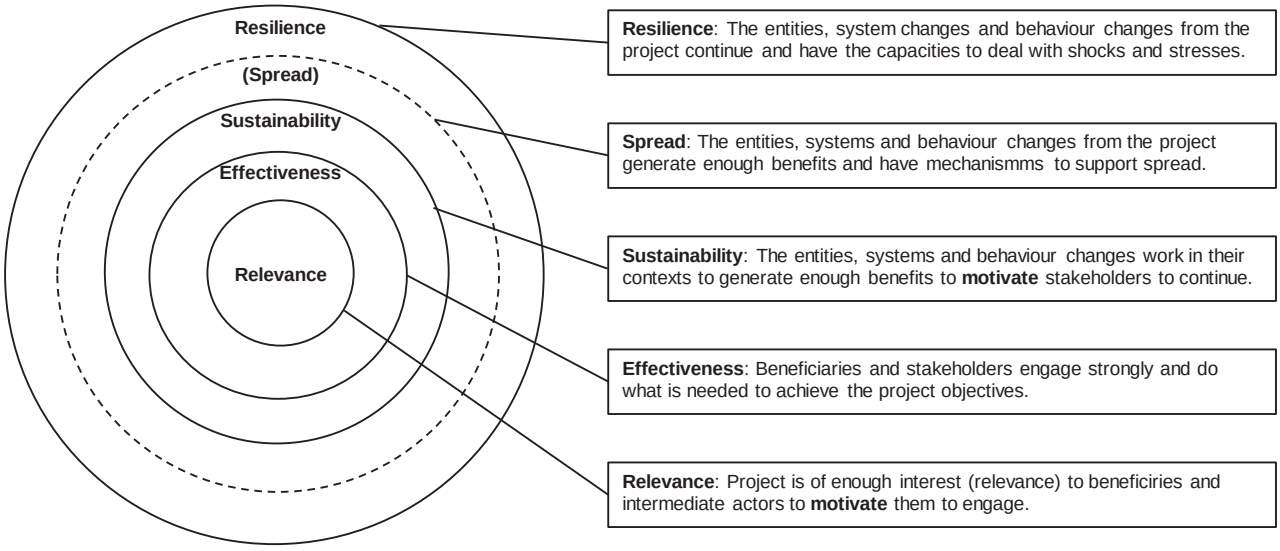
Spread, as described in Section 3.3.5, can follow on from entities that are sufficiently strong, generate sufficient benefits to motivate others, and have a feasible mechanism whereby others can join or take up the same models or behaviour changes. Thus, spread is dependent on sustainability (and motivation from strong benefits) but also needs other factors. Spread can in many ways be considered as an integral part of sustainability, but it is often overlooked.

Resilience depends on households and communities having built sufficiently strong coping and adaptive capacities to deal with the various shocks and stresses that may come their way in their particular environment. These capacities are based on the improved livelihoods, production, market

linkages, incomes, assets, nutrition, community organisations, networks, etc. that are supported or a part of the real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes, etc. established or strengthened through the project. If these are not sustainable (and continue), then the things that provide the coping and adaptive capacities needed for resilience will not continue, and the resilience improvement from the project will be short lived. Resilience is in a sense, a stronger form of sustainability. Thus, resilience depends on sustainability as much as it depends on project effectiveness and relevance.

This whole sequence of dependency and necessary but not sufficient conditions is summarised in diagrammatic form in Figure 20.

Fig. 20 Schematic view of relationships between relevance, sustainability, resilience, etc



Source: Based on an idea from Andre Ling (informal discussion) and analysis and understanding from the study

4.4 Conclusions on the achievement and improvement of Relevance

LIFT has performed well in terms of the achievement of relevance of its projects across the sector. Almost all projects (86 per cent) were assessed as relevant or highly relevant with only seven (14 per cent) assessed as partly relevant. Most of the partly relevant projects were assessed at mid-

term review stage and are expected to improve from the corrective taken after that.

The strong performance in achievement of relevance appears to be due largely to the strong LIFT processes for project selection including the preparation of the LIFT and Programme strategies, calls for proposals, project appraisal, MEAL planning, etc., and the LIFT Programme monitoring support and guidance provided during implementation. The implementing partners (IPs) themselves select objectives that are in line with the LIFT and Programme strategies and calls for proposals and they are generally improving their knowledge of the context and consulting with stakeholders including government during project design. At the same time, there appears to be a tendency to go for more ambitious and potentially challenging projects.

Almost all projects were highly relevant in terms of their objectives and relevance to the LIFT strategy and government. Slight weakness was found in around 30-40 per cent of projects in three main areas: (1) the relevance of project designs to achieve the objectives of the project, (2) adaptive management to correct for inadequate design or changes in the context, and (3) actually addressing the needs of beneficiaries. The main areas for improvement concern the project designs and adaptive management. The third issue is mostly a consequence of shortcomings in design and adaptive management.

While it is possible to make improvements in project designs, it must be recognised that there are many challenges and most IPs spend considerable time and resources on their designs. LIFT programme staff also spends a significant amount of effort in scrutinising, assessing and encouraging IPs to improve the project designs. The main challenges include understanding complex contexts, particularly relating to agriculture, natural resources, livelihoods, etc., the low capacities of vulnerable households particularly in remote areas, the difficulty of introducing new ideas and technologies in such areas, and the short timeframe (three years) for most projects.

While some improvements to design are possible and desirable (particularly for sustainability as discussed later), it is suggested that the main area for improvement of relevance is adaptive management. This would allow projects to adjust for design flaws from imperfect understanding of the context or changes in the context during implementation. Adaptive management would also be part of more process and facilitative approaches that tend to work better for relevance where these are possible. This is particularly important at the current time of transition in Myanmar. The same ideas and approaches are also useful in improving sustainability.

4.5 Conclusions on the achievement and improvement of sustainability

The LIFT portfolio of projects has performed less well in in its achievement of sustainability than it did for relevance. Only half (25) of the 50 projects reviewed were assessed as satisfactory or better, with only four of these assessed as likely to be highly sustainable. The other half (25) were found to have significant shortcomings, with most assessed as only partly sustainable (24) and one poor and mostly unsustainable.

Two major external factors were found to affect sustainability challenges: the sector (agriculture, social protection, migration microfinance, etc.), and the geographical area and context for the project (Delta, Dry Zone, Uplands, etc.). Different sectors have their own nature and characteristics including their operational structures, private sector and public sector actors and their respective roles and influence, the regulatory and policy framework, and the technical and logistical nature of the sector. Sectors are dynamic and have changed considerably over the lifetime of the LIFT strategy period 2014-2018 under review. Geography also has a major influence on sustainability challenges through the natural resources, physical infrastructure, remoteness, private sector capacity, etc. as well as social-cultural factors. Linked to both of these is the likely availability of competent IPs who can design and implement projects that LIFT can fund. What gets done and the way in which it is done depends to a large extent on the availability of IPs with the appropriate experience. The upland areas suffer from a shortage of experienced IPs.

Probably more important however for the ability of a project to achieve sustainability is the way the project is designed and implemented. These areas were found to have significant or serious shortcomings and so this is the area where significant improvements can be made.

Shortcomings included complicated and confusing multi-component projects that did not have a clear logical structure and were not clear about what should be sustained and how this would be achieved. Such projects sometimes struggled to identify and build a sufficiently strong relationship and partnership with the owners of such entities. In some cases the technology or business models used did not prove to be viable and able to generate enough benefits to motivate the different actors.

Several projects continued with a direct support approach with free inputs and doing things directly for partners (e.g. producer organisations). The review found that more facilitative approaches were much better at building ownership and capacity and were more likely to achieve sustainability. It was almost always better to start things as they would

continue rather than for the project to set something up directly and hand over. A three-year project is not long enough.

Most importantly however was that a number of IPs hardly seemed to consider sustainability at all until the mid-term review asked questions about it. Some IPs think that it is not feasible to achieve sustainability in the short three-year project timeframe, and they only consider that they will need to continue. The mechanisms for stimulating spread of the benefits to additional beneficiaries and supporting ways to enhance this during and after the project were also given little thought.

However, a number of projects performed reasonably well and some very well. The best performing projects all had clear well-focused and logical designs with clear partners and benefit generation mechanisms. These projects engaged closely with the appropriate partner organisation and helped them to improve or expand what they did for the benefit of the targeted ultimate beneficiaries. These projects included microfinance projects helping competent MFIs to expand their services and coverage, a social protection project helping the Department of Welfare to develop its policies and programmes including elderly support, two social protection projects helping village social protection organisations to strengthen their funds and services, a civil society strengthening project that worked with CSO partners to develop fisheries co-management policies and programmes and gender policy advocacy respectively. In all cases, there was a clear partner who was supported to do things better and who continued to do these thing in a better way.

There is clearly much scope for improvement and these sustainability issues should be addressed with due urgency. The following are suggested.

- The approach to sustainability needs something of an overhaul to completely integrate it into project design and implementation from the beginning.
- In design:
    - ◊ Develop a much clearer idea of the real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc. that should be changed, how they should be changed within the project timeframe, what should be sustainable by the end of the project, and how that will be achieved.
    - ◊ Who are the proper owners of these entities, etc., how the project will engage with them (the implementation approach), how will they be motivated from the benefits of improved function, etc.
    - ◊ Select and elaborate an appropriate implementation approach, with a tendency towards partnership and facilitation rather than direct support.

- ◊ Start things as they will continue, unless there are very good reasons to do otherwise.
- ◊ Develop what can be considered a sustainability plan and integrate this into project design and implementation.
- ◊ This increased focus on sustainability should be extended to include consideration of spread and include measures to enhance this into the design.

- If the IP feels that the timeframe is too short to engage in the change processes that are needed, and plans to continue in the area, then they should make a broader and longer-term strategy and frame a meaningful project that can achieve a degree of sustainability within this. This should be discussed with LIFT, which may consider agreeing in principle to a longer phase of support. Whatever is agreed should be very clear.
- In M&E: Monitoring should be strongly learning focussed and flexible enough to pick up subtle influences and changes in good time to be able to make any necessary adjustments. This will need a mix of less and more formal monitoring approaches.
- In implementation and management: Management will need to be more adaptive and strongly connected with the monitoring to understand how things are progressing and make any necessary adjustments in good time. This will be more important in the more dynamic contexts.
- LIFT will need to allow more flexible process approach projects and consideration of conditional phasing for longer term projects when needed by the project and feasible according to the competence and reliability of the IP. LIFT has effectively done this in the past with several projects that effectively have a flexible process approach, and with project extensions for some projects. It would be better however if this was clearly understood and included in the design from the start.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Recommendations for implementing partners

A number of recommendations are made to help IPs improve their designs and adaptive management, in order to improve achievement of the relevance and sustainability, and to some extent the spread and resilience, of their projects.

	Recommendations focussed on IPs	Ref:
1	**IPs should develop an improved understanding of entities and benefit generation at the design stage, and reflect this in the various design structures:** IPs should build a strong and clear understanding at the design stage of the various-real-world entities, systems and behaviour changes tht the project should establish or improve, and how these will generate benefits for the ultimate beneficiaries. This understanding and the entities etc. should be reflected in the logical (ToC), component, planning, budgeting and reporting structures, that should all be aligned as far as is practical. • IPs should build a strong and clear understanding of the different real-world entities, systems and behaviour changes that the project should establish or improve, and how these will generate benefits for the ultimate beneficiaries (i.e. the benefit generation mechanisms and models etc.). The project should go further and develop a clear understanding of how these things will be changed by the project actions and effects and what is needed from the context. This is the Theory of Change (ToC). • This work can be refined and finalised at the stage of developing the final ToC and MEAL Plan. These ToCs should be truly **'actor-centred'**, or more specifically **'actor and system focussed'**. • This understanding and the entities, systems and behaviour changes themselves should be **clearly reflected in the project ToC**. Since this is normally the clearest and most natural way to think about and explain the project: ◊ This ToC logical structure understanding should also be reflected in the component, sub-component and intervention/activity structure: ◊ This would normally be reflected in and guide the work planning and budgeting structures. • In this way, the logical (ToC), component, planning, budgeting and **reporting structures**, would all be **aligned** as far as is practical, and present the **clearest possible understanding and explanation of the project**. • If project implementers and stakeholder can properly understand the project and what it is supposed to do and achieve, then it is more likely that these things will happen.	Sections: 3.3.2:

2	**IPs should develop adaptive management systems appropriate to the nature of the project, and build these into project design:** • Projects vary in the extent to which they follow a blueprint as set down in the project design (e.g. build a school), or are trying to stimulate or facilitate a process of change by influencing different actors in parts of wider interlinked systems (e.g. stimulate nutrition and hygiene behaviour change or market systems development). ◊ The first 'blueprint' approach can be implemented through top down and fairly conventional, rigid management. ◊ The second 'process' approach needs adaptive management that includes an appropriate monitoring system that can pick up on subtle changes in the project sphere of influence at an early stage, and then flexible management can react quickly to such information and make appropriate adjustment or corrective actions. • Achieving project relevance, sustainability, spread and resilience all need a degree of adaptive management to understand what is happening in real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc. that the project is trying to influence, and take appropriate and timely corrective actions to keep the project on track (to achieve relevance, sustainability, spread, resilience, etc.). • This should include a degree of flexibility in the monitoring systems to be able to quickly understand if the ToC changes are happening or not. • In some cases, the best ways to do things or even the technologies that should be promoted are not clear at the outset, and the project needs to support pilot initiatives to refine and prove these things before rolling out more widely. Project should clearly identify the need for a pilot stage and include this in their design. • Project design should identify the extent to which it will follow a blueprint or process approach and provide at least an outline of the monitoring and adaptive management structures and systems that will be needed.	Sections: 4.4: and 4.5:
3	**IPs should strive for further improvement of project relevance through appropriate design and adaptive management:** • Most projects have achieved a satisfactory level of relevance, but further improvements may be gained through more attention to the interests of different stakeholders (including the ultimate beneficiaries and intermediate actors) to get their buy in, and more adaptive management during implementation to correct for any design flaws, and keep the project relevant as understanding grows or the context changes during implementation. • Several projects fell down in their designs by not properly addressing the needs and interests of all the different stakeholders, most commonly the intermediate actors, but also sometimes including the ultimate beneficiaries. • The analysis and clear thinking mentioned in the improved ToC recommendation above (about the various real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc. and how these generate benefits), gives a clear understanding about which stakeholders should do what, what benefits and motivation they may get, and how best the project can address their interests and needs to get	Sections: 4.4:

	the entities, systems etc. working in a better way. This is all about appropriate models. • It is not always possible to get everything right during project design. Adaptive management (with appropriate monitoring) systems should be able to identify design deficiencies at an early stage and make the necessary corrections. Adaptive management should also identify the need for, and make appropriate corrections, as understanding grows or the context changes to reduce relevance. • The aim is to keep the project relevant to all stakeholders from start to finish.	
4	IPs should make significant improvements in project sustainability through its inclusion in project design and adaptive management: Many projects were found to be weak in their planning and management for, and achievement of, sustainability. The approach to project sustainability needs an overhaul, so that it is adequately considered and built into project design, and worked towards during implementation through appropriate adaptive management. • The analysis and clear thinking mentioned in the first recommendation above allows development of a clear understanding about which real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc. should be changed, how they should be changed within the project timeframe, what should be continue after the project has ended: in other words, what should be made sustainable by the end of the project, and how that will be achieved. This analysis also gives an understanding of: ◊ The viable benefit generation model or mechanism, and which actors (ultimate beneficiaries or intermediate actors) need to do what to make this model work, ◊ The benefits they will receive that are needed to motivate them to do this ◊ The ownership arrangements needed to get the benefits to the right people. ◊ The systems tools and capacity needed. ◊ The supportive conditions needed in the context. • These things are the success factors needed to achieve sustainability for each of the real-world entities, systems or behaviour changes that the project will establish and should be sustained after the end of the project. The project design should clearly: ◊ Identify which aspects of the real-world entities, systems and behaviour changes that will be established or strengthened through the project should be sustained beyond the end of the project. ◊ Include a plan into the design for how this will be achieved (though addressing each of the success factors mentioned above). This is effectively a sustainability plan. ◊ Adjust the design of the monitoring and management systems for the project to include appropriate adaptive management.	Sections: 4.5:

	• It is almost always best to start things as they will continue. This means that the appropriate ownership arrangements for each of the entities etc should be in place from the start. The entities should do things for themselves rather than the project doing things for them or providing free inputs without a clear justification of the need and how sustainability will be achieved. • Adaptive management (with appropriate monitoring) systems should be included in the project design. These should be able to track progress towards sustainability in the different entities, systems, behaviour changes etc. from an early stage, and take the necessary corrective actions. • The aim is to have a clear understanding of what sustainability means and work towards this from start to finish. There should not be any need to develop an exit strategy and plan at mid-project stage. The sustainability plan in the design replaces the exit strategy.	
5	In some cases, IPs should be able to consider longer-term projects broken into meaningful standalone conditional phases, with prior agreement in principle from LIFT: • The above recommendation for achieving sustainability means that the level of sustainable operation aimed at for each entity, system or behaviour change etc., should be achievable within a project's three-year timeframe. • If the IP feels this is not enough for the level of sustainable change that should be supported and is planned to continue in the area, then they should make a proposal, with prior agreement in principle from LIFT, for a broader and longer term strategy based on incrementally phased support, with finance for the next stage depending on success in the previous stage. • If this is agreed, the IP should develop a longer-term strategy with clear output, outcome and sustainability goals, and frame within this the first of two (or more) meaningful projects that can achieve a useful degree of sustainability within the shorter timeframe of its phase. • This should be discussed in advance with LIFT, which may consider agreeing in principle to a longer phased support. Whatever is agreed should be very clear. Each phase should achieve a pre-agreed level of sustainability so that if the project is not continued, then some meaningful and sustainable benefit will have been achieved. • Having a longer-term strategy does not mean that sustainability can be ignored. Projects should always have a clear sustainability goal and plan built into the design and work towards this from the start.	Sections: 4.5:
6	**IPs should improve their plans for 'spread' and focus on its achievement through projects:** As with sustainability, spread should be considered in project design, and the plan developed, monitored and managed adaptively during implementation. The basic approach is: • In design, identify the spread mechanisms (how things will be spread). Spread generally depends on the same entities, systems, etc. that should be sustainable and are identified in the sustainability analysis and planning. The analysis is therefore carried out at the same time.	Sections: 3.3.5:

	• Develop a deliberate plan to enhance the likelihood that self-spread will be established during the project and continue after the end of the project and integrate this into the project design. This will often involve strengthening the same capacities as are needed for sustainability and enhancing these to promote self-spread. This plan can therefore be made at the same time as the sustainability plan and build on it. • Implementation should work towards achieving sustainability and spread from the start and include monitoring of the progress and appropriate adaptive management to make the corrective actions needed to keep the project on track.	
7	IPs should improve the plans for and focus on the achievement of resilience in projects: Many projects had resilience as a high-level goal, but could do more to understand how resilience should be achieved in their project situation and adjust their design to integrate features that increase the level of resilience achieved. The basic approach will be similar to that used for sustainability and spread. This will involve: • Focus on resilience in design. Analyse the types of shocks and stresses that project communities may face that could be addressed in some way by the project. Identify the main resilience mechanisms and therefore the resilience capacities, etc. needed. Some projects will have components that are explicitly focused on building resilience through e.g. disaster risk reduction and preparedness, climate change adaptation. • Develop a deliberate plan to enhance the likely achievement of resilience and integrate this into the project design. • Include consideration of the generation of resilience capacities in monitoring and adaptive management.	Sections: 4.2: and 4.3:
8	Systematic environmental screening and mitigation for agricultural technologies: IPs and FMO should support projects, MFIs and other intermediate service provider organisations to institute simple basic environmental screening and mitigation to reduce the (generally small) risk that some of the agricultural technologies supported may have adverse environmental effects. • There appears to be some possible risk of minor localised and generally reversible impacts from some technologies that may be supported directly or indirectly by some projects: e.g. misuse of agro-chemicals, large machinery, irrigation, aquaculture, etc. • In principle, it should be possible to reduce most, if not all, of these potential risks to acceptable levels through appropriate mitigation. • Simple and practical screening tools will be needed, and LIFT may draw on the expertise of its larger IPs or MFIs to help develop these. The concerned organisations may need to adjust their procedures and guidelines and enhance staff capacity.	Sections: 3.3.4:

5.2 Recommendations for LIFT's FMO and Fund Board

A general recommendation is that LIFT should support the above recommendations for IPs and adjust its various protocols, procedures and tools accordingly. A number of specific recommendations are included below to emphasise key areas and some other issues that were identified during the study.

	Recommendations focussed on IPs	**Ref:**
1	**LIFT should strengthen the ToC and MEAL planning support available for IPs so as to make truly 'actor-centred' ToCs and address the above recommendations for IPs**: This should include helping IPs as needed: • To improve their understanding of the real-world entities, systems and behaviour changes that should be sustained beyond the project. • To develop appropriate sustainability plans and integrate these into their designs and implementation. These should avoid the need for the design of project exit strategies at the mid-project stage or later. • To develop appropriate monitoring systems and adaptive management.	Sections:
2	**LIFT should support more adaptive management as appropriate to the specific needs of each project:** • This should allow for responsive adjustment of some aspects of design and implementation, including a degree of flexibility in targeting. • This should be considered and built into project design as far as is possible. • This would include identification of the need for piloting and refinement of approaches and technologies before rollout.	Sections:
3	**LIFT should consider including some longer-term projects through conditional phased projects to implement longer-term strategies:** • This is effectively done already through costed or no-cost extensions, • It would be more efficient and satisfactory however if this was done in a more planned and organised way as describe in the recommendation to IPs. • Either way, each project supported should be a meaningful standalone project with specific and achievable sustainability goals.	Sections:
4	**LIFT should strengthen its online repository of project documents and reports using a standardised folder structure and naming convention:** • A basic repository is now in place in Google Drive. This should be maintained, further standardised and expanded as needed. • A short guide should be developed for users to easily access the documents. • Project documents and reports should be systematically added to this repository as soon as they have been approved, or even in draft form (clearly marked as a draft and replaced by the approved version when available).	

5	**Strategic Partnership support should be used primarily to help the NGO or CSO partner to establish or strengthen one of their specific functions that fairly directly benefits the ultimate beneficiaries:** • During the review of projects, it became clear that the Strategic Partnerships that helped the NGO or CSO partner to improve some aspect of their work in a specific area that fairly directly benefitted the ultimate beneficiaries was significantly more effective and useful than the other approach that targeted only capacity building of the partner. • Such support provided a practical and effective way for the partner to strengthen its capacity through development of the systems, tools and capacity needed and learning by doing, and also provided directly useful benefits for a significant number of beneficiaries.	Sections:

MAIN DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project documents and reports:

- Project "Descriptions of Action".
- MEAL Plans including Theories of Change (ToC).
- Annual narrative reports (2016) or Semi-Annual narrative reports (2017).
- Project Mid-Term Review and Final Evaluation Reports.

Resilience ELQ study documents and reports:

- Griffiths, Dr. M.P. (4 April 2017) Resilience for LIFT (version 3.1). Social Policy and Poverty Research Group, Yangon, Myanmar (the "Conceptual Framework" report).
- Griffiths, Dr. M.P. (4 April 2017) From vulnerable to resilient: analysing LIFT's household data (Draft 2.1). Social Policy and Poverty Research Group, Yangon, Myanmar (the "Vulnerability Report").
- Griffiths, Dr. M.P. (2017) Risk, Reward and Resilience in Rural Communities. Social Policy and Poverty Research Group, Yangon, Myanmar (the "Qualitative Study" for resilience).

LIFT guidelines, reports and other documents:

- LIFT Annual Reports for 2015, 2016 and 2017.
- LIFT Interim Review Report. Coffee, February 2017.
- LIFT, April 2016: Developing Project Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning and Accountability (MEAL) Plans: Guidelines for Implementing Partners.
- LIFT, September 2018: Guidelines for assessment of the relevance and sustainability of LIFT-supported projects.
- LIFT Village revolving fund study
- LIFT: Myanmar: Empowering people for inclusive growth.
- LIFT: F Geilfus, June 2018: "Agriculture and Rural Markets" pillar of LIFT post 2018: Assessment of LIFT experience in agricultural development, nutrition sensitive agriculture and agricultural markets.

Other documents:

- OECD, DAC (2012) "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based management". OECD, Development Assistance Committee, Paris, France.
- OECD DAC website (accessed May 2017) http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm
- OECD DAC (undated) DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance.

- ADB (2016) Guidelines for Evaluation of Public Sector Operations.
- World Bank (2016) Guidelines for Reviewing World Bank Implementation Completion and Results Reports: A Manual for Evaluators. Last updated: 12 Nov 2013.
- European Commission (2015, March) Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Handbook: and ROM monitoring questions and report format.
- UNEP (January 2015) UNEP environmental, social and economic sustainability framework.
- World Bank (2012) Thinking systematically about scaling up: Developing Guidance for Scaling Up World Bank-supported Agriculture and Rural Development Operations.
- The Springfield Centre (2014) Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: a framework for managing and measuring systemic change processes.
- Pasteur, K. (2011). From Vulnerability to Resilience: A framework for analysis and action to build community resilience: Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, UK.
- Ibrahim M. and Ward N. (2012) From Vulnerability to Resilience: A handbook for programming design based on field experience in Nepal. Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, UK.

ANNEX 1

TASK NOTE: LIFT RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY SUMMATIVE STUDY

17 January 2019

A. Background

LIFT is commissioning a series of evaluative studies that respond to the LIFT Evaluation and Learning Questions (ELQs) that are set out in the LIFT MEAL Framework. This includes a series of evaluative studies that seek to examine changes in LIFT purpose level outcomes: a) increased income in rural households b) decreased vulnerability of poor households to shocks stresses, and adverse trends and c) improved nutrition of women and children. In addition to these outcome studies, separate but related studies will be conducted into specific areas such as relevance, sustainability, policy and gender amongst others.

The study described in this note will be focused primarily on relevance (ELQ 1) and sustainability (ELQ 3) and their respective sub-questions.

- ◊ ELQ 1: To what extent have the LIFT strategy and LIFT interventions been relevant to the needs of the people it intends to reach?
- ◊ ELQ 3: To what extent has LIFT identified and established sustainability approaches for achieving the purpose and programme outcomes after LIFT support ends?

Opportunities for drawing out findings that may be of relevance to ELQ 2 should also be explored through the analysis

- ◊ ELQ 2: To what extent has LIFT contributed to strengthening the resilience of poor people in Myanmar and helped them to hang in, step up and step out?

B. Objectives

The summative study will build on the approach, findings, and recommendations of the formative report on Relevance and Sustainability. The assessment will be carried out at the project level in two parts: a preliminary analysis of projects that have completed final evaluations by end of 2018 and a second round of projects that have concluded by early 2019.

The primary audiences/users for the study are the LIFT FMO, the LIFT FB

and LIFT IPs. Depending on the nature of the findings, this study should provide these users with insights that can help them understand how to ensure or enhance the relevance and sustainability of LIFT-supported projects. This learning also would be of more general use to other development practitioners.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- ◊ Provide an assessment of LIFT's portfolio of projects in terms of relevance and sustainability, including considerations of scalability and spreadability.
- ◊ Characterise the strengths, weaknesses and other aspects of performance in each sub-question area, across projects, to generate insights and learning about performance in terms of relevance and sustainability.
- ◊ Provide evidence-based recommendations to LIFT IPs, the FMO and the Fund Board on how to better ensure relevance, sustainability and spreadability.

C. Activities and Tasks

1. Provide backstopping and briefings to support programme staff and external project evaluators on use of the R&S tools for project MTRs and evaluations, insofar as this support is required and feasible.

2. Work with LIFT staff to set-up a user-friendly and accessible project documentation repository for the projects on google drive. This should be a single well-structured and consistently named repository.

3. Conduct Part 1 of the study, based on the summative evaluation of LIFT projects with final evaluations completed by December 2018 (up to 25 projects) in terms of relevance and sustainability, using the tools and methods devised in the formative study. Projects should be selected on the basis of (1) completion; (2) availability of final project evaluations; (3) representativeness across LIFT Programmes; (4) representativeness across LIFT thematic areas; (4) representativeness across LIFT intervention types (e.g. policy, system and direct implementation).

4. Produce an interim summative report for Part 1 setting out the purpose, methodology, selection of projects, the analysis of findings and recommendations. More specifically, the analysis should (1) categorise projects by thematic area, type of intervention, region and other relevant characteristics; (2) provide an overview of performance of the LIFT portfolio; (3) provide insights and learning regarding the reasons for high and low performance as well as the types of gaps and

challenges; (4) provide recommendations to the LIFT FMO and the Fund Board on how to improve relevance and sustainability in the future. This should include a deeper analysis of a few projects that illustrate key learning points.

5. Participate in consultations with ELQ consultants and programme staff on preliminary results from R&S assessment during Resilience Week. In particular, the consultant will consider the linkages between relevance and sustainability on one hand and resilience on the other, to contribute to an understanding of how relevance, sustainability, overall project success and resilience are interlinked and can be strengthened in the future. Key tasks during the Resilience Week will include: (1) a presentation of the Part 1 analysis to LIFT staff and the LIFT FB, (2) a presentation for Programme staff on the concept of spreadability, (3) further support for validation of project R&S assessments with Programme staff, and (4) follow up interviews with key Programme staff on Programme-level relevance and sustainability issues.

6. Conduct Part 2 of the study, which will focus on the summative analysis of additional LIFT projects (up to 45 projects) using the R&S tools. The second round will, to the extent possible, draw on project evaluations conducted by various LIFT evaluators using the R&S tools. The same criteria for selection of projects should be used as for the first part.

7. Produce a final summative report drawing on the analysis of projects from both rounds, and the insights produced from the resilience week and synthesis paper. The study should provide an overall assessment of the relevance, sustainability and spreadability of LIFT projects, analyse the factors (internal to LIFT, at the IP level, and externally) that impact on relevance and sustainability, identify key gaps, highlight lessons learned and provide recommendations for the LIFT FB, the FMO and LIFT IPs. More specifically, this should address questions such as: What appears to be working (or not) and why? How does this vary by region, intervention area, and project type/intervention modality? It should also explore how and to what extent LIFT has contributed to sustainable changes in systems, policies, services, etc.

D. Tasks, Deliverables and Estimated Timeframes

	Description	Estimated days	Proposed dates
1	Backstopping support for Programme staff and project evaluators on use of R&S tools	1	January and February 2019
2	Set-up of project repository on google drive	4	By end-January 2019
3	Participation and input into Resilience Week Deliverable: Presentation of findings	5	18-22 Feb 2019
4	Part 1 assessment of sustainability and relevance in projects using tools; including tweaking the data tools and preparation of the Part 1 report. Deliverable: Part 1 report	22	By end-March 2019
5	Part 2 assessment of sustainability and relevance in projects using tools; and preparation of overall draft summative report. Deliverable: Part 2 report	25	By mid-June 2019
6	Preparation of final report following triangulation of data with program staff and feedback on project assessments Deliverable: Final Report	3	By end-June 2019
	Total	**60**	

ANNEX 2

LIST OF PROJECTS REVIEWED

Delta projects:

- IOM - Migration as a livelihood diversification strategy in the Delta (MILDAS) (2015 to 2020).
- LEAD - Supporting landless households livelihoods and food security through alternative income generation activities in Pyinsalu Sub-Township (2016 to 2019).
- Mercy Corps - Linking Laputta to Markets (LLM) Increasing Incomes through Agriculture, Skills, & Employment (2015 to 2019).
- Metta - Promotion of Farmer-Managed Schemes for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development (2016 to 2019).
- NAG - Strategic Partnership: Improved Co-management of Ayeyarwaddy Wetland Resources (2017 to 2019).
- PATH - Introduction of Fortified Rice in Myanmar (2013 to 2019).
- Radanar - Integrated Agribusiness and Rural Development (IARD) Project (2016 to 2019).
- Save the Children - Bright SUN: Building Resilience, Synergy and Unity for Nutrition. (2015 to 2018).
- WHH - Support to Rice Seed Sector Development in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar (2017 to 2019).
- WHH-GRET - Delta Rural Intensification for Sustainable Economic Development- Delta RISE (2015 to 2018).
- World Fish - Promoting sustainable growth of aquaculture in Myanmar to improve food security and income for communities in the Ayeyarwady Delta and Central Dry Zone (MYFish-Culture- MYFC) (2015 to 2018).
- World Vision - Growing Livelihood in Bogale Project (2015 to 2020).

Dry Zone projects:

- Action Aid - Social Economic Development Network for Regional Development (2013 to 2019).
- FAO - Improving Farmer Livelihoods in the Dry Zone through Improved Livestock Health, Productivity and Marketing (2015 to 2019).
- Golden Plains - Restoring Unproductive Soil to Get Sustainable Yield by Green Manuring & Modified Cropping System in Dry Zone (2016 to 2018).
- HAI - Dry Zone Social Protection Project (2015 to 2018).
- IFDC - Dry Zone Agro-Input and Farm Services Project (2015 to 2018).
- MPSWA - Improved Nutritional Status of venerable community through Self-help Potential (2016 to 2018).
- SPPRG - Community Based Social Protection System Efficacy and Efficiency of Pilot (2015 to 2018).
- Terres des Hommes - Soilless Horticulture and Other Water-saving

Innovative Technologies for Landless and Marginal Farmers (2014 to 2019).
- UN Habitat - A short step from improved WASH to healthier communities (2016 to 2018).
- UNESCAP - Integrated Rural Economic and Social Development Programme for Livelihoods Improvement in the Dry Zone of Myanmar (2014 to 2017).

Uplands projects:

- CORAD - Promoting Agricultural Diversification and Economic Integration in Northern Chin State (2016 to 2019).
- CRS - Productive Agriculture through Community Engagement (PACE) (2016 to 2019).
- Mercy Corps - Making Vegetable Markets Work for Poor (MVMWP) (2014 to 2018).
- Metta - Uplands Food Security and Participation in Markets (UFS-PM) (2016 to 2019).
- MIID - Securing Positive Nutritional Outcomes through Agriculture Extension, Nutritional Education and Institution Building in Rural Chin State (NOAC) project. (2016 to 2019).
- TAG - Plan Bee: Introduction and Expansion of Modern Beekeeping and Honey Production in Shan State. (2013 to 2019).

Rakhine projects:

- BLO - Tat Lan Sustainable Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Phase II (2016 to 2017).
- IRC - Tat Lan Sustainable Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Phase II (2016 to 2018).
- Save the Children - Tat Lan Sustainable Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Phase II (2016 to 2018).
- CARE - M&E and Learning for Tat Lan Phase II (2016 to 2018).
- CARE - Supporting the food security, resilience and social cohesion of households and communities in Rathedaung Township (2016 to 2018).

Migration projects:

- CARE - Aung Myin Hmu Project - Industry Solutions for Safe Employment (2017 to 2019).
- IOM - Capitalizing human mobility for poverty alleviation and inclusive development in Myanmar (CHIME) (2016 to 2018).
- IOM - Increasing the Developmental Impact of Labour Migration through Strengthened Governance and Partnership (G&P): the Twe Let project. (2017 to 2019).

Financial Inclusion projects:

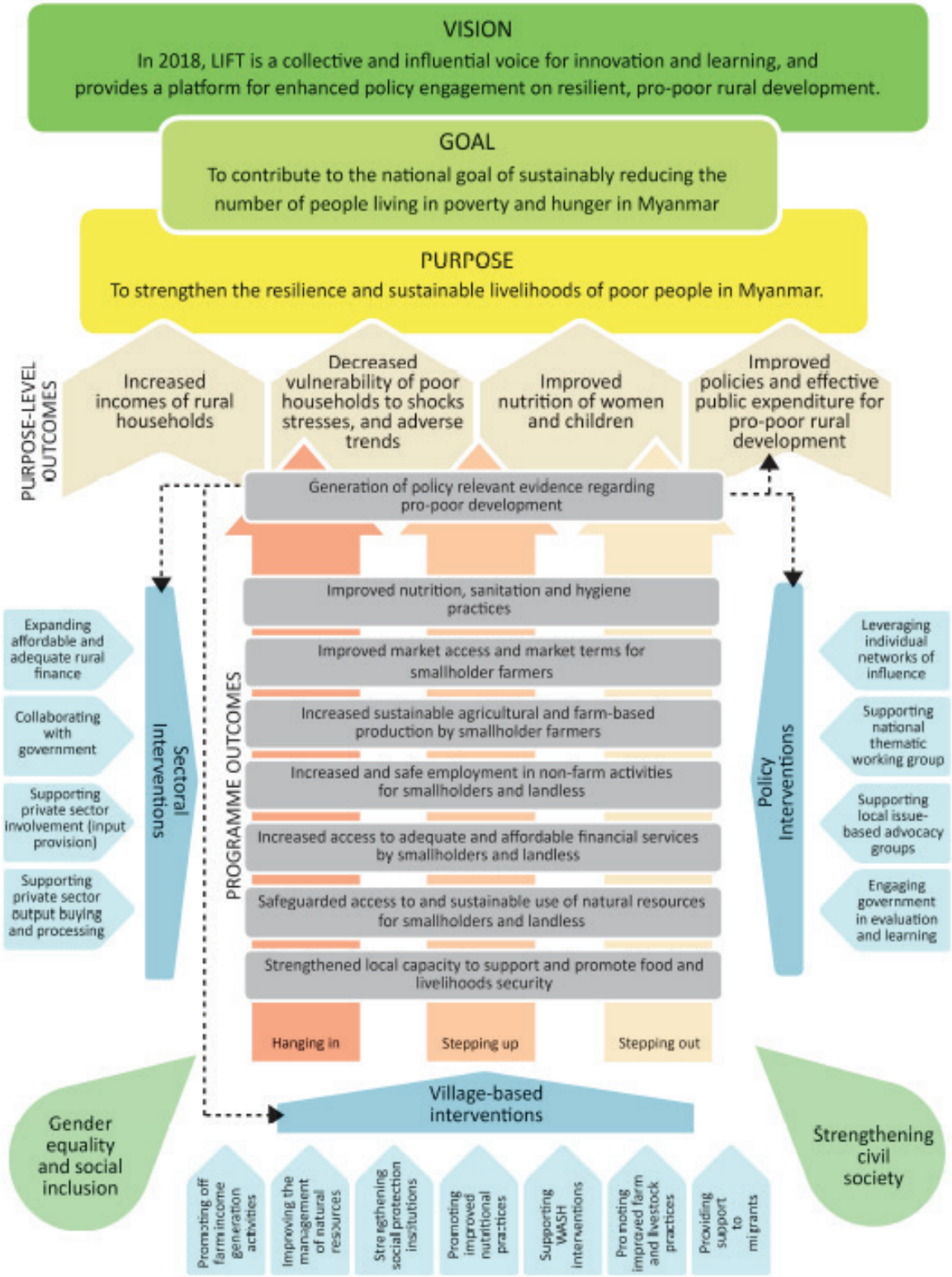
- CCA - Myanmar: Financial Inclusion Expansion through Co-operatives (MyFINANCE) project (2016 to 2019).
- GRET - Expanding Rural Financial Markets by Institutionalizing Chin MFI (2015 to 2018).
- GRET - Creating of a microfinance institution in the Dry Zone, Myanmar (2013 to 2019).
- PGMF - Myanmar Access to Financial Inclusion (MAFIN) Project (2015 to 2017).
- PGMF - Myanmar Access to Rural Credit through Institutional Strengthening (MARC) (2012 to 2019).
- Proximity - Financial Inclusion—Moving Ahead (2015 to 2019).
- VisionFund - Financial Inclusion For Uplands Project (2015 to 2018).
- Yoma Bank - Agri-Business Finance Program (AFP) (2015 to 2018).

Civil Society and other projects:

- FSWG - Harnessing Resources and Partnerships to Achieve Food Security in Myanmar (Phase 2) (2016 to 2018).
- GEN - Deepening Commitment to Gender Equality in Myanmar (2016 to 2018).
- IERG - Grass-roots Entrepreneurship Education and Pro-Poor Enterprise Development (2013 to 2017).
- KMSS - Strategic Partnership for Civil Society Empowerment (SPaCE) (2017 to 2019).
- EDEN - Eden Project to Rescue Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked into Sexual Exploitation in Yangon (2017 to 2019).
- HAI - Strengthening the Ministry of Social Welfare to fulfil its Role in Expanding Social Protection (2014 to 2018)

ANNEX 3

LIFT THEORY OF CHANGE



ANNEX 4

LIFT-LEVEL EVALUATION AND LEARNING QUESTIONS

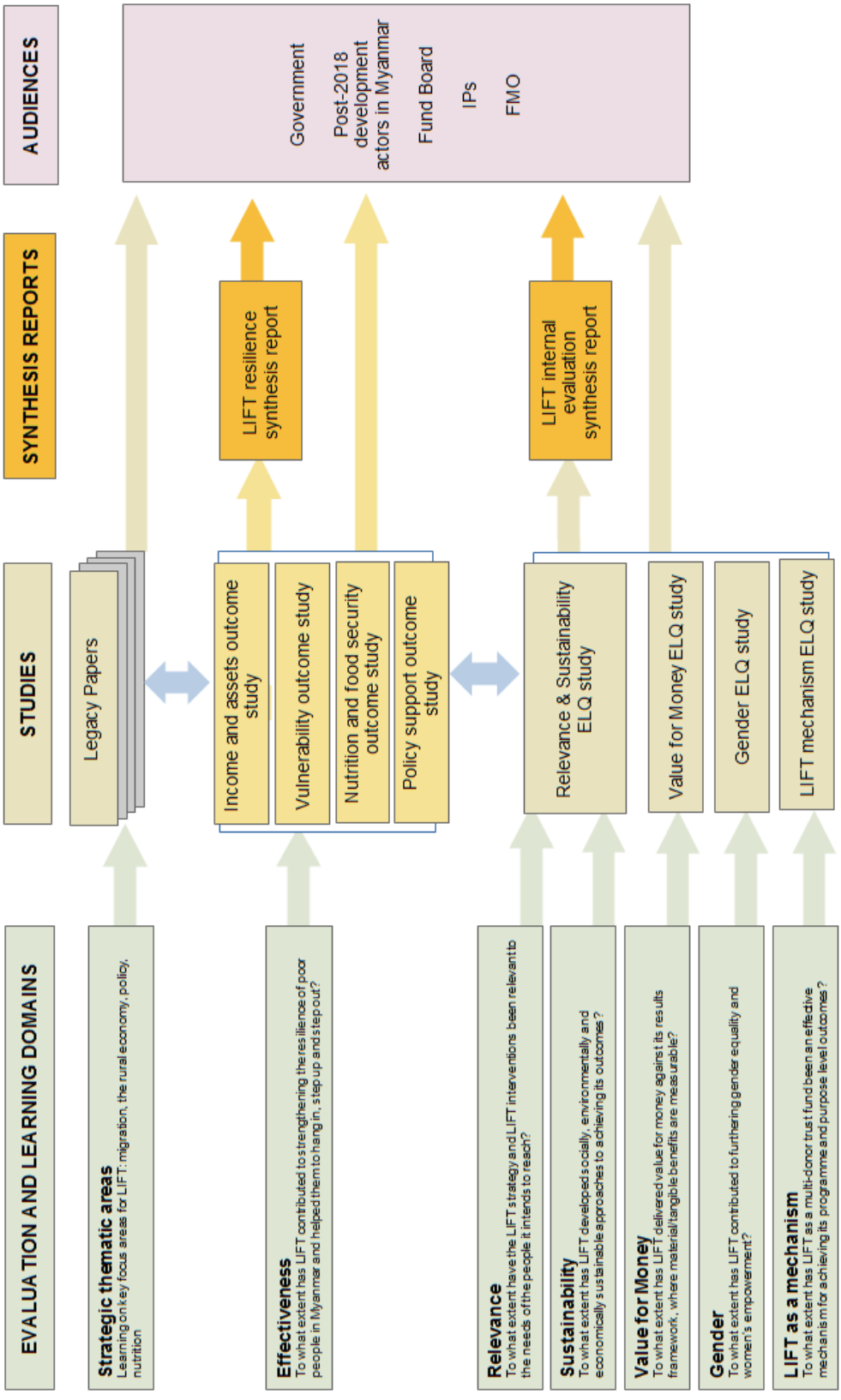
Evalutaion Domain, and the Main and Sub-Questions	Data Source	Knowledge Product
1. RELEVANCE: To what extent have the LIFT strategy and LIFT interventions been relevant to the needs of the people it intends to reach? 1. To what extent has LIFT appropriately followed and implemented its strategy? 2. Have the target beneficiaries and their needs been accurately identified? 3. Have interventions been designed in an appropriate manner given the context? 4. To what extent have interventions and approaches been adapted or flexible to respond to changing circumstances? 5. To what extent have the interventions actually addressed the needs of the target beneficiaries (including men, women and different social groups)?	Project proposals. Project monitoring reports. Mid-term project evaluations. End of project evaluations.	Relevance & Sustainability Study. Internal Evaluation Report.
2. EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent has LIFT contributed to strengthening the resilience of poor people in Myanmar and helped them to hang in, step up and step out? 1. To what extent has LIFT contributed to increasing incomes of beneficiary households, and through what pathways?* 2. To what extent has LIFT contributed to reducing the vulnerability of beneficiary households and communities and through what pathways?* 3. To what extent has LIFT contributed to improving the nutrition and food security of women and children and through what pathways?* * The analysis of pathways will include an examination of how programme level outcomes have interacted and fed into the achievement of this purpose level outcome. Unintended consequences will also be explored as part of this.	LIFT household survey datasets and reports. Project monitoring reports. Mid-term project evaluations. End of project evaluations.	Income and Assets Study. Vulnerability Study. Nutrition & Food Security Study. Resilience Synthesis Report.

3. SUSTAINABILITY: To what extent has LIFT identified and established socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable approaches for achieving the purpose and programme outcomes? 1. To what extent has LIFT established viable business models for private sector provision of services (e.g., extension/advisory services) or products (e.g., improved seeds, farm machinery), including through public and private partnerships? 2. To what extent has LIFT established sustainable models for the management of common assets/natural resources? 3. To what extent has LIFT strengthened formal and informal organizations and institutional arrangements for improving the position of farmers in value chains (related to inputs, advisory services and the processing and sale of produce)? 4. To what extent have agricultural technologies (activities?) promoted by LIFT been environmentally sustainable?	Project proposals. Project monitor-ing reports. Mid-term project evaluations. End of project evaluations. Project and programme special studies.	Relevance & Sustainability Study. Internal Evaluation Report.
4. EFFICIENCY: To what extent has LIFT delivered value for money against its results framework, where material/tangible benefits are measurable? 1. To what extent has LIFT sought to ensure VfM throughout the programme cycle and to what extent have findings been acted upon? 2. To what extent have value for money considerations been taken into account in the selection and design of projects? 3. To what extent have project's been managed in a way that offers value for money? 4. How much money is spent to reach individuals/ households, overall and by component; and how much does it cost to achieve a certain outcome?* * This question will only be answered for select outputs and outcomes based on the feasibility of producing robust evidence.	Project proposals. Project monitor-ing reports. Mid-term project evaluations. End of project evaluations. Project & programme special studies.	Value for Money Study. Internal Evaluation Report.

5. GENDER: To what extent has LIFT contributed to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment? 1. To what extent has the design of interventions considered gender differences in needs, constraints, and opportunities of beneficiaries? 2. To what extent have women participated equally in LIFT supported interventions and where there is unequal participation how has LIFT sought to reduce barriers to participation? 3. To what extent have men and women benefited equally from LIFT supported interventions? 4. To what extent have women been empowered as a result of LIFT interventions and through what pathways? 5. To what extent has LIFT influenced its partners to address gender issues in their programming and policy work?	Project proposals. Project monitor-ing reports. Mid-term project evaluations. End of project evaluations. Special studies.	Gender study. Internal evaluation report.
6. POLICY SUPPORT: To what extent has LIFT generated and disseminated evidence on pro-poor rural development in Myanmar and influenced related policies and practice? 1. To what extent has LIFT generated robust, useful evidence on sustainable agriculture, food security and rural development policy and practice in Myanmar? 2. To what extent have knowledge products developed by LIFT been recognised and used by key development partners in Myanmar? 3. To what extent has LIFT contributed to improving the formation and implementation of pro-poor policies and informed public expenditures, and through what pathways?	Project & FMO policy-related publications. Consultations with GoM and IP staff. Project monitoring and contribution analysis reports. Project evaluations.	Policy support study. Resilience Synthesis Report.

ANNEX 3

LIFT THEORY OF CHANGE



ANNEX 6

PROJECT RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

From the "Short guidelines for assessment of the relevance and sustainability of LIFT-supported projects": LIFT, 14 August 2018.

1. INTRODUCTION

This guideline provides a short introduction to LIFT's Relevance and Sustainability (R&S) assessment tools. These should be used in LIFT project mid-term and final evaluations to help make the assessments of R&S more systematic and useful. The data generated will be extracted and analysed across all LIFT projects to help assess LIFT's Evaluation and Learning Questions (ELQs) and Sub Questions on R&S.

LIFT has seven ELQs that cover relevance effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, gender, policy support and LIFT as a mechanism. The ELQs and their Sub-Questions are provided in Annex 4.

2. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RELEVANCE

LIFT uses the OECD / DAC definition or relevance as "the extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor". The "Relevance Assessment Table Tool" (Figure 21) considers and assesses each of the series of the different aspects of relevance that are generally recognised by most understandings of this definition. Relevance in this context means "suited to", "alignment with", "consistency with", or "appropriateness of". Thus:

(1) The relevance of the project objectives to the ultimate target beneficiaries.
(2) The relevance of the project design to the objectives and context. Is the project design likely lead to achievement of the project objective in the actual context?
(3) The extent to which the project has been flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances or inappropriate design. Has the project kept itself relevant?
(4) The extent to which the project has actually addressed the needs of different groups of target beneficiaries. Has or will the project achieve relevant outputs and outcomes?
(5) Relevance of the project to the LIFT strategy and therefore to the Development Partners who contribute to LIFT. This is important to satisfy those who contribute the necessary financing.

(6) Relevance of the project to government and country priorities. This is important to secure buy in and collaboration.

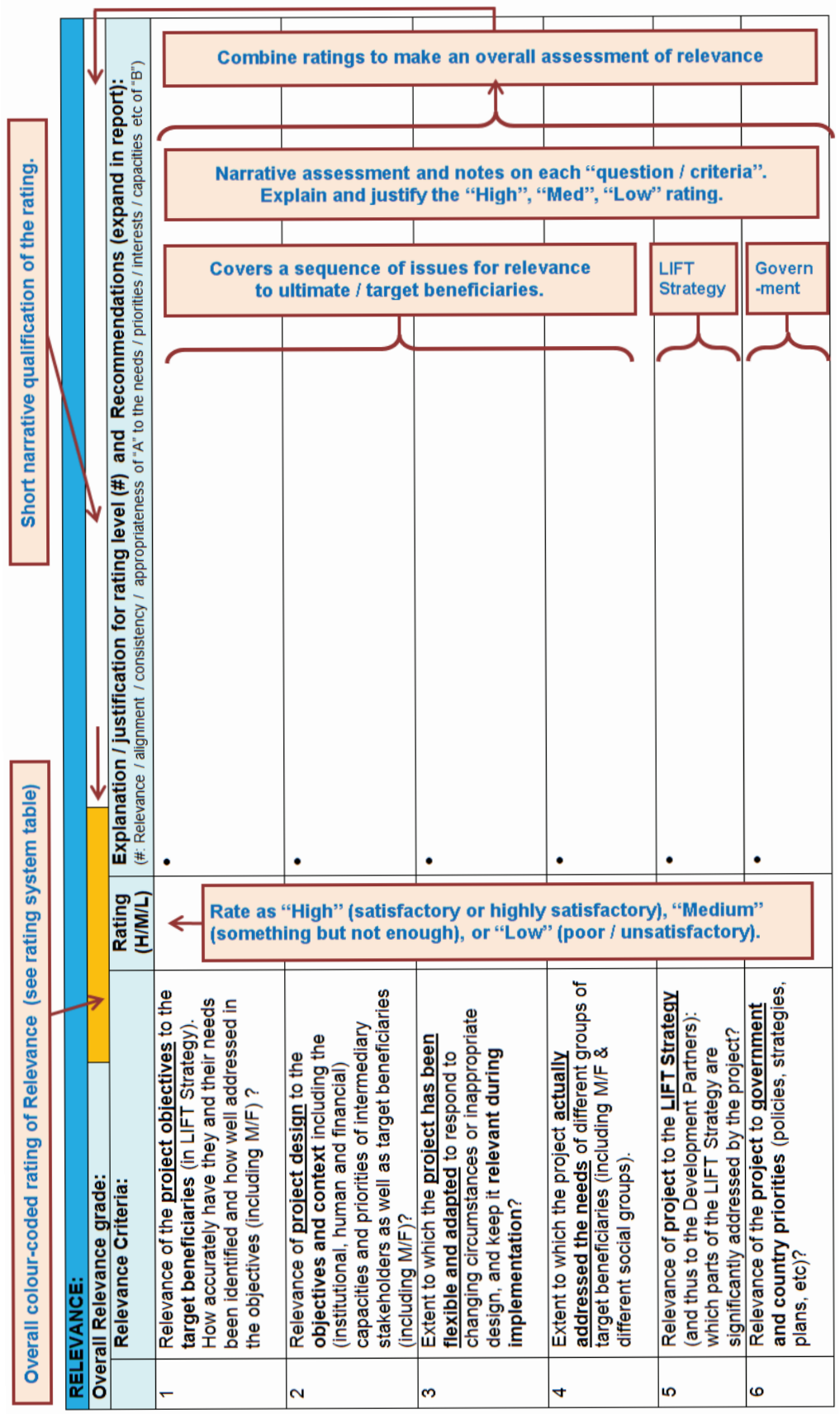
Each aspect of relevance is assessed as "High", "Medium" or "Low" and the rating and explanation / justification for this assessment entered into the relevance assessment table tool. These are combined by the evaluator to derive an overall grade of relevance. Most weight is given to the achievement of relevance for the ultimate beneficiaries (questions 1 to 4).

These six aspects of relevance correspond very closely to the five LIFT relevance ELQ sub-questions (Annex 1). The answers to each question will be compiled across different types of project to support LIFT's overall assessment of each relevance ELQ sub-question.

Overall project relevance is assessed on a commonly used four point scale. This relates to the urgency of the need for corrective actions for a mid-term assessment, or the relevance achieved throughout the project for an end of project evaluation.

1	**Highly relevant**: Highly satisfactory, almost no or only minor shortcomings.
2	**Mostly relevant**: Satisfactory but some shortcomings that shouls be corrected.
3	**Partly relevant**: Parly satisfactory but insufficient: significant corrective action is needed.
4	**Irrelevant:** Unsatisfactory: urgent action is neede to avoid failure or reduce losses.

Fig. 21 Blank Relevance Assessment Table Tool with explanatory notes



3. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

LIFT uses the OECD / DAC definition or sustainability as "whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn; projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable". The "Sustainability Assessment Table Tool" is shown in Figure 22, with notes that help to explain how it should be used. Sustainability is assessed in two stages.

Stage 1 provides a preliminary assessment of sustainability at the project level, in three steps.

- **Step 1:** Define the meaning of sustainability and identify the various real world entities, system changes, benefits or outcomes, etc. that the project should generate and should be self-sustaining and continue after the end of the project. The aim is to identify a small number of entities or systems etc. for which it is easy to understand what they are, how they operate, and how they can become self-sustaining. This should include private sector businesses, government service providers, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, farmer organisations and common property resources (CPR) models as appropriate, since these provide the information needed for the ELQ sub-questions.

- **Step 2:** Determine what will be needed for each entity to continue after the project, and the likelihood that these things will be available or happen. This is generally fairly straightforward but may require significant organisational or financial analysis. The likelihood assessment ("high", "medium" or "low") for each entity is put into the next column. The weight or importance of each entity in the project is assessed and put into the column after that.

- **Step 3:** Combine the entity assessments to make a preliminary overall assessment of project sustainability. This requires experience and judgement to balance and combine the likelihoods of sustainability for each entity according to their relative importance in the project, and to some extent, their inter-dependence. This uses a four point grading scale.

1	**Highly relevant**: Highly satisfactory, almost no or only minor shortcomings.
2	**Mostly relevant**: Satisfactory but some shortcomings that shouls be corrected.
3	**Partly relevant**: Parly satisfactory but insufficient: significant corrective action is needed.
4	**Irrelevant:** Unsatisfactory: urgent action is neede to avoid failure or reduce losses.

Stage 2: Identify and assess the risks for the wider and longer term social, environmental and economic sustainability of the overall project. This is needed to take account of the "externalities" and "whole-project effects" that may be missed by the stage 1 analysis of project elements,

The sustainability assessment table tool has separate rows for social, environmental and economic effects / impacts. For each of these, the evaluator should identify and summarise the main likely positive and negative effects or impacts and mitigation used that are not covered in stage 1. This is summarised to assess (1) the likelihood of a net negative impact (high, medium or low), and (2) the level of negative impact that would occur if the effect happened (high, medium or low). The assessments are entered into the table, together with remarks or recommendations. A fourth row is provided to consider and summarise the sustainability of the promoted agricultural technologies. This is done to provide the information needed for the ELQ Sub-Question 4.

The assessments of the risk levels for social, environmental and economic sustainability are used to qualify, and may confirm or downgrade, the preliminary assessment of sustainability obtained in stage 1, to generate the final overall grade (as above). This is entered at the top of the table.

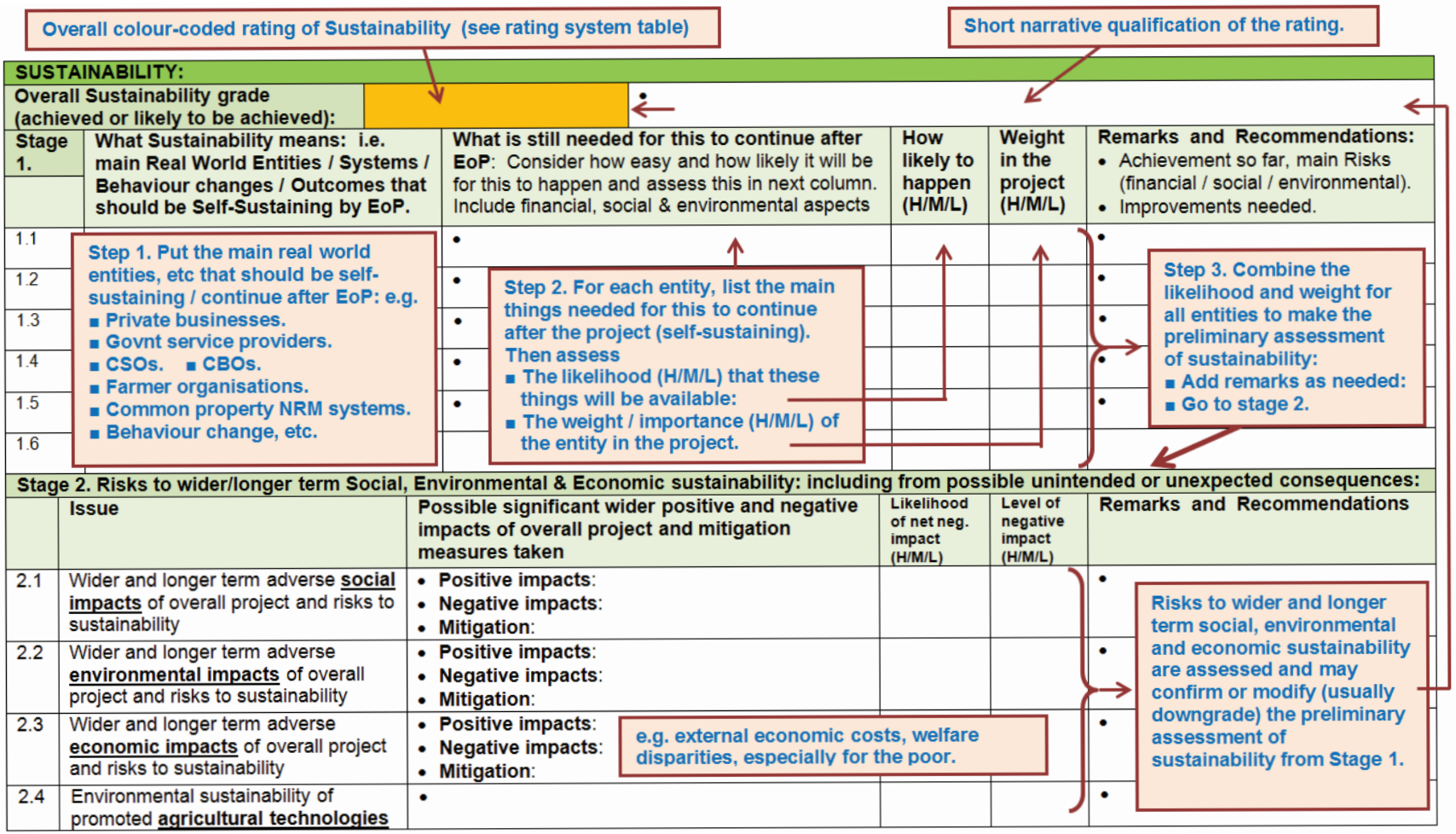


Fig. 22 Blank Sustainability Assessment Table Tool with explanatory notes

4. PRESENTATION IN THE EVALUATION REPORT

The Relevance and Sustainability Assessment Tables should be included as annexes in the mid-term or final evaluation report. The sections on relevance and sustainability in the body of the report should present, explain and elaborate on the findings as needed for the particular mid-term or final evaluation. The recommendations identified in the tables should be elaborated and presented in the appropriate sections in the report.

A more detailed presentation and explanation of these R&S tools is provided in the full "Guidelines for assessment of the relevance and sustainability of LIFT-supported projects".

ANNEX 7: Main parameters, categories & criteria for the R&S Study

1. BASIC

1.1 Highest level document reviewed
1.2 Status of implementaion

2. TYPES OF PROJECT

2.1 LIFT Programmes: provides management
2.2 LIFT Fund: source of finance
2.3 Geographical zone/coverage
2.4 Types of implementing partner (IP)
2.5 Sectoral focus areas
2.6 HI, SU, SO
2.7 Types of beneficiary
2.8 Direct or "facilitated" type of support/approach of project
2.9 Gender (equality)/marker

3. RELEVANCE

3.1 Type of main ultimate beneficiary
3.2 Main reason for downgrading relevance

4. SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 Most critical entity/system/model type
4.2 Meaning of scores (1 to 4) for sustainability likelihood and weight
4.3 Meaning of scores for social, environmental & economic risks
4.4 Main reasons for downgrading sustainability

5. SPREAD

5.1 Main types of mechanism for "self-spread"
5.2 Meaning of scores for assessment of spread (potential & likelihood)
5.3 Self-spread likelihood levels of the identified mechanisms

1. BASICS

1.1 Highest level Document reviewed

	Code	Geographical zone / Coverage
1	MTR	MTR Report
2	MTR +	MTR + R&S sheets
3	Final	Final Evaluation report
4	Final	Final Evaluation report + R&S sheets
5	No eval	No evaluation

1.2 Status of implementation

	Code	Geographical zone / Coverage
0	New	New or being contracted:
1	Ongoing	Ongoing:
2	Closing	Closing:
3	Closed	Closed:

2. TYPES OF PROJECT

2.1 LIFT Programmes: Provides management

	Code	LIFT Programme
0	Select one	
1	Delta	Delta 3
2	DZ	Dry Zone
3	Uplands	Uplands
4	Rakhine	Rakhine
5	Migration	Migration
6	FI	Financial Inclusion (includes Microfinance and "Private Sector Partnership")
7	CSS	Civil Society Strengthening

2.2 LIFT Fund: Source of finance

	Code	LIFT Programme
0	Select one	
1	Delta	Delta
2	DZ	Dry Zone
3	UPL	Uplands
4	RKN	Rakhine
5	CW	Country Wide
6	L&i	Learning and Innovation
7	FI	Financial Inclusion
8	PS	Private Sector Engagement
9	MIG	Migration
10	CSoc	Civil Society
11	Disability	Disability
12	Extra Nut	Extra Nutrition
13	Infra	Infrastructure
14	Flood	Flood Response
15	DGrant	Direct Grant

2.3 Geographical Zone / Coverage

	Code	Geographical zone / Coverage
0	Select one	
1	Delta	Delta
2	DZ	Dry Zone
3	Uplands	Uplands
4	Rakhine	Rakhine
5	Zones	Two or more LIFT geographic Zones (as above)
6	Country	The whole country (countrywide): likely to be policy, sectoral, etc programme.

2.4 Types of Implementing Partner (IP)

Select one of the following alternatives:

	Code	Geographical zone / Coverage
1	Nat	National NGO or other type of organisation
2	Int	International NGO or other type of international organisation
3	Gov	Government department or agency
4	MFI	MFI
5	Other	Other

2.5 Sectoral Focus Area

	High-Level Focus Area	Code High-FA	Sub-Level Focus Area: Can apply to any High-Level Focus Area: Select one or two:	Code Sub-FA	HI / SU / SO
1	Financial inclusion	FI	• SMALL MFI establishment, development and / or expansion of capacity.	• MFI-S-Cap	SU, SO
			• LARGE MFI establishment, development and / or expansion of capacity.	• MFI-L-Cap	
			• Financial services development and / or expansion: e.g. for hire purchase as with Yoma Bank (2015 Annual report p.68).	• Fin-Service	
			• Foreign Direct Investment support: e.g. TCX.	• FDI	
			• Community-based savings and/or credit or "revolving fund".	• CBSC	
2	Private / social business Sector Development and Employment (Often with "Migration" as a Sub-Level Focus Area or vice versa, depending on the primary focus)	PSD	• Private Sector Co-financing Partnership: e.g. Activities related to value chains e.g. PRIME, Heineken (2015 Annual report p.69, 70).	• PSD	
			• Agric Value Chain actor PSD: e.g. MC-LLM, IFDC.	• VCPSD	
			• Vocational / skills Training and / or Employment or self-employment (MSMEs); e.g. MC-LLM or SEDN.	• VT-Employ	
			• Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) / Off-Farm Enterprise development. Some Micro SMEs may only be a little larger than some IGA businesses.	• MSME	
			• Social Enterprise / business development for Employment: e.g. SEDN.	• SocE-Employ	
3	Agriculture / NRM / Food Security / Community-focused development: • Production. • Food Security. • Income generation activities. • Etc. **including** fisheries, farm based production and livestock; and working in a Value Chain context and purposive "Value Chain development".	Agric	• Farmer / Community-based Producer Enterprise (with or without Value Chain development).	• FPE	HI, SU
			• Small individual Income Generation Activity or business (e.g. livestock, fish, groceries): too small to be considered Micro Enterprise.	• IGA	
			• Crops: rice pulses, horticulture, etc.	• Crops	
			• Livestock.	• Livestock	
			• Aquaculture.	• Aquaculture	
			• Co-management / NRM fisheries.	• CNRM fish	
			• Wild capture fishing.	• Capture	
			• Seed sector related activities.	• Seed	
			• Forestry, agroforestry.	• Forest	
			• NRM for other (non-fish) purposes: e.g. mangroves, forestry, water catchment, etc.)	• CNRM-Other	
			• Knowledge and information	• K&I	
			• Climate change adaptation.	• CCA	

	High-Level Focus Area	Code High-FA	Sub-Level Focus Area: Can apply to any High-Level Focus Area: Select one or two:	Code Sub-FA	HI / SU / SO
4	Nutrition	Nut	• WASH.	• WASH	HI
			• Capacity and understanding (e.g. LEARN).	• Capacity	
			• Nutrition, hygiene, etc BCC.	• BCC	
			• MCCT.	• MCCT	
			• Food Technology: e.g. fortified rice.	• Food Tech	
5	Social protection provision and access to basic services (code: SP)	SocProt	• Social protection support: e.g. Help Age; SEDN "Referral System".	• SocProt	HI
			• Village Revolving Fund for Social Protection.	• VRF-SP	
			• WASH.	• WASH	
6	Migration: (May have Vocational Training and Employment as a Sub-Level Focus Area or vice versa depending on the primary focus).	VT-Mig	• Vocational / skills Training and / or Employment or self-employment	• VT-Employ	SO
			• Migration Training and networking.	• Mig-Train	
			• Migration Policy	• Mig-Pol	
7	Policy and governance	Policy	• Land policy.	• Land-Pol	HI, SU, SO
			• Knowledge and information	• K&I	
			• Civil Society strengthening.	• CSS	
			• Social protection policy.	• Soc-Prot-Pol	
			• Institutional development: restructuring, capacity building, etc.	• Instn-Devpt	
			• Village Development Planning VDP.	• VDP	
8	Civil society Strengthening	CSS	• Civil Society Strengthening	• CSS	HI, SU, SO
			• Community Based Organisations including VDCs etc.	• CBO	
9	Other	Other	• Capacity building	• Capacity	HI
			• Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness.	• DRR	

2.6 HI, SU, SO

	Hi/Su/SO	Sub-Focus areas: Select all that apply:
	HI	• Hanging In: Subsistence
	SU	• Stepping Up: Moving up in the same main livelihood area in terms of level of technilogy, production, market access, etc.
	SO	• Stepping Out: Moving from one main livelihood area to another: e.g. from agriculture to business

2.7 Types of Beneficiary

Note that beneficiaries may be fully described (and defined) by using each (both) of the following two pairs attributes:

- Ultimate or Intermediate beneficiaries: by position in the causal / results chain.

AND

- Direct or Indirect beneficiaries: by type of engagement with the project.

- "Ultimate Beneficiaries" are the poor and vulnerable households targeted by LIFT (i.e. those at the end of the results chain).
- "Intermediate Beneficiaries" are the public, civil society and private sector organisations and networks in the project / programme area, who receive a definite benefit from the project and provide services of benefit for the ultimate beneficiaries (i.e. those in the middle of the results chain, between the project activities and the ultimate beneficiaries).

- "Direct Beneficiaries" ("Immediate beneficiaries") are those who receive significant benefit directly from the activities of the project, during the period of the project investment. These may be "ultimate beneficiaries" or "intermediate beneficiaries".
- "Indirect Beneficiaries" are those who receive some benefit which results from what the project sets up, either during or after the project. This mostly relates to the "ultimate beneficiaries" but there could also be some "indirect, intermediate beneficiaries". The number of "Indirect Beneficiaries" reached may not be known until later or at, or after the end of the project.

Note that the terms "primary" and "secondary" are NOT used to categorise beneficiaries, since these terms are ambiguous (could refer to either to the importance (ultimate or intermediate) or the sequence of benefiting (direct, indirect)), and are covered by the above more precise terms.

2.8 Direct or "facilitated" type of support / approach of project

Select one of the following alternatives for the broad type of project support:

	Direct	**Direct Support** • The Project supports the Ultimate Beneficiaries directly by providing them with goods (grants equipment inputs etc.) or services (training, coaching, technical support, extension advice, etc.) that benefit them more or less directly. • Contrasts with (the "opposite" of) the Facilitation Approach.
	Facilitated	**Facilitation Approach:** • The Project works with (supports) intermediate actors with a relatively "light touch" to help them improve or provide additional services that are useful for the Ultimate Beneficiaries (indirect, facilitated support for UBs). These services are part of the viable "business model" of the intermediate actors who use their own resources. • The project tends to work within a specific "system" to leverage" system change. • Contrasts with (the "opposite" of) direct support.
	Mixed	A **mixture** of Direct and Facilitated types of support.
	Policy	Project supports a policy that will very indirectly bring benefits for the Ultimate Beneficiaries.

2.9 Gender (equality) Marker

Four categories of focus on gewnder equality are recognised in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker system. This is similar to the ADB gender marker but has one more category than the more basic OECD DAC gender marker. One example of the formulation for this is given at.

- https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/geneva-iasc-events/documents/iasc-gender-marker-fact-sheet

Gender Code	Description
0	There are **no signs that gender issues were considered** in project design or implementation. There is risk that the project will unknowingly nurture existing gender inequalities or deepen them.
1	The project is designed to **contribute in a general and limited way** to gender equality. The design could be stronger and advance gender equality more. • The project's needs assessment includes a gender analysis that is not meaningfully reflected in activities and outcomes OR • At least one activity and outcome aim to advance gender equality but this is not supported by the needs assessment.

Source: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/geneva-iasc-events/documents/iasc-gender-marker

2	The project is designed to **contribute significantly** to gender equality. The different needs of women / girls and men / boys have been **analysed** and **integrated** well into the design with appropriate activities and outcomes. Gender equality has been reasonably well "**mainstreamed**" into the project.
3	The **principal purpose** of the project is to advance gender equality. The entire project either: a) targets women or men, girls or boys that suffers discrimination or disadvantage, creating a more level playing field, or b) focuses all activities on building gender-related services or more equal relations between women and men.

2.10 Nutrition Marker

A similar marker was developed for the purposes of the Relevance and Sustainability Study as below. The aim is to see how far the project has focused on or integrated NUTRITION into implementation, in line with the increased emphasis in LIFT on nutrition in recent years.

Nutrition Code	Description
0	**Little or no specific consideration of Nutrition** (explicit / deliberate / intentional) Project design or implementation. Not considered or planned for in design or implementation.
1	**General although limited (but explicit) consideration of Nutrition** in Project design or implementation. Aims to make a general and limited contribution to improving nutrition. Some generalised consideration of nutrition but no specific analysis, strategy or plan.
2	The project and implementation are designed to **contribute significantly to Nutrition.** Specific **analysis** and **design** to **integrate / mainstream** nutrition into the project: i.e. vulnerability and nutrition needs analysed and a specific strategy and activities identified and mainstreamed into project implementation.
3	**Nutrition is a principal purpose** of the project: i.e. the whole project or at least one of the main components. Aims to make a specific and major contribution to nutrition.

2.11 Resilience Marker

A similar marker can be developed for the purposes of the Relevance and Sustainability Study as below. The aim is to see how far the project has focused on or integrated RESILIENCE into implementation, in line with the more explicit emphasis in LIFT on resilience.

The table below is an attempt at a very basic and immediately obvious marker with easily distinguishable categories. The CARE version has more categories and a more systematic and (probably) robust methodology, but is much more complicated (and time consuming). The following was thought appropriate for, and tried, in this study.

Resilience Code	Description
0	Little or no specific consideration of Resilience (explicit / deliberate / intentional) Project design or implementation. Not considered or planned for in design or implementation.
1	General although limited (but explicit) consideration of Resilience in Project design or implementation. Aims to make a general and limited contribution to improving resilience. Some generalised consideration but no specific resilience analysis or plan.
2	The project and implementation are designed to contribute significantly to Resilience. Specific analysis and design to integrate / mainstream resilience and contribute significantly to reducing vulnerability and / or increasing resilience: i.e. vulnerability and resilience needs analysed and a specific strategy and activities identified and mainstreamed into project implementation.
3	Resilience is a principal purpose of the project: i.e. the whole project or at least one of the main components. Aims to make a specific and major contribution to resilience.

3. RELEVANCE

3.1 Type of main ultimate beneficiary

- This is supposed to provide useful information on the type of Relevance and help to see if the type of ultimate beneficiary is a factor in difficulties with achieving relevance. Other factors such as type of IP are covered elsewhere. thought appropriate for, and tried, in this study.

No	Code	Details	Remarks
0	Multiple	Two or more different types of beneficiaries	• E.g. farmers, landless, etc.
1	Small Farmers	Small Scale Farmers	• Subsistence, with some sales when possible. • Includes aquaculture, forestry, fishing, etc.
2	Mixed Farmers	Mix of smaller and / or larger farmers	
3	Landless	Landless (rural) and urban poor HHs	• Landless (e.g. non paddy or very poor) HHs in rural areas, and urban poor HHs that are included in e.g. vocational training, employment and migration projects: unless included as "Migrants" below.

4	Migrants	Migrating people (M/F)	• Safe migration, usually for, and linked to support for, employment.
5	Youth	Youth	• Young people from the project rural or nearby urban areas.
6	PLWMC	PLWMC	• Pregnant and Lactating Women and Mothers with young children and their young Children. • When specifically targeted.
7	Women	Women in general. All categories (including PLWMC).	• Women from male-headed as well as female-headed households, young, old, etc. • Includes all categories of women (including PLWMC).
8	HH	Whole household.	• Specifically targeting the whole household rather than women, children, etc.

3.2 Main reason for downgrading Relevance

No	Code	Details / Risks	Remarks
1		Objectives / focus	
2		Intermediate actor relevance	Interest, appropriateness, relevance, etc for intermediate actors.
3		Adaptive management	
4	n/a	Not applicable.	

4. SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 Most critical entity / system / model type

- This table lists all the different types of entity / system / behaviour change / models that can be identified in the sustainability assessment.
- The "Code" / "tag" entry is used in the "Most critical entity / system type" box of the "Project Assessment Summary Table" (Annex 5) to identify the type of the entity / system that is most critical for overall sustainability of the project.
- The same codes should be used to "tag" the entities / system / models identified in the table (Stage 1) for extraction to assess ELQ sub-questions about sustainable models.
- If it is necessary to identify a new type of entity / system / model, this should be added to the list.
- There should be consistency between the "high-level" and "sub-level focus areas" of section 1.4 and the different types of entity / system/ model identified in the list below.

	Select one	Details	Remarks
1	Multiple	Two or more types of entity / system are critical	Sustainability of two or more types of entity are needed to ensure sustainability of the overall model.
2	HH	Ultimate beneficiaries as individual HHs (not group) for e.g.: farming, micro-enterprise, nutrition, etc.	• Includes all types of UB as identified in section 2.1: Small Farmers; Mixed Farmers; Landless; Migrants; PLWMC; Women; etc: when operating as an individual HH (not in a group) for e.g. • Farming, micro-enterprise, adopting ENA / EHA, etc.
3	CBSC	Community-based savings and credit groups	All types of village-based savings and credit or credit organisations from small to large, including VSLAs, etc.
4	CBVRF	Community-based Village Revolving funds for credit and / or social protection.	All types of village-based savings and credit or credit organisations from small to large, including VSLAs, etc.
5	CB-Nut	Community Based Organisation / Group for Nutrition.	Ordinary volunteer-based community organisations that support nutrition, mother to mother support groups, MCCT, etc.

6	CBVCO CBVCO-Ext	Community-based Value Chain Organisation: Add "Ext" if the CVCO has an extension function.	• Includes model in ELQ 3 Sub Question 3: "To what extent has LIFT strengthened formal and informal organizations and institutional arrangements for improving the position of farmers in value chains (related to inputs, advisory services and the processing and sale of produce)?" • Includes formal cooperatives, farmer producer enterprises, etc. and informal farmer groups that provide services or livelihoods for its members. Some of these operate like businesses and could be counted as a PSB but should be included here for consistency.
7	CBO-Other	Other Community Based Organisation: but not CBSC, CB-VRF, CB-Nut, CBVCO, or CBVCO-Ext.	• Community-based organisations such as a VDC, DRR cttee, etc.: but NOT farmer organisations, community savings & credit organisations, nutrition groups, etc.
8	CNRM	Community Natural Resources Management models	• Includes model in ELQ 3 Sub Question 2: "To what extent has LIFT established sustainable models for the management of common assets/natural resources?"
9	Net	Network or System: Groups or entities working together for a common interest but not regarded as a more formalised CSO.	• CSO or less formal grouping of organisations into a network with specific purpose and functions.
10	PSB PSB-Ext	Private Sector Business: Add "Ext" if the PSB has an extension function.	• Includes model in ELQ 3 Sub Question 1: "To what extent has LIFT established viable business models for private sector provision of services (e.g., extension/advisory services) or products (e.g., improved seeds, farm machinery), including through public and private partnerships?" • Includes the non-farmer private sector businesses in value chains.
11	PSB-Soc	Social Business	• Social businesses, etc that operate as a business and provide livelihoods for its members.
12	CSO	CSO: that is registered and reasonably well organised (more than a network).	• CSO or less formal grouping of organisations into a network with specific purpose and functions.
13	MFI	Microfinance institution or related model, including access	• Any kind of microfinance organisation. • Includes development of microfinance products and access for specific (e.g. marginalised) groups.

14	Info	Information, document, etc Repository.	• May be a specific institution or network that is designed to collect, manage, disseminate, etc a body of information on a specific area of interest.
15	Gov Gov-Ext	Government Service Provider: Add "Ext" if the "Gov" agency has an extension function.	• All types of government run institution or organisation that provides some kind of service: e.g. health, agricultural extension or research, education or training, etc.
16	Org	NGO, other national, international, UN or other organisations providing services	• May be NGOs or national, international, UN or other organisations when these provide services. • Not government or CSO service providers since they are covered by other "tags".
17	Policy	Policy or programme / practice	• A specific policy, or policy, programme, strategy or practice area that the project focuses on.
18	Other	Other	• If there are many "others" than a new type of entity / system should be identified.

4.2 Meaning of Scores (1 to 4) for Sustainability likelihood and Weight in project

- "How likely to happen (1 to 4)":
- "Weight in the project (1 to 4)":

Score	Meaning	Details
1	Very High	
2	High	
3	Moderate	
4	Low	

4.3 Meaning of scores for Social, Environmental & Economic risks

Score are needed for:

- The **Likelihood** that some net negative impact will occur from the hazards specified; and
- The **Level** of damage that would result (the impact) if that hazard occurs.

Note that these should be assessed after allowing for any mitigation that has already been put in place by the project: but NOT if the proposed mitigation is put in place.

No	Code	Likelihood of neg. impact	Level of impact
1	1 H	High: Highly likely that the risks will occur. Needs high level of mitigation to reduce risks to acceptable level or cancel the intervention.	High: High level of damage with high and possibly prohibitive costs for recovery.
2	2 M	Medium: Moderately likely that risks will occur. Needs significant mitigation to at least reduce or avoid the risks.	Medium: Significant damage with significant costs for recovery.
3	3 L	Very low risk.	Very low damage.
4	n/a	NO likelihood at all.	No damage since no likelihood.

4.4 Main reasons for downgrading Sustainability

- Main entity-related reason to downgrade: OR
- Main soc / env / econ reason to downgrade:
- To be identified from experience of assessments.

No	Code	Details / Risks	Remarks
1	**Real world entity, system, etc. related risks:**		
1.1	Financial	Business or organisational viability risks from profitability or other finance-related issues: includes market demand, etc.	
1.2	Technology	Viability of the Technology / Practices introduced: including financial and technical, etc. viability.	
1.3	Institutional	Institutional capacity; may affect organisational viability.	
1.4	Adoption	Insufficient adoption: Not enough to create a self-sustaining (and growing) critical mass of adopters from which it can spread.	
1.5	Multiple	Multiple actors, multiple risks, etc.	

1.6	n/a	Low or no risks	• Do not downgrade sustainability.
2	**Social, environmental & economic sustainability risks:**		
	n/a	Low or no risks	• Do not downgrade sustainability.

5. SPREAD

- **Note**: Spread is assessed in terms of two "factors":
  - ◊ "**Spread Potential**": This is the optimum level / degree (i.e. potential) of spread (increase in number of beneficiaries) that would be expected if the (entities and systems established or strengthened by the) project works reasonably well (as intended), and reasonable assumptions about the context ("enabling environment") hold true. This depends on the inherent potential of the main "spread mechanisms" and the enabling environment.
  - ◊ "Spread Likelihood": This is the likelihood that this (potential) level of spread will actually be achieved. This depends on how well the project (entities and systems etc.) actually works, and if the assumptions about the context ("enabling environment") actually do hold true over time.
- **Note: "Actual Spread"**: The level of "Actual Spread" achieved over time will be a combination of these two factors.
- **Note** that this is very similar to the approach used for categorising risk:
  - ◊ "Risk Likelihood" for the likelihood of occurrence of a particular hazard, together with
  - ◊ "Hazard Impact" for the level of impact that is likely to result if the hazard occurs.

5.1 Main Types of Mechanism for "Self-Spread"

- "**Spread Mechanism**": While several types of spread mechanisms may operate in a single project, only the main one should be selected. This should be the spread mechanism which is likely to be dominant and control the level of spread, and therefore have the most impact.
- "**Inherent Spread Potential**": This column in the table below gives the inherent potential level of spread that the "Type of Mechanism for Self-Spread" would normally generate.
- The assessed value for the "**Spread Potential**" (High, Medium, Low) for a particular project would be based on this but may be adjusted to account for differences in the way in which the spread mechanism

may operate in the assumed context (e.g. because of limited scope); but not for the likely spread outcome resulting from the project as it is. This is covered by the "Spread Likelihood level" (section 4.2).

Main Types of Mechanism for "Self-Spread"

No	Code	Type of Mechanism for Self-Spread:	Details, examples, etc	Inherent Spread Potential
0	**Select one**			
1	HH	HH to HH sharing of knowledge, etc.	• HHs share knowledge informally or through small separate groups. • Farmer to farmer sharing / extension.	Low
2	Peer pressure	Peer pressure	• Community-level interaction and synergies to generate peer pressure for behaviour change. • Low spread if within the community; or Medium if the influence is wider (e,g, social media).	Low to Med
3	Growth of entities	Growth in number of members, clients, students, etc or services of the entities supported by the project.	• CBOs or coops increase membership. • PS businesses increase customer base, or services and revenue. • New members for farmer organisations, coops, etc. • New customers (and / or services) for private sector businesses. • New students for training institutions or programmes.	Med
4	New entities	New entities self-establish and grow through copying and / or the increased availability of finance.	• May be the same type of entity (or entities) supported (from copying the model), or different types (e.g. from credit / loan financing). • May be within and / or beyond the same geographic area. • Needs strong adoptable technology and business model.	High
5	Leverage / recycling	Leverage of finance and / or recycling of credit	• Project funding allows MFI to mobilise significant additional finance for credit. • Investment funding mobilised for e.g. roll out.	High
6	Policy / Practice	Policy and / or practice leading to change	• E.g. policies, regulations, programmes, projects, etc. that are taken up. • The degree and extent of the change and impact is likely to vary.	Medium to High depending on relevance
7	n/a	Not applicable.		

5.2 Meaning of scores for assessment of Spread (Potential & Likelihood)

Self-Spread POTENTIAL: i.e. Potential Scale / Reach in terms of **number of additional UBs that can be reached** through the above mechanism (H, M, L) compared to the project:

No	Code	Details
0	**Select H / M / L**	
1	1 H	High: Almost the same as # of project UBs (70% to 100%): OR Very High: One or more times the number of UBs from the project.
2	2 M	Around half of # of project UBs (30% to 70%)
3	3 L	Very few or no UBs (< 30%)

5.3 Self-Spread Likelihood levels for the identified mechanisms

- Likelihood of Self-Spread ("spreadability") through the identified Mechanism for Self-Spread.

Code	Type	Details, examples, etc.
0	**Select H / M / L**	
1 H	High to very high: Self-Spread is easy and likely: • Notionally > 70%.	Good to very good possibility for "self-spreading": e.g.: any investment needed will be generated locally / commercially and easily (with low risk): no external (e.g. donor) investment is needed: e.g. • Very successful (profitable, appropriate technology, etc.) model that stakeholders have the necessary resources: e.g. • Private sector businesses that are profitable and have well-resourced stakeholders to drive spread. • MFI with investment capital working in a strong, profitable and expanding market.
2	Self-Spread is possible but difficult: • Notionally 30% to 70%: • Notionally 50:50 i.e. around 50%.	Moderate possibility for spread. Either (1) Local / commercial investment is needed and there are moderate difficulties and / or risks for its availability; or (2) A relatively small / reduced mount of external (e.g. donor) investment is needed and likely to be available for many cases. Note that (2) may provide a good cost-effective opportunity for replication of the project with external donor investment; if the model has proved itself and requires only modest investment: e.g. • Policy change. • Small government subsidy piloted and rolled out if successful. • Project roll out focused on selected proven strategies and with much reduced funding.

3 L	Self-Spread is unlikely • Notionally < 30%.	• Little or no possibility for spread without more or less repeating / replicating the project with the same level of funding from the same type of external / donor source.


LIFT
Livelihoods and Food Security Fund
UKaid
European Union
Australian Aid
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
Canada
Irish Aid
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland
Managed by UNOPS


LIFT