



LAND-at-scale

Mid-term review, 2023

Management response

[LAND-at-scale](#) (LAS) is a land governance support programme financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and managed by the Netherlands Enterprise and Development Agency (RVO). LAS is a demand-driven and flexible land governance programme that supports tailor-made interventions and activities that aim for structural change in land governance. The programme is implemented in 12 countries by a variety of implementing organizations, including national and international NGOs, multi-lateral organizations, and service providers.

The Mid-term Review (MTR) of the programme is the first programme-broad review since the launch in 2019 and has responded to the three folded objective to 1) provide insight into the extent to which the LAS approach and activities in the period 2019-2023 contribute to the programme overall objective; in order to 2) draw lessons and formulate concrete recommendations that identify potential improvements to the effectiveness of the programme and activities; and to 3) assess whether there is sufficient proof-of-concept (in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, sustainability and expected impact) in order to substantially expand the LAS programme.

The review has been carried out by a team of independent consultants from Mokoro Ltd., who have assessed key documents and conducted interviews with the LAS core team and funders, implementing partners, and wider key stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in LAS. RVO would like to thank the review team and all key stakeholders for their work, contributions and collaboration in the process. LAS has a programmatic set-up and aims to adapt and strengthen its approach based on lessons learned and insights gained. The findings of this MTR provide important input for this: the set of key findings and key recommendations will be shared with and discussed among RVO, MFA and the LAS Committee. Implementing partners will further be involved in discussions around recommendations specifically at implementation and country-level. After a careful study of the review report, RVO would like to provide a response to key findings and recommendations.

We are pleased to see that according to the OECD/ DAC criteria the review findings demonstrates relevance and coherence of the programme, and has found ample 'proof of concept' to support calls for future funding, to consolidate the existing portfolio and to expand activities. The review highlights the following elements as key to LAS achievements thus far:

- Its demand-driven approach in which the RVO/ embassies/ implementing partner triangle is recognized as a key to success.
- Adaptive programming allows to respond to changing operational circumstances and unforeseen challenges such as political change or disaster-related events.
- The 'multi-stakeholder, multi-level, and multi-sectoral approach' is recognized for its innovativeness: combining titling and rights registration projects with activities that address the rules and normative behavior aspects of land governance.

At the same time, the MTR indicates a number of recommendations and strategic building blocks for improvement of which RVO would like to second the most relevant aspects and offer the respective response:

Recommendation	Follow-up
<p>Timing and strategic consolidation of LAS projects: adopt more flexible approach to project duration and provide explicit opportunities for strategic consolidation</p>	<p>RVO welcomes this recommendation and will adopt more flexible timelines and funding opportunities in the next phase of the programme through a variety of measures, including removing the 3-year time limit, providing explicit attention to partnership building, and building on existing scaling readiness approaches.</p>
<p>Ensure that project selection adopts 'tight targeting' as its guiding principle</p>	<p>RVO welcomes this recommendation and will give shape to a 'tight targeting' approach in project selection through the currently ongoing strategic consolidation in selected countries. Identification in the new phase of the programme will consist of scoping ideas in close collaboration with embassies and development partners in country, while focusing on conditions for structural change and scoping for potentially transformative activities that can make a big difference in the long run.</p>
<p>Align with activities with transformational potential that are already underway: providing critical material and capacity boosts that allow them to expand and consolidate their achievements</p>	<p>RVO sees the complementarity of this recommendation with the previous two and agrees with the added value of building on proven land governance approaches. Moreover, LAS will further develop its scaling approach by carving out its role in preparing proven land governance approaches for further scaling through a variety of aspects, including the scaling of successful pilots to other contexts, institutionalization of proven approaches, and strengthening projects through applying a multi-stakeholder lens.</p>
<p>Continue to be bold: providing support where other donors are not (yet) working, supporting potential game changers in land governance terms</p>	<p>RVO endorses this recommendation and recognizes that reviewers identify 'being bold' particularly in the project identification phase through being demand-driven, as well through the selection of ideas that have game changing potential. These are elements that will receive attention both in the ongoing projects as well as for potential identification of new projects.</p>
<p>LAS Committee: Revisit the contract between RVO and its expert members, to ensure continuity of this key element in the overall success of LAS and clarify their role as the programme matures and expands</p>	<p>RVO welcomes the recommendation to revisit the LAS Committee and agrees with the observation that the committee has played a key role in the overall success of the programme. As the reviewers note, the programme matures and expands, and this requires new roles and responsibilities for the members of the committee. In line with this recommendation, RVO has consulted committee members about their own perspective on their added value and these ideas will be taken along. This includes considering a smaller, more effective committee and to more clearly diversify between mandates of MFA expert members and thematic expert members with the objective to better take advantage of their respective mandates and added value.</p>
<p>Continue with the current approach of supporting complementary bundles of land governance activities: in line with the ToC 'multiple pathway' approach</p>	<p>The idea of 'multiple pathway' approach to land governance, with support to complementary bundles of land governance activities within countries has been a central focus of LAS from the start. The reviewers recommend to continue this approach in the next phase, and one improvement RVO proposes here is to give more explicit attention to partnership building between partners involved in different aspects of land governance (technical, legal, social, advocacy etc.) to better align their work in country. We also foresee a more important role for Knowledge Management to</p>

	gain more insights into the 'multiple pathway' approach.
Cross-cutting issues of gender, climate and work around corporate social responsibility and the private sector can be strengthened and made more transformative	RVO appreciates the recommendations made by the reviewers regarding gender and climate as cross-cutting issues, and agrees with the observation that more can be done in this regard. RVO has started a revision of the existing internal gender and climate frameworks for LAS, to be informed also by project-level gender and climate reviews. The main aim would be to more clearly focus on transformational change when it comes to gender and climate aspects related to land governance. Regarding CSR, the MTR recommends more focus on in-country activities. RVO will explore together with MFA whether this can be done more explicitly in the next phase of the programme.
Knowledge management and M&E: more attention to matching project partner needs with KM partner expertise, improve 'learning loops', more feeding of national and global debates, and improve support to cross-cutting issues. More sharing opportunities and exchanges.	RVO endorses the MTR observation that knowledge management is the 'glue of the programme' and is central to achieving structural change and scalability. We take note of the recommendation that KM needs at project level can be better matched with available expertise. We recently launched small country-level funds for KM questions/ needs of implementing partners, as foreseen in the original KM plan. RVO further agrees with the reviewers suggestion that learning loops should be improved so that they can better support adaptive programming. RVO will make the approach towards learning loops more systematic, and in the next phase will apply outcome harvesting methodologies. More sharing and learning opportunities, including feeding into national and global debates have recently been taken up in close collaboration with the Land Portal, ILC and LANDac and will continue to deserve attention. The continuation of the annual LAS exchange with all project implementers is an important anchor in learning and exchange opportunities and will continue to take place. While we agree with the reviewers observation that standard programme indicators may be somewhat too narrow to capture project level outputs and outcomes, RVO already welcomes and will continue to motivate partners to use project specific indicators in addition to programme indicators, to better capture impacts on the ground and support adaptive programming.

In conclusion, RVO highly appreciate the reviewers' findings and recommendations identified during the review process and presented in the final report. The recommendations are welcomed for strengthening both the ongoing phase of the programme, while also providing important input for developing a next phase of the programme. We look forward to sharing and discussing findings and recommendations also with other donors and development partners. RVO, key stakeholders and implementing partners look forward to further strengthening the programme and project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability through the findings.



Mid-term review of the LAND-at-scale programme

Commissioned by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)

Final Report

August 2023

Prepared by:

Christopher Tanner, Team Leader

Elizabeth Daley, Land Rights and Gender Expert

Ray Purcell, Climate and Land Expert

Johanna Jelensperger, Senior Evaluator

Jacques Cyubahiro, Local Expert

Amer Madi, Local Expert

Muriel Visser, Quality Support Advisor

Jim Grabham, Research Coordinator

Mokoro Ltd

The Old Music Hall
106-108 Cowley Road
Oxford OX4 1JE

+44 (0)1865 403179
mokoro@mokoro.co.uk

mokoro.co.uk

Table of Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	ii
Acknowledgments and disclaimer	iv
Summary findings and recommendations	v
1. Findings	vi
2. Conclusions	xii
3. Recommendations.....	xiv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background	1
3. The LAND-at-scale programme.....	2
4. The Mid-term review (MTR)	3
5. The review of the LAS programme.....	8
6. Key issues	25
7. Cross-cutting issues.....	29
8. Conclusions	41
9. Recommendations.....	44

List of Tables

Table 1	Review Question 1 – How relevant and coherent is the LAS programme?...10
Table 2	Review Question 2 – To what extent is LAND-at-scale fulfilling its expected functions and achieving the outputs and outcomes set out in its Theory of Change?.....14
Table 3	Review Question 3 – What are the main factors that explain the successes and limitations of LAND-at-scale’s performance?17
Table 4	Summary OECD Gender Equality Score for LAS Projects34

List of Figures

Figure 1	Flow chart of LAS ‘demand-driven’ project selection process 2
Figure 2	Process and phasing of the MTR..... 7

List of Boxes

Box 1	The FAO definition of land governance..... 3
Box 2	Scaling26

Acronyms and abbreviations

CCI	Cross-cutting issue
CCO	Certificates of Customary Occupation
CoFo	Land commission
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CTV	Centro Terra Viva
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDE	Sustainable Economic Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSH	Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid, MoFA
DWH	Department Western Hemisphere
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom Government
FFP	Fit for Purpose
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GDWGL	Global Donor Working Group on Land
GLTN	Global Land and Tool Network
GoN	Government of the Netherlands
IDLO	International Development Law Organization
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGG	Inclusive Green Growth Department, MoFA
ILC	International Land Coalition
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing partner
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KM	Knowledge Management
LADEC	Land and Development Expertise Center
LAS	Land-at-scale
LIMS	Land Information Management Systems
LUP	Land Use Planning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MIPAREC	Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation under the Cross
MTR	Mid-term review
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee
PRAI	Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
RQ	Review Question
RVO	Netherlands Enterprise Agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFC	Service Foncier Communal (Community Land Service)
TL	Team Leader
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCOBAC	Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare
UN	United Nations
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security

Acknowledgments and disclaimer

Acknowledgements

The Mokoro Mid-term review (MTR) team would like to thank all those in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKNs) and external stakeholders who contributed and made time available during the data collection that forms the basis of this report.

Disclaimer

This report reflects the combined thinking of the Mokoro team and cannot be taken to represent the official position of the Netherlands Government in any way.

Summary findings and recommendations

ES1. This Final Report of the Mid-term review (MTR) of the LAND-at-scale programme (LAS) for the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) has three key objectives as set out in the Terms of Reference for the review:

- to provide insight into the extent to which LAND-at-scale programme approach and activities in the period 2019–2023 contribute to the programme’s overall objective, in order to:
- draw lessons and formulate concrete recommendations that identify (potential) improvements to the effectiveness of the programme and activities; and
- assess whether there is sufficient proof-of-concept (in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, sustainability and expected impact) in order to substantially expand the LAND-at-scale programme.

ES2. The review looks at the origins of LAS in earlier Government of the Netherlands (GoN) approaches to land issues, noting how it emerged as a way to bring these activities together and take support down to local level with greater impacts on the lives of ordinary people.

ES3. The Programme Document underlines how it is grounded in the principles of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). In line with the FAO definition of land governance, which includes “the rules, processes and structures through which decisions are made about access to land and its use, the manner in which those decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way in which competing interests in land are managed”, addressing land governance requires an integrated “multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-sectoral approach that at least recognizes and respects the concerns and rights of vulnerable people”.

ES4. LAS builds this approach into its Theory of Change (ToC). This is key to understanding how LAS operates in practice, with a portfolio of quite different projects, addressing different aspects of land governance, often with several components.

ES5. LAS aspires to be a demand-driven programme responding to specific land governance needs and opportunities wherever they exist. The MTR examined how this process of being demand-driven works in practice and finds that by making full use of the in-country knowledge and experience of the network of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) and, through them, working with local civil society organizations and governments, it comes very close to being genuinely ‘demand-driven’.

ES6. The big questions then revolve around whether LAS activities are indeed contributing to structural change, and supporting ‘scaling’, defined in terms of the sustainability of interventions at the point when external (LAS and other project) support ends in a post-project situation.

ES7. The review adopts the standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability. A set of Review Questions

(RQs) was agreed in the Inception Phase, based upon questions provided in the Terms of Reference (TORs). To answer these questions, a methodology was developed that combines a desk review of LAS documentation provided by RVO with interviews with stakeholders at three principal levels: central level programme staff and members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the LAS Committee; EKN personnel in countries where LAS is active; and implementing partners (IPs). A total of 75 semi-structured interviews were carried out at country level and 22 at programme level. The gender breakdown of interviewees is 55 men and 42 women.

ES8. All 12 active LAS country projects were reviewed, and in two cases, Burundi and the Palestinian Territories, in-depth case studies were also carried out by local consultants to explore progress towards scaling and the goal of structural change in greater detail.

ES9. The MTR was also tasked with looking at three cross-cutting issues (CCIs), namely gender, climate change, and corporate social responsibility. The Inception Phase review also found that despite its key role as the 'glue of the programme', the Knowledge Management (KM) component has been having some difficulties and was recently restructured to give RVO a central role in implementing it in line with LAS programme and project needs. The KM and related Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities were also therefore given specific attention both at programme level and in the country review.

1. Findings

ES10. Looking now at each of the three Review Questions, the principal findings are:

1.1. Review Question 1 – How relevant and coherent is the LAS programme?

- LAS is relevant and coherent and through its 'demand-driven' approach, it is effectively responding to land governance priorities as seen by EKNs working with civil society, government, and other donor stakeholders.
- LAS takes into account the context in each country (crisis settings, government commitment, capacities of partners), developing projects that target resources on specific areas and groups of beneficiaries.
- The responses developed (LAS projects) follow various ToC pathways but may not necessarily align with host government priorities and/or procedures.
- LAS successfully enables specific, well-targeted land governance initiatives to be identified and implemented through its demand-driven model.
- LAS is successfully building on earlier/current Netherlands contributions and commitment to land governance and encourages EKNs to identify and respond to land governance needs in-country, through LAS project selection and accompanying/supporting implementation.
- LAS activities are relevant to partner and donor land governance programmes; where it is part of larger programmes it is raising the profile of

land governance within them but at the risk of losing control over how LAS resources are used and scaled.

ES11. LAS is relevant as a global programme seeking to address critical development issues in a new and potentially transformative way. The programme structure is well conceived, building on earlier EKN-based roles in land governance support. And as mentioned above, it does indeed respond to diverse needs and opportunities identified through the EKNs acting as gatekeepers and interlocutors and succeeds in being a demand-driven programme.

ES12. As can be expected in a programme that supports structural change (implying changes to rules, power relations etc.), there are instances with regard to land and natural resources tenure and governance where LAS is not entirely aligned with national policies or processes in the countries where it is working. LAS addresses this conundrum in a smart way, by working closely with the EKNs in each country to identify suitable 'ideas' to take up and develop projects around. The EKNs know the political context well and will be aware of how it impacts the selection of projects. Their role is critical, and carries on through implementation if problems do occur.

ES13. The LAS approach is mirrored by important new programmes being developed by other donors, notably the UK FCDO Land Facility. This again underlines the relevance of its approach, working closely with EKNs and supporting targeted projects, although in the case of LAS the implementation has been handed to a government agency (RVO) and not outsourced to private sector contractors as the Land Facility is doing.

1.2. Review Question 2 – To what extent is LAND-at-scale fulfilling its expected functions and achieving the outputs and outcomes set out in its Theory of Change?

- LAS has successfully established a land governance capacity within RVO and is creating the core of a future GoN centre of excellence in land governance, drawing upon in-house and outside expert specialized knowledge.
- With delays in implementation caused by start-up issues and the pandemic, most LAS projects have not yet been able to produce indicators and sufficient data to allow assessment of intermediate and long-term programme outcomes.
- Nevertheless, the success of the demand-driven approach and the Country Reviews indicate that LAS is on course for achieving its outputs and outcomes.
- It is less clear that LAS will achieve structural change and scaling, although several projects are engaged in activities that lead in this direction.
- It is not clear if LAS is effectively contributing to policy/enabling environment changes, although again several projects include activities that lead in this direction.
- CCIIs are referred to and included in every project, underlining the commitment of the RVO/LAS team to ensuring that these issues are addressed.

ES14. While LAS directly addresses the food security, rule of law, and cross-cutting issues (CCIs) priorities of the MoFA departments funding it, its impact is less clear with the quantitative results available using standard MoFA indicators.

- Before-and-after-LAS use of local or national indicators (child nutrition, land conflict data, mediation services, etc.) and enabling environment indicators (laws, policies, guidelines changed/introduced due to LAS) can measure the structural changes in land governance that LAS seeks to achieve.
- For CCIs, indicators of transformational change (such as women in decision making roles, evidence of changing normative behaviour in customary contexts) and indicators that link land governance and climate change (a new area that LAS can occupy with innovative thinking) can also serve to measure structural change more effectively than data disaggregated by gender and the presence of 'climate smart' planning etc.

ES15. It is too early to say whether structural change in land governance is being achieved, but there are positive signs that the LAS approach is achieving this objective. Several projects are engaged in or facilitating national policy discussions, and others are supporting activities that have the potential to change the rules and relationships that define land governance in any given country. By targeting ongoing activities and coming alongside local organizations actively involved in challenging orthodoxies in land governance, LAS is indeed promoting structural changes in land governance.

ES16. While there are several titling and rights registration projects, these are balanced out by being implemented alongside other activities that address the rules and normative behaviour aspects of the land governance challenge. And there are several projects where land administration as such does not figure at all. This again is in line with the strategic principle outlined above, to follow a "multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-sectoral approach", and the idea of multiple pathways to change that is provided for in the ToC.

ES17. With regard to scaling – a key objective with 'scale' in its name – the RVO/LAS team understands this to mean the sustainability of LAS interventions in a post-project context without follow-on funding and other support. Scaling is also closely linked to achieving structural change, in the sense of having project-supported innovations adopted into national policies and practices, impacting on cultural and institutional constraints to good governance (especially in the case of gendered relations around land issues).

ES18. The MTR finds that while scaling is indeed included as a key objective in active projects, scaling strategies are not being universally implemented on the ground. Moreover, implementing partners appeared to be unclear about what scaling means and what is needed to achieve it. The MTR reveals the importance of having governments on board when it comes to scaling; and to engage with governments and other prospective donor partners who might pick up where LAS leaves off as a project is being designed, and during implementation. Effective Knowledge Management, analyzing lessons learned, and developing effective informational material about the LAS activity, is also key in this context.

ES19. The MTR also finds that a focus on scaling per se may not be the best way to look at this challenge – perhaps it would be best to focus more tightly on the conditions for structural change and activities that are most likely to achieve it, including policy and

normative changes in institutions and cultural contexts. Success in this context then opens the way to new initiatives being integrated into official programmes or permanently changing behaviours at community level and in land institutions.

ES20. Cross-cutting issues (CCIs) are included in some way in all projects. However, a deeper look at how they are being addressed reveals significant gaps in relation to mainstreaming and transformational impact. These questions are addressed in detail in the main report, but the following points sum up findings with relation to CCIs:

- Gender needs to be treated as a transformational challenge that involves men (as the 'custodians' of cultural norms in traditionally patriarchal societies) as well as women, and not be seen solely in terms of women's land rights.
- Climate appears as a 'bolt-on' issue in most projects and is not mainstreamed at all, with interviews and conversations with project personnel giving the impression that it is not an immediate priority when faced with more urgent issues (some also add that this is a common response from the government agencies they work with).
- Despite LAS guidelines, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and private investor land access issues are hardly addressed in the current portfolio, and there is little if any reference to the more controversial issue of large-scale allocations or land-grabbing that directly impact local livelihoods and food security.

1.3. Review Question 3 – What are the main factors that explain the successes and limitations of LAND-at-scale's performance?

- LAS has been able to make full use of the EKN network to achieve its demand-driven strategy and access in-country support when needed.
- Its flexible approach allows LAS to respond to changing operational circumstances and other unforeseen challenges such as political changes or disaster-related events.
- The design of the project allows it to identify genuine demand and opportunities to promote changes in land governance, and allows for diverse needs and aspects of land governance to be addressed in line with the ToC model of multiple pathways.
- The project selection has contributed to the success to date of LAS, although there are cases that perhaps should not have been selected (for operational and political-economy reasons) or where resources could have been better targeted.
- The role of the EKNs and the effective use of the RVO/EKN/Implementing Partner triangle in project identification, formulation, and implementation, is a key factor in LAS achieving its objectives. The 'gatekeeper' role of the EKNs is evident throughout the programme, and is especially clear in countries where the surrounding political context requires careful handling

and embassy personnel who understand how to navigate a way through complex political challenges.

- This approach has also brought more EKNs into the circle of land governance work, allowing them to identify needs that may have been affecting overall development goals and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) performance in host countries, but which were not being addressed.

ES21. A clear limiting factor in terms of operational effectiveness was the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in significant delays in implementation and the relative lack of hard performance data at this point in the project cycle. The RVO/LAS team is well structured however, with a broad range of skills in land governance and in communication and information and has managed to put together a diverse portfolio across several countries. The size of the challenge is demanding of time and human resources however, and there were comments from some implementing partners about 'remote management'.

ES22. The LAS Committee played an important role in the selection of projects and continues to be an important guiding force behind project implementation. There were signs however that some members, and in particular the five expert members, are unclear about their role as the implementation phase of the programme has got underway.

ES23. A certain bias towards 'land administration being land governance' and vice versa was noted in aspects of programme design and indeed in the composition of the LAS Committee, but in practice this has not materialized, with land administration activities supported by LAS all taking place alongside others that have a more governance flavour to them, focusing on things like rules, relationships, gender relations, and legal empowerment.

ES24. Finally, a key factor is the LAS strategy of identifying and supporting ongoing and interesting activities with the potential for change and coming alongside them with funding and technical assistance (including knowledge management support). This in itself represents a form of scaling, enabling projects that are already achieving good results to expand their activities and consider how to make them sustainable into the future. LAS is not concerned about starting its own activities from scratch – its focus is on aligning with what is working and collaborating with a range of partners to achieve results.

1.4. Cross-cutting issues (CCIs)

ES25. The question of transformation is key across all three CCIs, with activities seen in many cases as not being sufficiently transformational in their approach. Gender is often seen solely in terms of women's land rights, rather than looking at wider issues of gendered power relations and roles in decision-making over land and natural resources, as well as the related question of how vulnerable and marginalized groups are addressed.

ES26. Seen in terms of limiting global warming as well as simply looking at mitigation and adaptation measures, climate activities do not yet address the relationship between land governance and climate issues in concrete and innovative terms. This is not surprising given the challenge of achieving systemic change generally to address and respond to the climate emergency. In this context, given its innovative and bold approach to project identification, LAS has a considerable opportunity here to develop new and exciting approaches to this critical issue.

ES27. Corporate social responsibility is weakly addressed across the programme, and new initiatives such as the Land Desk are focused mostly on helping investors to understand land rights issues and incorporate this understanding into their project planning when they seek to access land for their projects. LAS is not yet looking at the issue of relationships between local communities and investors and government who want their land, or on finding ways to integrate inclusive and VGGT-based approaches to address the potentially negative impacts of large-scale land allocations and 'land-grabbing'.

1.5. Knowledge Management (KM) and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

ES28. The KM component has been and continues to be implemented by several equally high-status and experienced organizations, including the prestigious Dutch universities known for their work in land governance and related issues. Pre-MTR issues were more about the structure and management of the KM component rather than questions of performance, capacity, or the relevance of the KM component per se. Issues that did stand out in the MTR include:

- Despite having partners (the International Land Coalition (ILC) and Land Portal) specialized in organizing and running large online and other events, there has been little regional and programme-wide exchange and dialogue (the annual LAS Exchange stands out as an exception and points to what could be achieved even with online meetings).
- Some partners do not understand what KM is for and what it is in practice, and the component has not developed the 'learning loops' that feed lessons learned back into project implementation and/or feed into higher level policy and normative work.
- KM has not been built into most LAS project plans and budgets from the start, and with a relatively limited budget to fund several KM partners working in 12 different countries, there are questions over who funds KM activities on the ground.
- KM works well in projects where one partner already has at least some KM experience or has KM built into their mandates (for example several projects are working with national universities to develop materials that will then be used by other partners, and others have non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the implementing team with strong KM track records).

ES29. The link between M&E and KM is relatively weak and affects the learning loop issue. Implementing partners also complained about the unsuitability of standard MoFA indicators and that they are not adequate for measuring progress towards the key change and scaling objectives. While some implementing partners have limited M&E capacity and require more support, many do have considerable M&E experience themselves, and already have their own indicators to measure and evaluate what they are doing.

ES30. KM and M&E are closely related and feed into each other, and it is important that the partners work together to synthesize information and data from the projects and package these together into information products to use both nationally and globally.

2. Conclusions

ES31. Land rights and how they are regulated and governed affects the livelihoods of billions of people; and land use changes linked to irresponsible land governance have caused climate change, continue to drive it, and impede efforts to mitigate its worst impacts. LAS is a bold attempt to achieve, or at least initiate, structural change in land governance, with the potential to make a real impact at local, national, and international level.

2.1. Proof of concept

ES32. Through the RVO/EKN/IP triangle, LAS is identifying and aligning with innovative activities addressing key land governance issues in a range of different contexts.

ES33. A great strength of LAS in this context is that it is not a programme concerned with re-inventing the wheel, or taking leadership with its own start-up activities; rather, it seeks to align with partners whose work is already showing promise. With appropriate support from LAS, these activities can drive structural change and achieve scaling.

ES34. LAS is getting resources down to local level, to small teams who are testing and proving innovation in the field, sometimes in very challenging circumstances. The programme is a coherent, relevant, and ambitious response to land governance challenges that underpins future livelihoods and can contribute significantly to the climate emergency.

ES35. LAS comes very close to being demand-driven without the need for expensive project identification missions. The use of the EKN networks, building on earlier GoN land interventions, allows this demand-driven to work in a practical and inclusive way.

ES36. The ToC shows how multiple pathways lead towards structural change in land governance and the goal of enhanced livelihoods and other SDGs. It is an accurate reflection of the complex nature of land governance as defined by FAO. The ToC could be strengthened by making explicit reference to customary land governance systems (in terms of their continuing relevance and legitimacy, and the need to also promote change here where appropriate); and to give greater prominence to the transformational nature of the changes that LAS seeks to promote.

ES37. That said, it is important to underline how LAS is finding ways to link different activities together, either within LAS consortiums and implementing partnerships, or by aligning with other initiatives and activities supported by other donors.

ES38. Its flexible and adaptive programme management approach is well suited to addressing land governance in complex and demanding working environments, even 'where other projects don't go', working closely with local actors and guided by local EKNs .

ES39. The lack of performance data does not mean weakness or poor design. LAS had an understandably long gestation period, creating a working capacity in land governance at RVO from scratch followed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is now emerging as a vehicle for targeting technical support and resources as close as possible to where demand exists for improved land governance that can transform and improve lives and contribute to a

sustainable planetary future. There is ample 'proof of concept' to support calls for future funding, to consolidate the existing portfolio and to expand it as resources come online.

2.2. Structural change and scaling with limited resources

ES40. Scaling ultimately does require that LAS-supported pilots and other interventions are adopted by government and/or other actors with more resources and who can provide a long-term framework within which the LAS activity can evolve and expand. As some LAS portfolio countries have shown, this is not always easy, especially where there are vested interests who support political economies which are inimical to changes in land governance that might rob them of their privileged access to land and natural resources.

ES41. LAS projects are promoting or contributing to structural changes by targeting ongoing activities with a potential for driving change, and in some cases, also supporting national dialogues on land governance. However, the programme is small in relation to needs and its own stated goals, especially given its presence in diverse and often demanding settings. It is doubly important that project selection is rigorous and focuses on tightly targeting LAS funding onto key land governance constraints and/or on ongoing activities where additional support can make the difference between limited impacts while current support is in place, and longer-term sustainability and continuity once support ends.

ES42. LAS shows that well-targeted small budgets *can* achieve considerable impact, a lesson from the MTR that underlines the need to really examine ideas and look for land governance constraints and issues that, if unblocked or resolved, can result in far greater impacts than might otherwise be the case. This is the essence of the programme.

ES43. Several LAS projects underline how placing land governance activities within wider livelihoods and rural development strategies can encourage investment in increased production, persuading state or other stakeholders to 'scale' LAS activities. It is important to ensure that alliances and partnerships are not simply treated as an add-on to project activities as they progress, but are given consideration while projects are being developed.

2.3. Cross-cutting issues

ES44. LAS does need to improve how it is addressing CCIs, through transformative (gender) and innovative (climate) activities. The MTR finds a strong commitment to gender and women's land rights, but a matching need to adopt transformational activities that work with both men and women to achieve real change in gendered relations that govern how land and natural resources are used.

ES45. LAS also needs to address controversial issues such as land governance practices that result in inappropriate forms of land use, foment corruption, and disempower ordinary people. These exacerbate climate change and nullify mitigation efforts such as 'climate-smart' activities. LAS has a major opportunity to identify and support activities that address the links between poor land governance and climate change.

ES46. The CSR approach of support to investors who need land in LAS supported countries should shift towards LAS in-country projects that help government, communities, and investors, work together constructively, respecting and defending local rights, with inclusive ways to engage with each other and work together sustainably and equitably.

2.4. Knowledge management

ES47. Knowledge management is the ‘glue of the programme’ and is central to achieving structural change and scalability. KM is important in two respects: as a tool for supporting the LAS activity itself, with learning loops and feed back to enhance and consolidate project achievements on the ground; and as a means of learning from the project to inform government and others when they consider adopting LAS-supported approaches or begin discussing policy positions on land governance.

ES48. The KM component did not work as planned. RVO has reset it with a new structure giving it direct control over the activities of the still large number of KM partners. It is too early to assess if this is going to work but early signs and discussions at the 2023 LAS Exchange and in the 2023 LANDac Conference suggest that the changes may work.

2.5. Scope and geographical spread

ES49. Some of those interviewed consider the spread and diversity of the LAS portfolio to be too great an operational challenge, stretching human and technical resources too thinly. The current total of 12 countries is higher than originally planned, with implications for the allocation of programme resources per project, and for the management and oversight challenges of working with 12 different countries and projects.

ES50. However, LAS was conceived as a global programme, and the response from EKNs to the call out for ideas reveals how central land governance is to addressing critical development challenges in today’s world. The model works well and requires consolidation and a resource boost, not restructuring and downsizing.

ES51. LAS is emerging as a good approach to Netherlands land governance support. In this context, an initial portfolio of 12 countries is better seen as an indicator of things to come; and the question now is how to address any weaknesses and operational problems, secure new budgetary resources to enable long range planning, and make LAS more effective.

3. Recommendations

ES52. The LAS is broadly on track, delivering on its stated objectives. The following recommendations are intended to adjust and improve LAS in the second half of its present project cycle, and to guide discussion as MoFA, RVO, and other partners, discuss the continuation of this bold and innovative programme into a second phase.

3.1. Programme issues

- **Human resources:**
 - The present RVO team is meeting diverse challenges across many countries, particularly given the doubling of projects from the six originally planned, but would benefit from reinforcing, especially in a future with new projects.
 - Consider placing RVO resources into selected EKNs (perhaps at regional level) in response to specific regional or country needs.

- RVO should consider contracting short-term specialist support to address specific CCI issues raised in the MTR (see 9.2 CCIs below).
- **Reconsider the timing and strategic consolidation of LAS projects:**
 - Adopt a more flexible approach to the present three-year limit on LAS projects, either allowing for longer periods in particular circumstances (for example, where start-up challenges are anticipated), or explicitly providing for the possibility of follow-on projects as part of the LAS scaling and structural change strategy ('strategic consolidation', with follow-on projects building on success to achieve long-term sustainability and change).
- **Ensure that project selection adopts 'tight targeting' as its guiding principle:**
 - In general LAS is successfully focusing its limited resources on specific activities that are likely to achieve change with enhanced support; due diligence when selecting activities should take this 'tight targeting' approach, bearing in mind that small amounts of money tightly focused and aligned with potentially transformative activities can make a huge difference in the long run.
- **Be clear about the role of LAS resources within larger programmes:**
 - LAS can bring land governance into the forefront of much larger programmes (such as the Saameynta project in Somalia), but it should retain a voice in the use and allocation of its resources; it might be better to prioritize smaller projects in the LAS pipeline.
- **Double down on the strategy to align with activities with transformational potential that are already underway:**
 - The alignment strategy is working well in several LAS projects, providing critical material and capacity boosts that allow them to expand and consolidate their achievements.
- **Continue to be bold:**
 - LAS has provided support where other donors are not prepared to work; this lesson can inform new project selection and be extended into being bold in supporting potential game changers in land governance terms.
- **LAS Committee:**
 - Review the information provided to the LAS Committee when presented with ideas, including something about how the ideas might be implemented.
 - Include guidelines about the risks of allocating limited LAS resources in countries with high political fragility and/or insecurity, undermining chances of achieving structural changes and scaling, unless the local EKN sees a clear strategic role for LAS support and can provide back-up and political support.
 - Revisit the contract between RVO and LAS Committee experts to ensure continuity of this key LAS feature, and clarify their roles as the programme matures and expands.

- **Continue with the current approach of supporting complementary bundles of land governance activities:**
 - Land titling and registration alone will not achieve LAS long-range outcomes and land governance activities without effective *appropriate* administration will not work either.
 - The notion of bundles of activities should be explicitly built into the project selection and formulation process, in line with the ToC 'multiple pathway' approach.
 - The current approach can be improved with more attention to balancing budget allocations between components and to the relationships between IPs chosen to implement them (Colombia and Rwanda are good examples here).

3.2. CCIIs

- **Gender:**
 - Consider adding substantive gender transformative expertise to support the RVO team and IPs in using gender as a strategic entry point to support all vulnerable/marginalized groups more broadly.
 - In specific project countries where the gender and land question is of particular importance and focus, thought could be given to outposting a RVO/LAS gender expert attached to the respective EKN.
 - The programme as a whole would gain from a gender review and the development, with expert support, of more transformational gender strategies at country level.
 - The MTR recommends that all LAS projects should aim to score at least 1 on the OECD scale, but given its importance in land governance, LAS should be bolder on gender transformation and aim for a 'high' 1.
- **Climate:**
 - LAS should commission a study on the links between land governance and climate change looking at how changes in land governance can contribute to global warming and enhance mitigation, and the implications for LAS-funded projects.
 - An outline climate strategy should be provided in the Formulation Plan and a detailed strategy set out in IP Proposal documents, including local level climate analysis.
 - Outline climate strategies should be included in the RVO LAS Country Summary Briefings and Information Notes.
 - As with gender, consider human resource interventions with specialist support and, where appropriate, outpost resources to selected EKNs.
- **Corporate social responsibility and the private sector:**
 - While the proposed Land Desk is an interesting innovation to promote more responsible corporate investment, LAS as a governance programme should be more focused on supporting in-country projects addressing the question of large-scale land allocations within the objective of structural changes to land governance, including:

- legal empowerment and capacity-building work to enable communities to defend their rights and engage with investors on a constructive, inclusive investment basis;
- local government training to make administrators and others more aware of their role in mediating between investors and communities, with clear awareness of the need to follow VGGT and related guidelines; and
- support policy engagement with governments favouring private investment that impacts on local rights (in which controversial issues such as corruption, land speculation, and 'land-grabbing' by elites and vested interests can be addressed).

3.3. Knowledge management and M&E

- **Maximize the new RVO coordination and leadership role:**
 - Work with LAS project teams to identify KM needs and then match these needs with the expertise and skills available within the set of KM partners.
 - Provide support to lesson learning and identifying successes and constraints to develop '**learning** loops' that feed back into improved implementation.
 - Similarly, learn from projects **to produce narratives** to strengthen the voice of LAS projects nationally, and feed into national and global debates.
 - Look at how KM partners can improve their support to CCIs (for example, avoiding the trap of equating gender and women, with more attention to gender sensitization and training for Implementing Partners (IPs); promoting engagement around climate and CSR/private sector/inclusive development scenarios).
- **More sharing and exchanges:**
 - The demand for more exchanges beyond the annual LAS Exchange in Utrecht was clear at the 2023 LAS Exchange meetings – RVO/LAS can make greater use of remote workshop/webinar methods to work with key partners like the Land Portal to facilitate more exchanges between partners, and where feasible, more face-to-face workshops and meetings should also be budgeted for and programmed.
 - The MTR began with the recognition that LAS has also served to establish a land governance capacity and possible centre of excellence within RVO as part of a broader MoFA strategy to change the way it supports land governance and related CCIs. If the GoN wants to capitalize on this investment, it needs to consider a second phase, at least of the programme. This opens the way for strengthening and adjustments as indicated above.
 - The EKNs continue to play a key role within the GoN approach to land governance reform. However, the role of EKNs has changed significantly compared with the earlier approach. LAS has brought some EKNs into land governance in an active sense, and has created new networks in these countries, but the change in role in other countries may risk undermining the currency and utility that have enabled these networks to identify ideas (demand) so effectively. And the gap between local level partners and programme support is much wider than when EKNs have or had a more direct oversight or management role.

- It might be useful to reconsider the role of the EKNs in the operational context of LAS and combine this with a reassessment of how the LAS team operates, perhaps with dedicated resources in key EKNs or on a regional basis. This could take LAS support closer to participating countries and promote greater exchanges between them.

1. Introduction

1. This draft Final Report for the Mid-term review (MTR) of the LAND-at-scale programme (LAS), carried out for the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), presents the findings from a document review and interviews carried out in May/June 2023. The document also reflects the Initial Findings presentation made to the LAS Committee in Utrecht on 28 June 2023 and subsequent comments.

2. The report has the following structure:

- Background
- The LAND-at-scale programme (overview)
- The Mid-term review (approach, methodology, activities)
- Assessment of the Programme against Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria
- Key issues
- Cross-cutting issues (CCIs)
- Knowledge management (KM) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

3. The MTR included a structured review of the 12 active and soon-to-be active LAS projects, including 'deep dive' case studies for two of them.

2. Background

4. Land inequality is worsening around the world, accompanied by a lack of respect for pre-existing local rights by governments and powerful economic actors.¹ Furthermore, despite constitutional and policy frameworks promising gender equality and equal rights for women and men, gendered norms and power relations still negatively impact women and vulnerable groups when it comes to accessing land, having secure rights over it, and being able to use land productively.

5. Responsible land governance is also central to efforts to keep global warming to within 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to mitigate against the worst impacts of climate change, especially on the poorest households.² This includes the recognition and protection of the territorial rights of indigenous people and their role as custodians of the planet's remaining wild and biodiverse spaces.³

6. The view of the Government of the Netherlands (GoN) is that "if you do not solve land issues, you cannot achieve most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United

¹ ILC, 2018. *Uneven Ground: Land inequality at the heart of unequal societies*. ILC and OXFAM. ILC, 2021. *Land, People and Planet - Triennial report 2019–2021*. info@landcoalition.org.

² IPCC, 2020. *Climate change and land: Summary for Policy Makers*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

³ IPBES, 2019. *The Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem service, policy for summary makers*.

Nations (UN). Therefore, a sustained and comprehensive effort on inclusive land governance and sustainable land use is a key priority to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”.⁴

7. The GoN also concludes that despite the global consensus around good land governance expressed in the VGGT and elsewhere, “many countries ... still show many problems varying from a regulatory and institutional framework that hamper the recognition of ownership and user rights, limited capacity and inefficient implementation practices resulting in limited access to land tenure services and tenure security, lack of stakeholder engagement, unfair evictions and discrimination of vulnerable people”.

8. Previous approaches from the Netherlands to tackling these issues centered around a mix of direct funding to global institutions, such as the International Land Coalition (ILC) and the Land Portal, and decentralized support to specific land governance initiatives through cooperation budgets devolved to the Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKNs). In 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) joined with the EKNs and other partners to consider how to draw together and improve the effectiveness of these different strands of Dutch support for land governance, with greater emphasis on local level impacts.

9. LAS emerged from these discussions as a new way to bring together the different land-related activities of the Netherlands, and also to take support down to local level with greater impacts on the lives of ordinary people. The programme is not confined to any specific continent or region; it targets “lower and middle-income countries/regions/landscapes” with the aim of “directly strengthen[ing] essential land governance components for men, women and youth that have the potential to contribute to structural, just, sustainable and inclusive change at scale”.⁵

3. The LAND-at-scale programme

10. LAS is set within the global framework of human rights conventions and land governance instruments that includes the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT);⁶ the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (PRAI);⁷ and the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) applied to land-based investments.⁸

11. The Programme Document underlines how the VGGT five guiding principles “serve to understand properly the meaning of secure tenure rights”, and the term ‘good land governance’ as used in LAS.⁹ The LAS view of land governance closely mirrors that of FAO

⁴ NL MoDA & RVO, 2019: LAND-at-scale Programme document. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency. February 2019, Section 1.1.

⁵ Ibid, Section 1.2.

⁶ FAO, 2012: *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security*. Rome, Committee for Food Security (the Voluntary Guidelines, VGGT).

⁷ CFS, 2014: *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*. Rome. Committee for Food Security. (Also available at www.fao.org/3/a-au866e.pdf).

⁸ FAO, 2014: *Respecting free, prior and informed consent: Practical guidance for governments, companies, NGOs, indigenous peoples and local communities in relation to land acquisition*. Governance of Tenure Technical Guide 3. Rome, FAO. (Also available at www.fao.org/3/a-i3496e.pdf).

⁹ NL MoDA & RVO, 2019, Section 2.2.

(Box 1), in which it was quickly apparent that addressing land governance requires interventions at several levels. Where land governance is considered to be poor and impacting negatively on people’s lives and the environment, improving land administration has its place, but the key objective is to change the “rules, processes and structures through which decisions are made about access to land and its use, the manner in which those decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way in which competing interests in land are managed”. As FAO points out, this is “fundamentally about power and the political economy of land”.

Box 1 The FAO definition of land governance

Land governance concerns the rules, processes and structures through which decisions are made about access to land and its use, the manner in which those decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way in which competing interests in land are managed. Land governance therefore encompasses statutory, customary, religious and informal institutions. It includes state structures such as land agencies, courts and ministries and municipalities responsible for land, as well as informal land developers and traditional bodies. The concept of land governance covers the legal and policy framework for land, as well as traditional practices governing land transactions, inheritance and dispute resolution. *In short, it is fundamentally about power and the political economy of land.* (our emphasis)

Source: FAO (n.d.) Land Governance and Planning. Accessed 20/07/2023. [Available at: <https://www.fao.org/land-water/land/land-governance/en/>]

12. The LAS Programme Document sets out an ambitious approach to do just that: achieve structural changes in land governance which then lead on to improvements in livelihoods and SDGs. To promote and support structural change, LAS adopts a *demand-driven* approach, which identifies and responds to land governance needs on the ground in specific contexts. LAS actively seeks out and supports innovative activities that align with VGGT principles and can change the way land governance is conducted in any given country. By adding its support to the institutions and people implementing these activities, it consolidates structural change through ‘scaling’, with changes adopted by governments and/or extended to other areas and countries.

3.1. The early stages of LAS

13. The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) was chosen to implement the new programme, which began in April 2019 and is set to run until 2026. An initial budget of EUR 30 million from the MoFA Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG), and EUR 2 million from the MoFA Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH). This was boosted in 2021 by a further EUR 5.5 million from DSH and the Department of Sustainable Economic Development (DDE).

14. RVO had virtually no in-house land governance capacity when LAS was launched. LAS provided the resources for contracting and assembling the new RVO land governance team during the initial phase of the project. The new team then had to set about developing working protocols and learning how to make LAS work in practice.

15. The challenge of getting LAS operational was then compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, curtailing international travel and communication with colleagues at all levels. These two factors had obvious implications for a programme in start-up mode, causing inevitable delays in implementation. However, the RVO team responded well and proceeded with the key first task, working with EKNs and others to identify 'ideas' for LAS projects.

3.2. Structure and function

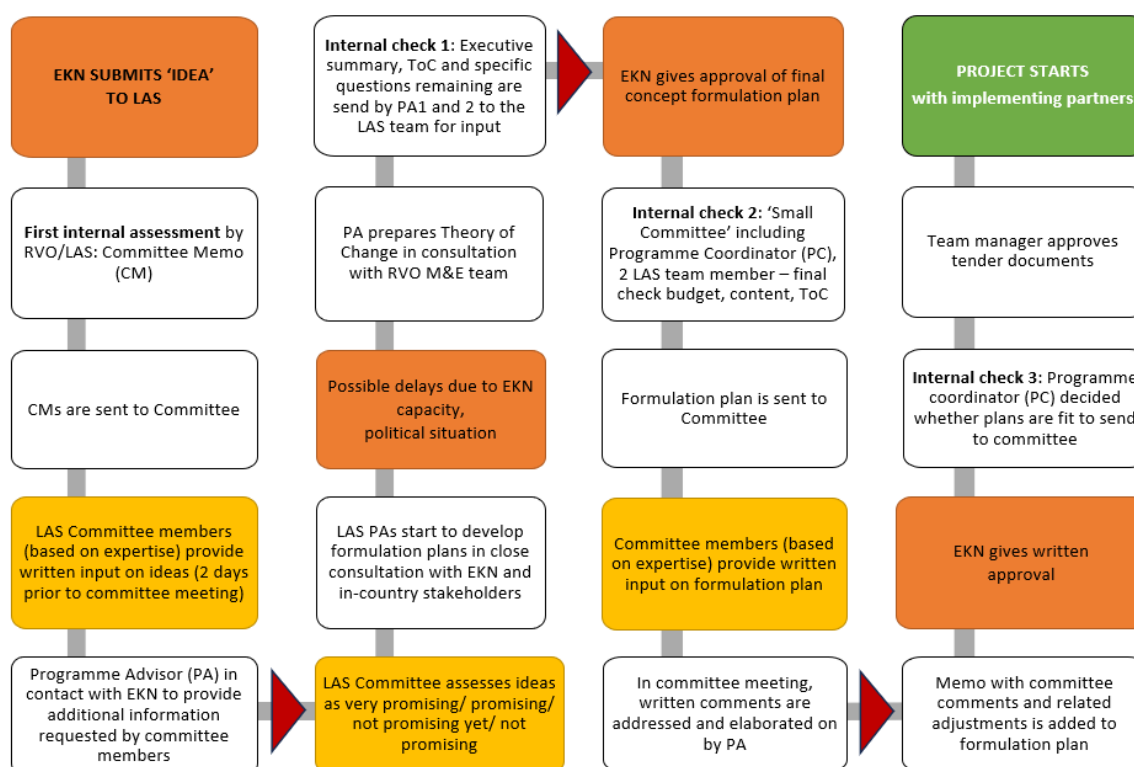
16. The way LAS works is illustrated in the flow chart of the project selection process (Figure 1) provided by RVO. Identifying demand and responding with appropriate projects that are then carried out by local partners happens in four key settings:

- The EKNs (**orange** boxes), in countries where LAS is now active and in others where it is not yet present, have the following key roles:
 - identifying 'demand' and presenting this as 'ideas' to RVO and the LAS Committee to then consider and work up into operational projects;
 - providing ad hoc liaison support with governments and with implementing partners (IPs) once LAS projects become active on the ground; and
 - continuing to identify new land governance opportunities and present these to RVO for a possible future expansion of the LAS portfolio in the second half of the programme and any potential extension or expansion of its activities.
- The LAS Committee (yellow boxes), have oversight functions but their principal role has been **selecting** 'ideas' from the EKNs that are channeled up by the RVO team.
- The RVO **LAS** management and technical team (white boxes), whose roles are:
 - formulating the 'ideas' selected by the Committee into full project plans;
 - identifying and contracting IPs;
 - supervising the preparation of IP Proposals;
 - accompanying projects once they become operational; and
 - overseeing critical KM and M&E activities in each country and at programme level.

- **Implementing** partners (green box), both individually and grouped together in some cases into consortiums, are responsible for implementing the projects formulated by RVO (and often responsible for initiating the ideas in response to the original RVO 'call' and then working with the EKNs to present them upwards).

17. The operational core of the programme is the triangle consisting of RVO, the EKNs, and implementing partners. 'Demand' for land governance support – in the form of 'ideas' – is identified by the EKNs based on their existing knowledge of land issues in their respective countries, and contacts with governments and civil society organizations (CSOs). Thus, the EKNs play a key role in identifying the 'ideas' that are then sent upwards through RVO for consideration by the LAS Committee.

Figure 1 Flow chart of LAS 'demand-driven' project selection process



18. The LAS Committee is composed of senior officials from MoFA representing the Ministry's different thematic and geographic priorities,¹⁰ and five independent land governance experts covering various thematic areas. The LAS Committee tasks and responsibilities include:

- selecting and approving project ideas to be included by LAND-at-scale;
- advising on the formulation of the country interventions;
- advising on the annual strategic plan and evaluations of the programme;
- advising on changes in the programme design; and

¹⁰ Inclusive Green Growth (IGG), Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), Sustainable Economic Development (DDE), Regional Department Africa (DAF), Regional Department Western Hemisphere (DWH) and Regional Department Northern Africa and Middle East (DAM).

- approving financial contributions by third parties to the programme.¹¹

19. RVO is the Permanent Secretary to the LAS Committee. Members from MoFA represent their thematic or regional departments, whilst the external expert members are there in a personal professional capacity. The experts cover a range of specializations, including women's land rights, people-centered land governance, inclusive investments, land registry, cadaster, land use planning, land justice, communal lands, indigenous peoples, and M&E of land governance activities. They serve on a voluntary basis, and those who work for other institutions are allowed time for LAS Committee functions.

4. The Mid-term review (MTR)

4.1. Objectives

20. The MTR Terms of Reference (ToR) call for a focus on "the programme as a whole: the project portfolio as well as other programme-broad activities (knowledge management, technical advice, strategic partnerships, Global Donor Working Group on Land (GDWGL), outreach, communication [and the contribution of each] to reaching programme objectives."¹²

21. The primary concern of MoFA is to "gain better understanding of and insight into what works, and what does not, by testing the assumptions underlying the programme as presented in the ToC, and by recommending adjustments where and if necessary."¹³ This also requires an assessment of projects on the ground, with a particular focus on those countries with LAS projects that are successfully developing and pursuing scaling strategies.

22. The MTR should also assess the factors that impact on its implementation and operational effectiveness. These include how land governance fits within wider host country priorities and political economy issues.

23. The MTR ToR lay out three key objectives:

- to provide insight into the extent to which LAND-at-scale programme approach and activities in the period 2019–2023 contribute to the programme's overall objective, in order to:
- draw lessons and formulate concrete recommendations that identify (potential) improvements to the effectiveness of the programme and activities; and
- assess whether there is sufficient proof-of-concept (in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, sustainability and expected impact) in order to substantially expand the LAND-at-scale programme.¹⁴

24. The ToR also require the MTR to consider the extent to which LAS is contributing "in an attributional manner to the MFA standard result frameworks [and] pathways that are essential for achieving progress on the SDGs of the United Nations. The MTR also considers the subset

¹¹ MTR Terms of Reference, p.6.

¹² RVO, 2023:14, *Terms of Reference of a Mid-term review of the LAND-at-scale programme*, p.13.

¹³ RVO, 203:14, p.14. The assumptions underlying the ToC were not explicit in the ToR, nor are they in the Programme Document.

¹⁴ RVO, 203:14, Introduction, p.4.

of what could be called 'process objectives' within the LAS global objective to 'improve just, inclusive and sustainable land governance'. These include:

- building a coherent portfolio of projects that are able to utilize or create a scaling potential 3 in alignment with the donor landscape;
- bringing together different initiatives financed by MoFA on land governance;
- reinforcing and leveraging the connection in the triangle between implementation – research – policy (upwards and downwards);
- bundling and sustaining "in-house" specialized knowledge on land governance;
- ensuring a demand-driven approach in close cooperation with embassies; and
- facilitating adaptive programming.

4.2. OECD DAC Criteria

25. While the MTR is not an evaluation of LAS, the ToR requires it to follow the standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability. A set of Review Questions (RQs) was agreed in the Inception Phase, based upon questions provided in the TORs. These are:

- Review Question 1 – How relevant and coherent is the LAS programme?
- Review Question 2 – To what extent is LAND-at-scale fulfilling its expected functions and achieving the outputs and outcomes set out in its Theory of Change?
- Review Question 3 – What are the main factors that explain the successes and limitations of LAND-at-scale's performance?

26. Each question is broken down into sub-questions on specific issues. An important caveat is that efficiency and value for money assessments require budget data and other cost-effective indicators that were not available to the MTR team. 'Efficiency' therefore had to be assessed with reference to the other lines of enquiry and in qualitative terms.

4.3. Key issues

27. Three strategic principles guiding LAS were identified in the Inception Phase:

- LAS claims to be a **demand-driven programme**.
- LAS seeks to promote or support **structural change in land governance**.
- LAS promotes the **scaling of successful land governance initiatives**.

28. The Terms of Reference also identify three cross-cutting issues (CCIs) that should be given specific attention: gender, climate change, and corporate social responsibility. Each has a specific section in the discussion below.

29. Lastly, two aspects of the programme are critical for its successful functioning and, in particular, for leveraging the connections and interaction between the three parts of the implementation–research–policy triangle. The first is the Knowledge Management component of the programme, described by some as the 'glue of the programme'. The second is

monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and the related question of indicators and their suitability for measuring progress towards real structural change and sustainability.

30. KM and M&E together create and feed connections that flow both upwards and downwards, generating what the programme document refers to as 'learning loops'. Learning loops are understood to have three dimensions:

- enabling projects to benefit and be improved by feeding back lessons learned, and addressing specific knowledge needs generated by the project activities;
- extracting lessons learned from LAS projects, analysing them, and producing effective information packages that can be fed upwards to support policy level change (enabling environment) at government level in the host country; and
- extracting lessons learned from LAS projects, analysing them, and producing effective information packages that can be fed upwards to support normative and policy work by MoFA/RVO in their capacity as current chair and permanent members of the Global Donor Working Group on Land (GDWGL).

31. The MTR considers the extent to which learning loops have been generated and what is needed to make this process more effective in the future.

4.4. Research methodology and workplan

32. The MTR covers the period from June 2019 to March 2023. Figure 2 gives a visual overview of the MTR process from Inception through to Final Report.

33. The MTR began with a desk review of LAS documentation provided by RVO. Where necessary some additional web-based research was also carried out (for example, getting more information about project civil society partners). The literature review was reinforced by five weeks of remote interviews carried out with central level RVO and LAS Committee personnel; EKN representatives in LAS active countries; and implementing partners. A total of 75 semi-structured interviews were carried out at country level and 22 at programme level. The gender breakdown of interviewees is 55 men and 42 women.

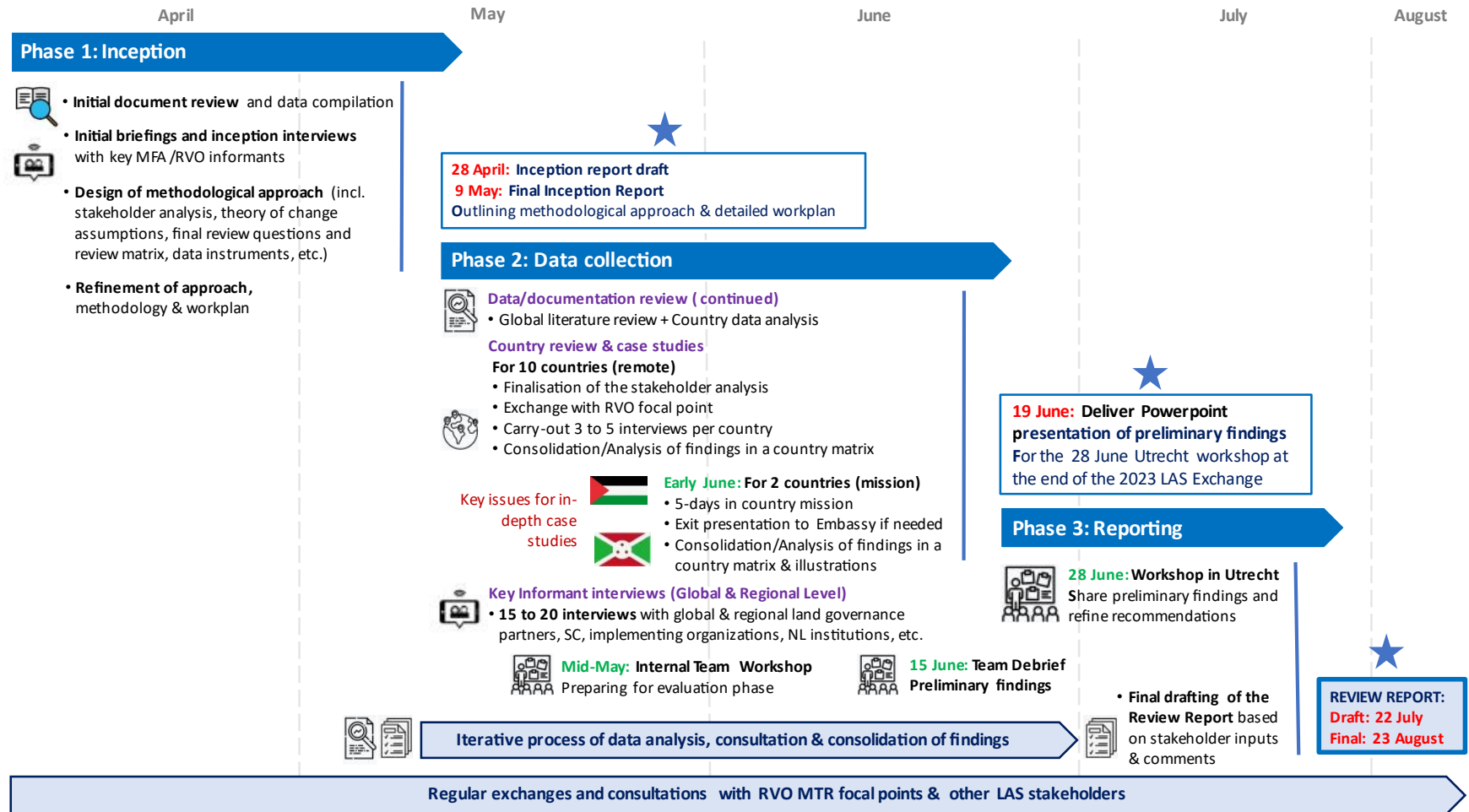
34. While the focus was on LAS as a programme, a Country Review looked at the ten active LAS projects and their country contexts, and two new projects that are moving towards implementation. Country Review interviews were carried out with EKN and implementing partners in each country. The Country Review is a key element of the MTR and provides examples, which are referred to throughout the discussion that follows, of how LAS is working on the ground.

35. Two in-depth case studies of active LAS projects were also carried out. RVO provided a list of three countries where implementation is going well, including progress towards scaling. The MTR team selected Burundi and the Palestinian Territories, largely for reasons of geographical spread and to understand how LAS is working in two very different contexts.

36. Following the strategic principles listed above, the focus was on how projects are contributing to structural change and how they are managing the challenge of scaling. The resulting information was entered into Country Matrices, one for each active LAS country, which facilitated cross-referencing to identify common features and others that are specific to each country/project.

37. Finally in this overview of the MTR methodology, initial findings were presented to the LAS Committee in Utrecht on 28 June 2023, just after the second annual LAS Exchange had taken place (during which the MTR team was able to meet implementing partners). Comments during and after the Utrecht meeting were then integrated into the Final Report.

Figure 2 Process and phasing of the MTR



4.5. Limitations

38. The majority of the documents for the MTR were provided by RVO. They include project reports and other material produced by the programme team. The MTR team has minimized bias by triangulating between sets of information and clarifying issues in interviews.

39. Remote interviews are effective for eliciting information from stakeholders, but there is no substitute for in-country visits to see what is happening close up. Time and budget constraints prevented in-country work by the core MTR team, but two case studies were carried out using local consultants. Each consultant was tasked with carrying out interviews and visiting project partners and stakeholders, accompanied when necessary (and online) by a core MTR team member assigned to their country.

40. Early implementation was significantly held up by the Covid-19 pandemic, and some projects have only been operational for a year or more. A summary of results against standard MoFA indicators up to the end of 2022 was provided as the Final Report was being finalized and underlines the continuing lack of hard data for assessing performance against the LAS standard indicators.¹⁵

41. The MTR has therefore had to take a mainly qualitative approach. Even where hard data are lacking, it has been possible to make an informed assessment of how well projects are performing against broad project objectives; draw conclusions about how to strengthen the programme during its present phase; and inform budgetary decisions about the future size and direction of LAS.

5. The review of the LAS programme

5.1. How relevant and coherent is the LAS programme?

42. As a global programme designed to achieve structural changes in land governance, LAS is entirely relevant to the challenges outlined in the Background discussion. It ambitiously strives to have global reach, and in this context offers a response that is sensitive to the wide range of land governance needs in very different countries.

43. Its Theory of Change starts from the GoN premise, mentioned above, that “if you do not solve land issues, you cannot achieve most of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDGs). Therefore, a sustained and comprehensive effort on inclusive land governance and sustainable land use is a key priority to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.”¹⁶

44. The Theory of Change (ToC) captures the nature of the challenge facing LAS, and the need to address land governance challenges “in an integral manner via a multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-sectoral approach that at least recognizes and respects the concerns and rights of vulnerable people”.¹⁷

¹⁵ M&E Sheet LAND-at-scale, provided by RVO on 31 July 2023.

¹⁶ NL MoDA & RVO, 2019: LAND-at-scale Programme document. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency. February 2019, Section 1.1.

¹⁷ Programme Document, Section 2.1.

45. The anticipated Outputs and Outcomes underline how achieving structural change is not just a matter of durable interventions, but also involves activities that *change rules* and *institutional behaviours*, as well as the *power relations* between different land users, and between land users and governments.
46. The ToC also shows how achieving structural change that is durable and 'scalable' is likely to require more than one activity (project) as well as working together with other initiatives in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way.
47. The existence of multiple pathways in the ToC opens the way for LAS being a 'demand-driven' programme, a feature of LAS that enhances its relevance as a programme able to identify and respond to a wide range of land governance priorities and opportunities in different countries, and to then tailor-make targeted projects to address them.
48. And further, as a 'demand-driven' programme, "[LAS] Initiatives are expected to emerge through partnerships that have gained an initial experience with land governance and are willing to further collaborate to scale these up."
49. The relevance of LAS is further enhanced by the fact that it has developed an effective process for identifying 'demand' which reflects real land governance challenges on the ground. The demand-driven approach allows prospective partners – through the EKNs – to propose a range of different ideas that address elements of the land government challenge that they consider to be a priority in their respective countries.
50. In some cases, the EKNs had already identified land governance issues as a key constraint affecting other elements of their development assistance programming. Again, this underlines the relevance of the LAS model as a way of identifying specific issues in situations that are often highly complex politically, and devising an appropriate response to such issues.
51. The model that has been developed is both a practical and cost-effective way of identifying 'demand' by working through 'intermediaries who know', rather than by sending LAS teams out to look for where there might be acute needs for new land governance interventions.
52. Using civil society partners also makes sense. While local people may feel the impacts of poor land governance and 'demand' a response, they are rarely able to articulate their needs in a way that can be presented as an 'idea' to the local EKN. Local CSOs are in touch with communities and know about land governance issues in their areas. The overall approach is therefore as close as is feasible to being genuinely 'demand-driven'.
53. The result is a diverse portfolio of projects that together effectively address the complexity of land governance. Interventions across countries are quite different and address the land governance challenge in ways that are appropriate, and which take into account the country context of each project (Table 1).

Table 1 Review Question 1 – How relevant and coherent is the LAS programme?

Evaluation Question	Response (with original ToR Review Question numbers)
<p>RQ1.1 To what extent is the programme relevant to and coherent with the priorities and needs in the countries where it is implemented?</p> <p>Relevance and coherence (country level)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAS is relevant and coherent, and through its 'demand-driven' approach, it is effectively responding to land governance priorities as seen by EKNs working with civil society, government, and other donor stakeholders • LAS takes into account the context in each country (crisis settings, government commitment, capacities of partners), developing projects that target resources on specific areas and groups of beneficiaries (RQ 2, and ToR chapter 2.2) • The responses developed (LAS projects) follow various ToC pathways, but may not necessarily align with the priorities and/or procedures of government • LAS successfully enables specific, well-targeted land governance initiatives to be identified and implemented on the ground through its demand-driven model (RQ 8, ToR chapter 2.2) • LAS does not always directly respond to national (government) priorities, with 'ideas' coming from other stakeholders who identify specific needs and priorities in their countries
<p>RQ1.2 To what extent is the programme relevant to and coherent with the overall priorities of the Dutch MoFA and with those of the broader land governance community?</p> <p>Broader relevance and coherence (global level)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referencing MoFA departments involved (IGG, DSH, DDE), LAS directly addresses food security priorities, but its actual impact is less clear with the quantitative results that are available, and indicators may not be ideal for measuring food security impacts • The portfolio addresses rule of law priorities in several countries; it is also addressing global cross-cutting issues of gender and climate change • LAS is successfully building on earlier/current Netherlands contributions and commitment to land governance, and encourages EKNs to consider and respond to land governance needs in-country in line with GoN policy, becoming key partners in LAS project selection and responding to both MoFA and in-country priorities • LAS activities are relevant to partner and donor land governance programmes; where it is part of larger programmes it is raising the profile of land governance within them but at the risk of losing control over how LAS resources are used and scaled (RQ 5) • LAS ensures that climate change is addressed in project plans and other documentation, but it is contributing relatively little to climate change in real terms (RQ 4) • LAS addresses Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and inclusive development, although this is not apparent in activities on the ground (RQ 20) • Other GDWGL partners are aware of LAS but have little current information about the programme, and the MTR did not detect significant feedback or learning from LAS that could inform partners and convince them to co-fund the programme (RQ 19)

54. For example, in Mali LAS has been supporting newly created but still weak Land Commissions in Mali; in Burkina Faso it has been focusing on improving conflict resolution and inclusive approaches to secure land rights for women and youth in Burkina Faso.

55. In Colombia, LAS has supported the use and adaptation of Fit for Purpose (FFP) methods for recording community boundaries and smallholder plots and persuaded government land managers to undertake changes to outmoded and inefficient surveying and registration procedures. Other LAS activities deal with the challenge of working in complex political environments by supporting local NGOs that are recognized by official structures and are familiar with the territory.

56. In all these cases, LAS has come alongside civil society and international partners already engaged with land issues in testing or implementing new approaches to the problems that exist. This observation underlines how the programme is essentially about constructive

collaboration with and support to actors who are already taking the lead on key issues; its primary role is supporting promising initiatives and approaches rather than setting up new projects from scratch.

i. Demand-driven

57. The key to LAS is that it does succeed in its claim to be a demand-driven programme. The way the programme is structured provides a logical and coherent way of addressing a wide range of land governance challenges. The triangle of RVO–EKNs–Implementing Partners is the motor at the heart of the programme cycle, driving the identification of ideas through to implementation and accompanying projects on the ground.

58. This is clear in the way that projects were selected. The newly created RVO/LAS team put out a call to 40 EKNs around the world to identify land governance ‘ideas’ and present them for possible LAS funding and technical support. The message also went to civil society organizations, inviting them to propose ideas for LAS funding through local EKNs.

59. Dialogues between EKNs, civil society organizations, and governments resulted in the ‘ideas’ that were subsequently passed up the chain to the RVO/LAS team. A good indicator of the effectiveness of this strategy for identifying demand on the ground is the fact that the initial round of two ‘broad calls’ to 40 different EKNs resulted in 64 ideas being presented to the LAS Committee (several countries presented more than one idea).

60. Countries selected for further consideration by RVO were (in alphabetical order): Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, the DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Mali, Malaysia, Mozambique, the Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

61. All 64 ideas were presented to the LAS Committee for consideration. A first round of assessments reduced this list to 25 ideas for detailed consideration, with countries excluded for reasons such as insufficient political buy-in from governments, or a lack of minimum capacity to engage with LAS; or because the EKN decided to go it alone with its own programme (Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, South Sudan, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe).

62. Selection went ahead without major difficulty. The LAS Committee appears to function well despite its eclectic mix of civil servants and international experts. The fact that MoFA members have a slight majority over the five-person expert group does not seem to have unduly influenced project selection. Both sides have clear views and complementary views about the need to be strategic while also addressing specific thematic issues.

63. In the end, 12 countries were selected by the Committee. Of these, ten were developed into working projects by RVO, endorsed by the Committee, and then launched after successfully identifying and contracting implementing partners. The other two have reached partner selection phase and are expected to come online within a matter of months. Together, they literally span the world from South America to the Middle East and North Africa (**Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.** and **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.**). This is a significant achievement for a newly created team embarking on a global programme that literally has system-changing ambitions.

ii. Alignment with national and global priorities

64. Table 1 includes an observation that “LAS does not always directly respond to national (government) priorities, with ‘ideas’ coming from other stakeholders who identify specific needs and priorities in their countries”. This is partly due to the process of selecting ideas, which is heavily reliant on EKNs working with civil society partners as well as with governments. It is also a reflection of the fact that innovation and change in a lot of the countries where LAS works will not be coming from governments that largely favour the vested interests of those who stand behind them, and thus tend towards maintaining the status quo when it comes to land governance in each country.

65. In this context it is important to recognize the difference between coherence with government policies and/or specific land governance needs as identified by other stakeholders, especially those working at community level with the poorest rural households. It is to be expected that activities identified by LAS will often be challenging state orthodoxies with regard to land governance, which of course is at the heart of a strategy that promotes structural change as its main objective.

66. LAS addresses this conundrum in a smart way by working closely with the EKNs in each country to identify suitable ‘ideas’ first, and then proceeds to formulate project proposals that are put out to tender to find the best implementing partners (IPs). The EKNs know the political context well and will be aware of how it impacts the selection of projects. Their role in selection is critical, and in fact in the majority of cases LAS projects are aligned with government policies or adapted to situations where governments themselves are open to change. This is clear in the Sahel countries where new institutions are being established and tested (Land Commissions), and where LAS is supporting nationally driven policy debates around legal frameworks that have remained largely unused.

67. There are examples where LAS is misaligned with government policies and programmes because it chose to work with NGOs and others who are experimenting with approaches that modify or even challenge official practices. In these cases however, the LAS project has sought dialogue with government land institutions with the local EKN playing a key role as interlocutor.

68. In the global context, the relevance of LAS and its alignment with current thinking is well illustrated by other GDWGL countries considering similar approaches. The new Land Facility programme developed by the UK Government’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) that is now out for international tender is a good example. Like LAS, a large central fund will be managed by a core technical team working closely with UK embassies (‘UK Posts’). The core technical role is also outsourced to a separate agency, although the FCDO has opted for an open tender process to identify a private sector contractor rather than a government agency like RVO.

5.2. Results and achievements and the Theory of Change

69. LAS has successfully established a land governance capacity in RVO that did not exist before the programme began. This capacity has grown with the programme and as new funding has come in. The new RVO/LAS team has successfully established networks of experts and partners in the Netherlands and further afield, and with governments and civil society organizations across the world. This success story is amply demonstrated in purely human terms by the warmth and conviviality of the annual LAS Exchange held in Utrecht before the LANDac Conference, to which the MTR team had the privilege of being invited.

70. Results cluster around the core strategic objectives in the ToC of promoting and supporting structural change, and achieving the scaling of LAS-supported activities (which in turn has implications for the longer-term sustainability of outputs and outcomes (Table 2).

71. LAS directly addresses the food security, rule of law, and cross-cutting issues (CCIs) priorities of the MoFA departments funding it, but its impact is less clear with the quantitative results available using standard MoFA indicators.

- Before-and-after-LAS use of local or national indicators (child nutrition, land conflict data, mediation services, etc.) and enabling environment indicators (laws, policies, guidelines changed/introduced due to LAS) can measure the structural changes in land governance that LAS seeks to achieve.
- For CCIs, indicators of transformational change (such as women in decision making roles, evidence of changing normative behaviour in customary contexts) and indicators that link land governance and climate change (a new area that LAS can occupy with innovative thinking) can also serve to measure structural change more effectively than data disaggregated by gender and the presence of 'climate smart' planning etc.

72. It is too early to say whether structural change in land governance is being achieved. However, the MTR has identified positive signs that the LAS approach is achieving this objective. Several projects are engaged in or facilitating national policy discussions (the National Land Conference in Burundi, and working with FAO and others supporting a national policy dialogue in Chad). In Rwanda, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) project working with village level abunzi dispute mediators is shifting government thinking on land governance back towards working with local level customary institutions. In Colombia, the government is interested in LAS-supported Fit for Purpose (FFP) approaches to land rights surveying and recording as possible alternatives to the outdated and inefficient methods of the official land administration services, with LAS supporting a local university to draft new regulations that recognize the FFP approach.

Table 2 Review Question 2 – To what extent is LAND-at-scale fulfilling its expected functions and achieving the outputs and outcomes set out in its Theory of Change?

Evaluation Question	Response (with original TOR Review Question numbers)
<p>RQ 2.1. How well is the programme achieving the objectives set out in its initial documents and theory of change at country and global levels?</p> <p>Effectiveness, including equity dimensions, and external and internal coherence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAS has successfully established a land governance capacity within RVO and is creating the core of a future GoN centre of excellence in land governance, drawing upon in-house and outside expert specialized knowledge (ToR chapter 2.2) • With delays in implementation due to start-up issues and the pandemic, most LAS projects have not yet been able to produce indicators and sufficient data to allow assessment of intermediate and long-term programme outcomes (RQ 11) • Nevertheless, the success of the demand-driven approach and the Country Reviews indicate that LAS is on course for achieving its outputs and outcomes • It is less clear that LAS will achieve structural change and scaling, although several projects are engaged in activities that lead in this direction • It is not clear if LAS is effectively contributing to policy/enabling environment changes, although again, several projects include activities that lead in this direction • CCIs are referred to and included in every project, underlining the commitment of the RVO/LAS team to ensuring that these issues are addressed (RQ 11 extended) • While gender is mainstreamed as an issue across the programme, most activities are not yet achieving transformational objectives, with a tendency to equate gender with women’s land rights • Climate change is mentioned in every project, but activities tend to be reactive (‘climate-smart’ planning, for example) rather than proactively addressing the link between land governance, the climate emergency, and mitigation (RQ20, RQ6, RQ12) • CSR and related questions are hardly covered at all in LAS projects, although some do refer to ‘land-grabbing’ and the presence of vested interests who influence the enabling environment in which the LAS project is operating • Climate change is referenced but often treated as a ‘bolt-on’ issue, with little attention given to how land governance work contributes to climate change priorities • With regard to scaling, there is little evidence of synergies with other donor-funded activities, although in some cases the EKNs do provide a channel of communication with other donors (RQ 3, RQ 16, and ToR chapter 2.2) • LAS is maintaining the already high GoN reputation in global land governance circles and needs to demonstrate success; a success narrative needs to be developed using the data and this MTR and packaged to sell LAS to the DGWGL and others (RQ19)

73. There are other examples, but the general point is clear: by targeting ongoing activities and coming alongside local organizations actively involved in challenging orthodoxies in land governance, LAS is indeed promoting structural changes in land governance.

74. Another issue that was flagged in the Inception Report was a possible bias towards the land administration-focused activities in the ToC, and those that can be more accurately described as land governance activities. The MTR finds that while there is a predominance of titling and rights registration activities overall, these are balanced out by being implemented alongside other activities that address the rules and normative behaviour aspects of the land governance challenge. And there are several projects where land administration as such does not figure at all.

75. Scaling – understood to mean sustainability of LAS interventions in a post-project context *without follow-on funding and other support* (see the discussion below in the Key issues section (4.3)) – is included as a key project objective in all cases, starting with project selection through to formulation and implementation. Yet while scaling strategies are mentioned in project documents, they are not being universally implemented on the ground. Indeed, interviews during the data collection phase, as well as observations at the LAS Exchange, underlined the fact that many implementing partners were unclear about what scaling means and what is needed to achieve it.

76. It is important to note, however, that scaling is closely linked to achieving structural change. The MTR finds that a focus on scaling per se may not be the best way to look at this challenge – perhaps it would be best to focus more tightly on the conditions for structural change and the activities that are most likely to achieve it, including policy and normative changes in institutions and cultural contexts. Success in this context then opens the way to new initiatives being integrated into official programmes or permanently changing behaviours at community level and in land institutions.

77. What the Country Review does show is the importance of having governments on board when it comes to scaling. The Burundi case study with support to community land services (SFCs) is a case in point.

78. Uganda is another case where the LAS activity builds on current legislation and government openness to the idea of issuing land certificates that recognize customary forms of occupation (Community Certificates of Occupation). LAS support to an ongoing project is proving that this approach is effective, and plans are in hand to expand the number of beneficiary households up to a target of around 30,000.

79. A related issue is the need to discuss LAS project proposals with government and other donors as they are being developed in order to assess the potential for scaling post-LAS. The role of the EKN as an interlocutor can be critical here: in Colombia, for example, the Ambassador has organized gatherings at which senior politicians can meet with LAS project personnel to be informed about what the project is doing on the ground. This has generated a level of political support that hopefully will facilitate the scaling of project activities within official programmes.

80. Cross-cutting issues (CCIs) are included in some way in all projects (Table 2). However, a deeper look at how they are being addressed reveals significant gaps in relation to mainstreaming and transformational impact. These questions are addressed in more detail below, but the following points are made in this programme overview:

- Gender needs to be treated as a transformational challenge that involves men (as the ‘custodians’ of cultural norms in traditionally patriarchal societies) as well as women, and not be seen solely in terms of women’s land rights.
- Climate appears as a ‘bolt-on’ issue in most projects and is not mainstreamed at all, with interviews and conversations with project personnel giving the impression that it is *not* an immediate priority when faced with more urgent issues (some also add that this is a common response from government agencies they work with).

- Despite LAS guidelines, CSR and private investor land access issues are hardly addressed in the current portfolio, and there is little if any reference to the more controversial issue of large-scale allocations or land-grabbing that directly impacts local livelihoods and food security.

81. All three CCIs are discussed in more detail in the following sections of the report. For now, however, the comments above should be balanced by noting that there are good examples in several projects where CCIs are being confronted in a way that is potentially transformational and can lead to the structural changes at the heart of the LAS ToC.

82. Gender activities in Burundi and the Sahel countries have the potential to change norms and behaviours at both community and government level. The Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare (UCOBAC) project is very gender aware, and the Centro Terra Viva (CTV) project in Mozambique is including climate issues in its local government training activities. In Colombia, the three-way partnership between Kadaster International/ICCO/Tropenbos is forging a link – albeit in a somewhat ad hoc way – between community titling, environmental training, and community-based planning and reforestation.

83. LAS is playing an important role in facilitating deeper thinking around these key issues, in line with its strategic agenda to identify new openings and promote new thinking in pursuit of the structural changes needed to achieve the SDGs.

5.3. Factors explaining successes and limitations

84. The demand-driven approach and use of the RVO–EKNs–Implementing Partners triangle to deliver it, is a feature of LAS that has played a key role in its success to date (Table 3). Full use has been made of the acquired experience of EKNs with existing land programmes or awareness of land issues; but the programme has also succeeded in bringing on board several others, with little previous land engagement and even some with little or no devolved development assistance budget.

Table 3 Review Question 3 – What are the main factors that explain the successes and limitations of LAND-at-scale’s performance?

Evaluation Question	Response (with original ToR Review Question numbers)
<p>RQ 3.1. Is the programme set-up and governance fostering the achievement of objectives as identified in the Theory of Change and objectives set out for the programme (chapter 2.2)?</p> <p>Effectiveness and efficiency of programme governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme is well structured and its demand-driven approach enables LAS to respond to opportunities to support innovative activities that are ongoing and require further support • LAS has been able to make full use of the EKN network to achieve its demand-driven strategy and access in-country support when needed • Its flexible approach allows LAS to respond to changing operational circumstances and other unforeseen challenges such as political changes or disaster-related events • With a full portfolio of diverse projects, necessary shifting of personnel between countries has affected consistent support to implementing partners (RQ1, RQ8, RQ 15, ToR chapter 2.2) • The requirement to use standard MoFA indicators has hindered the ability of implementing partners to measure progress towards change as foreseen in the ToC • There are weak links between the M&E and KM functions (RQ 16), contributing to the lack of progress in developing ‘learning loops’ and lesson learning that can feed into national policy debates and normative discussions at the level of the GDWGL • The demands of a global and diverse programme with a relatively small central-level team have stretched resources, made up for by the dedication and hard work of the RVO advisors and their EKN colleagues (RQ 15) • The LAS Committee played an important and effective role selecting ideas for future LAS projects, but there are some questions about how this has played out; its role since initial project selection has also become less clear and needs to be revisited (RQ 15)
<p>RQ 3.2. Is the programme design and scope conducive to achieving its objectives?</p> <p>Effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of the project allows it to identify genuine demand and opportunities to promote changes in land governance, and allows for diverse needs and aspects of land governance to be addressed in line with the ToC model of multiple pathways (RQ 10) • Project selection is working well, although supporting activities in operationally and political complex contexts needs to be balanced against the option of using limited LAS resources in less challenging places where change and scaling is more likely to take hold and survive post-project (RQ 14) • The principles of LAS are clear in supporting documentation and in project design and plans, but are not always translated into appropriate activities (with specific reference to CCIs) • The M&E framework is held back by having to use standard MoFA indicators that are inappropriate for measuring the kind of changes and impacts foreseen in the ToC (RQ 10) • The three-year time limit imposed on LAS projects may not be enough to achieve structural change and scaling objectives

Evaluation Question	Response (with original ToR Review Question numbers)
<p>RQ 3.3. Have the programme approaches supported the achievement of results and objectives?</p> <p>Effectiveness of programme approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAS activities are more likely to contribute to structural change in land governance where they focus on changing rules and behaviours related to land governance, and support development and testing of new ideas • Improved livelihoods are more likely where LAS is set within wider strategies or matched by projects providing opportunities for LAS beneficiaries to exercise and use their enhanced tenure rights (RQ 10, RQ 11) • Few LAS projects have adequate scaling strategies and tend to be leaving this aspect to the end of their working cycle rather than planning it in from the start (RQ 9, RQ 21, RQ 22, and ToR chapter 2.2) • While CCIs are mentioned across the programme, the quality and relevance of some activities falls short of what is needed to achieve structural change and transformational impacts (RQ6) • Partnership strategies vary between projects, with some talk of ‘forced marriages’ delaying implementation as very different partners learn how to work together; perhaps more attention is needed on contractual details, including finance and accountability issues
<p>RQ 3.4. Has the programme been able to learn from and adequately adapt its programming to changing circumstances in the context and/or operations?</p> <p>Continuing relevance and effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the portfolio has developed, managing many diverse projects across the world with a relatively small team presents obvious difficulties, but the RVO/LAS team works hard to meet challenges and adopts an open flexible approach to course corrections and adaptation to changing circumstances (RQ 23) • Poor performance of KM activities prior to the MTR has resulted in KM not yet contributing to the LAS adaptive and learning-based approach; this may change with the recent reorganization, although there are still concerns about the number of KM partners and their roles • KM varies greatly between countries: where there are good local partners with KM experience and capacity (universities, experienced non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with KM capacity) it is working relatively well • More attention is needed in creating and using implementation/research/policy learning loops; and using these to promote regional KM strategies (RQ 23; ToR chapter 2.2) • The experiences and lessons learned have not yet percolated very far beyond the confines of LAS and its partners, but it is anticipated that as data begins to come in from late-start projects this will begin to change (RQ 23)
<p>RQ 3.5. Are the projects being implemented in a way that the results will continue and become permanent beyond the project?</p> <p>Sustainability, Scaling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, this is the case in some countries where LAS has contributed to governments adopting or at least recognizing FFP methods; and where LAS is supporting the consolidation of successful initiatives such as Land Commissions and training local level dispute mediators • As a programme of the Netherlands Government, LAS is recognized by national governments, donor partners, and decentralized agencies, and this gives it some leverage when it comes to its land governance activities being taken up and expanded/integrated into official programmes • Some EKNs are playing a critical role in bringing government and donors together to discuss LAS results; LAS has also supported national conferences and other policy dialogues that open the way to change and to potential scaling • Regional and programme-wide exchanges create awareness of opportunities for change and building collaborative approaches to promoting land governance reforms • In fragile contexts where national institutions are weak and policy positions may change very quickly, LAS has provided the means to address on-the-ground needs and support activities that lay the foundation for future long-term change (RQ 21) • LAS must use the KM component to develop informational material for use in policy discussion and contribute to changes in the enabling environment; EKNs can advise on strategic positioning of LAS activities vis-à-vis other socio-economic development strategies

85. Examples of EKNs that already had significant land governance or related activities within their devolved programmes include Mozambique. EKN experience was critical for addressing partnership problems that unexpectedly emerged as implementation got underway; the EKN also served as interlocutor between LAS project partners and government when the official position over one part of the LAS project appeared to change abruptly.

86. The role of the EKNs in selecting projects and as a go-between – or ‘gatekeeper’ as RVO puts it – is evident throughout the programme. This is especially the case in countries where the political context requires careful handling and the presence of embassy personnel who understand how to navigate a way through complex political challenges.

87. The effect of working with this triangle has also had an impact on the EKNs. While some were already involved in land governance work, many were not or had only very small development programmes. According to the RVO/LAS team, only around half of all EKNs had had previous land experience or were aware of the way in which poor land governance was impacting upon host country efforts to achieve the SDGs.

88. The call out to EKNs to think about land governance in their host countries and present ideas for LAS funding had a dramatic impact on bringing land issues to the fore and raising the potential of eligibility for GoN support through LAS (64 ideas from 40 EKNs were presented).

89. Colombia again is a good example, where there had previously been virtually no development cooperation programme (as a middle-income country it is low on the MoFA priority list for devolved development assistance funding). The ambassador in Bogotá had a particular interest in land issues and is aware of the land governance challenges facing the government with strong links to environmental and especially forest conservation issues. He was instrumental in responding to the call for ideas, leading to the eventual selection of the Colombia project and its IPs.

90. Some EKNs have also been implementing other projects through devolved budgets and found land issues to be a serious constraint on implementation. What is common to all, however, is how LAS has provided an opportunity to either continue or expand their existing land governance engagement (i.e., scaling up ongoing activities or building on previous achievements); or encourage EKNs not engaged in land work to ask if land governance is holding back host country progress towards the SDGs, and if it is, propose ideas that can then be funded and implemented.

91. This broadening impact of the programme is also a kind of scaling in the sense that it has expanded and consolidated global land governance activities initiated by the Netherlands.

92. With regard to limiting factors, two have already been mentioned. The first was the need to create a new land governance capacity from scratch within RVO, and then to go on to develop an implementation plan and working protocols for the new programme, all within the project timeframe and budget. This evidently took time. The second limiting factor was the Covid-19 pandemic, which curtailed all international travel and face-to-face communications between LAS team members and other parts of the programme structure at a critical point in implementation.

93. These two factors together resulted in a significant delay in getting projects underway. However, despite Covid-19, the RVO/LAS team working with the EKNs was still able to initiate

and successfully complete project selection. The team then worked hard once Covid-19 restrictions were lifted to move ahead with implementation as quickly as possible.

94. Overall, the project selection process and subsequent project formulation, partner contracting, and implementation tasks assigned to RVO have gone according to plan. The model is working and delivering a diverse and interesting portfolio of 12 projects in 12 very different countries. And as noted above, as far as possible, these projects are indeed 'demand-driven' and have potential to produce and consolidate structural change in land governance.

95. However, it may be that the role of the LAS Committee here is out of sync with the installed capacity of the RVO/LAS team – the original thinking of the RVO/LAS team was to have fewer countries (around six), but the Committee selected more ideas, resulting in a larger than intended number of active projects and countries. This was not foreseen at the design phase and has impacted on the programme by producing fewer resources and less capacity per project.

96. One comment made by a LAS Committee member is interesting in this context. The lack of information about proposed implementing partners makes it difficult to select 'ideas' that are the best fit for LAS; or it might lead to proposals from the Committee that prove to be impractical when it comes to partner identification and implementation. This might also be a factor behind LAS choosing to come alongside or become part of much larger programmes (Saarmentya, in Somalia, for example), and losing an opportunity to tightly target its limited resources to support smaller initiatives with greater potential to unlock change and lead to scaling.

97. The MTR team has been told that it is legally not possible to give the Committee information about prospective partners, unless LAS were to cease being a flexible, demand-driven programme and revert to being a traditional subsidy programme. This is a change that certainly should not happen – the demand-driven, flexible, and adaptive character of LAS is its strongest feature. Moreover, in several cases the EKNs collected inputs from multiple stakeholders (CSOs, government etc.) to formulate ideas. Not every idea came from a specific organization or consortium. This gives them richness and a sense of being different, another aspect of the programme that should not be put at risk.

98. Nevertheless, comments coming from the Committee do warrant consideration to see if lessons can be learned about how the selection process and the information provided to the Committee could be enhanced to ensure that LAS resources are tightly targeted and avoid or mitigate the most challenging or difficult contexts in which to work.

99. Another useful example is Mozambique, where the LAS Committee apparently identified synergies between two ideas and asked the RVO/LAS team to merge them. This meant negotiating a partnership arrangement which at the end of the day did not work out, when perhaps, as is now happening, it would have been better to proceed on the basis of separate contracts. The flexibility shown when dealing with these issues underlines the benefits of the LAS approach.

100. In Colombia, a similar vision of complementarity between different activities resulted in a 'forced marriage' (an expression used in several country contexts) between partners with very different institutional cultures who took a long time to figure out how to work together. On this occasion, the partners were chosen through a tender procedure, and fortunately they

have all benefited by learning from each other about aspects of land governance with which they were not previously familiar.

101. This last point also raises another important comment in relation to the ToC. In the Inception Report it was noted that there appears to be a certain bias towards land administration activities at the expense of more genuinely governance-oriented activities. This could be summed up as 'good land governance mainly requires land administration interventions'. Indeed, the MTR did encounter the view, high up in the programme structure, that land governance *is* land administration, and a persistence of the view that titling accompanied by the development of digital Land Information Management Systems (LIMS) resolves all land governance issues.

102. What the MTR has also shown however, is that the multiple pathway strategy captured in the ToC is entirely the right way to go. As the Colombia case shows, there is complementarity between the right sort of land administration solution (which tends to follow from a greater understanding of local needs and underlying governance issues), and community-based legal empowerment and other governance (rule and relationship changing) activities.

103. It must be noted that amongst the ten active countries, there are several examples of excellent partnerships and different entities working together in consortiums to deliver a LAS project with multiple dimensions. This is the case in all the Sahel countries, and in Burundi. Such an approach may well be the only or best way to respond to the challenge in the ToC, to put together a land governance solution in each country that identifies and supports several pathways – administrative, technical, behaviour changing, empowering, and culturally adaptive – that together can result in the long-term change and scaling that LAS was designed to promote.

104. These are complex questions, and it is not easy to come up with clear answers. However, the range of opinions heard, and the examples of less than happy 'forced marriages', also set against the backdrop of a multi-pathway ToC, do point to a need to ask questions about a) the information presented to a LAS Committee that is clearly able to see the synergies between different ideas, and how it can be presented and perhaps added to in a way that enables the right decisions to be made about the best use of LAS resources; and b) the due diligence and other work that takes place when the RVO/LAS team moves on from project formulation to the process of identifying and selecting implementing partners.

105. With 12 rather than six projects selected and launched, the RVO/LAS team moved into project management and technical assistance mode. Despite assuming an unexpectedly large and diverse programme spread across the globe, the team has been effective, drawing on proven land governance experience and high-end communication and programme management skills. The team was reinforced in 2021, when additional funding was provided by two other MoFA departments, and it continues to work hard to provide adequate and *consistent* levels of operational follow-up and technical assistance. All project stakeholders interviewed spoke highly of the LAS team and the quality of support. Nevertheless, the MTR did encounter comments from implementing partners about 'remote management' and questions were raised about the high rate of turnover in Programme Advisors assigned to some countries; and there

not being enough in-country presence through active missions while the local EKN was apparently unable to help.

106. These comments are mitigated by the adoption from the outset of a flexible and adaptive approach. The RVO/LAS team is open to changes being proposed by partners or responding to changing circumstances on the ground. This is especially the case where LAS is working with partners with strong track records in-country, such as SNV in Mali, OXFAM Intermom and OXFAM Novib in Chad, the international NGO ZOA in Burundi, or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Somalia.

107. With regard to the question of standard MoFA indicators being imposed on projects and not being suitable for measuring the changes that LAS is designed to promote, LAS implementing partners have been able to introduce their own indicators (many developed over many years before they joined with LAS). This has been the case in the two case study countries of Burundi and the Palestinian Territories and has also been observed in other countries such as Mozambique, where implementing partners have turned to LAS to expand and reinforce ongoing activities in land governance.

108. Finally, given its key role as the 'glue of the programme', poor progress with the Knowledge Management (KM) component has been a distinct and important limitation on the overall success of LAS. This is not to say that there are no positive examples, especially where LAS project partners include local universities that contribute to the development of knowledge material that is central to implementation and to scaling (Colombia, the Palestinian Territories, Chad, for example). But interviews and conversations at the LAS Exchange pointed to difficulties in fully using the strong acquired capacity and experience of equal KM partners that have included leading universities and reputable global level institutions like the ILC and Land Portal.

109. The KM component is also central to successfully achieving the process objective of creating 'learning loops' at several levels, as already described above in the overview of the programme: feeding into and enhancing in-country project performance; informing political leaders and decision makers about successful LAS initiatives and stimulating enabling environment changes; and supporting the GoN global objective of engagement with the donor community and GDWGL. The last of these particularly requires effective packaging of empirical material and evidence in support of the positioning of the Netherlands on land governance and to perhaps convincing other partners to come alongside and co-fund a future expanded LAS.

110. Within the KM package there is also the critical issue of promoting exchanges and lesson-learning between projects. Regional exchanges between the Sahel countries involved in LAS have clearly served to increase dynamism and created a culture of learning from each other; sharing experiences about project implementation, and particularly about the challenge of scaling, can feed into more successful outcomes. At the 2023 LAS Exchange the MTR team noted a clear desire on the part of implementing partners for more exchanges, including whole-programme meetings in different countries.

111. It is important to note in this context that the RVO/LAS team is aware of the need for communication and dissemination of LAS activities and progress. Promoting more exchanges and cross-programme learning is nevertheless an issue that merits further consideration and

support, both in the coming second phase of the current LAS and in future iterations of the programme.

112. The lack of progress with the KM component and what the prospects are now for the immediate and longer term are discussed below in the next section. To sum up:

- LAS has successfully established the 'centre of excellence' and a capacity to identify, plan and implement land governance projects in a wide range of diverse contexts.
- The LAS model is working well, is building on earlier experience and activities from the Netherlands, and is effective at identifying demand as far as possible, without the need for expensive identification missions.
- The process of selecting 'ideas' for development into operational projects has worked relatively well.
- As implementation picks up, and particularly given that the number of projects selected significantly exceeds the number originally planned, demands on the core team have meant switching between countries and not being able to provide the support that partners expect (noting that some have had experience of previous EKN-based projects where 'the donor' is close by).

113. It may well be that as implementation proceeds and implementing partners assume the reins of running their projects, demands on the central level team will fall. Whatever happens next, the fact is that LAS has established a core land governance capacity at RVO, and this will inevitably see demands on its time and resources increase. The goal now is to ensure that its potential is fully and amply exploited. The ideal scenario for MoFA is that this happens via an extension and expansion of LAS; alternatively, LAS might evolve into an improved programme, building on its present activities.

114. It might also be the case that success has been achieved at the expense of clarity regarding the role of the EKNs with the advent of LAS. Some implementing partners and KM partners are uncertain about the EKN role, and the EKNs themselves sometimes seem unsure about their role once projects have begun. Looking more closely at this question it is evident that EKNs are no longer the primary actors when it comes to land governance support generated from the Netherlands at country level. But they do have a clear and effective role in project selection; they are always members of the LAS Project Steering Committee in-country; and they join meetings with the (national) governments and other donor organizations and accompany RVO/LAS field visits if possible.

115. As cases like Mozambique and Colombia show, the gatekeeper role of the EKNs is also clear and continues to be effective, being on hand to resolve problems that might occur. And in certain politically complex places, their role is clear and unequivocal, guiding LAS as it navigates a path through complex and sensitive political landscapes.

116. Nevertheless, LAS has ushered in important changes in the role and function of the EKNs with regard to land governance, and perhaps by extension, as primary interlocutors of development assistance from the Netherlands at country programme level. Moreover, and importantly for the LAS model that depends upon EKN awareness of land governance needs based in their previous experience and relationships with national stakeholders, if EKNs are replaced by the LAS central level team as the drivers and managers of projects, they may lose

their ability to accurately identify 'demand' in the future and thus fulfill the key 'idea generation' role they have played in LAS.

117. Against this, it is equally valid to note that in Burundi, for example, LAS and the EKN working together have brought on board new partners and organizations that the EKN has not yet worked with (MiPAREC, in the case of Amahoro-at-scale, and Land and Development Expertise Center (LADEC) in the case of scaling); the presence of embassies at national bigger events developed by LAS implementing partners would not otherwise have happened (again Burundi, with its LAS-supported National Land Conference; and the National Consultation for land policy revision in Chad).

118. This is clearly a two-way process that always results when changes are implemented, with pros and cons on all sides. Maybe there is not just one role for the embassy, but what LAS does show is that they remain key elements of the implementing triangle already referred to above. An interesting observation comes from the Chad country review, where the EKN indicated that it would welcome the chance to be invited to take part in LAS Committee meetings, given its high level of engagement with the project on the ground.

119. MoFA and RVO should perhaps consider a meeting or group reflection on this changing role and come up with suggestions on how to keep the best of the earlier model, and build on the best of the new one. This might include, for example, allocating resources within the LAS framework to enable the stronger EKNs to take on the role of providing in-country project management, while LAS provides the high-end technical assistance and support.

120. Thirdly, budget and project duration may be affecting the potential for scaling and achieving structural change. Several interviews stressed that sustainable structural change requires both greater levels of funding per project, and longer time horizons for initiatives to prove themselves and then go on to being scaled in some way.

121. The current EUR 37.5 million budget, less around EUR 7 million allocated to Knowledge Management, is spread over 12 projects, and each is limited initially to three years (considerably less than EUR 1 million per year per project). This makes it even more essential to target resources precisely on key issues and reinforce or consolidate ongoing initiatives, so multiplying their potential impacts.

6. Key issues

122. The key issue of whether and how the LAS programme is demand-driven has been answered above in the overall programme discussion and Review Questions. This section looks specifically at the remaining questions of structural change and scaling, and the other critical programme components of M&E and Knowledge Management.

6.1. Structural change

123. LAS sees **achieving structural change** in land governance as a prerequisite for achieving its long-range social and environmental outcomes. For the RVO LAS team, this essentially means supporting activities that will take root and survive beyond the end of the programme, but it is important to ask if this is enough.

124. Achieving structural change in terms of impact on the rules regulating access to and use of land, and the behaviours of those who interpret and apply these rules, is a complex challenge. It can often involve confronting vested interests, and controversial questions such as corruption and government-endorsed activities that negatively impact on local people in the name of national development or even the greater good of achieving SDGs and other socio-economic targets.

125. The MTR finds that LAS has successfully found more nuanced ways of confronting these challenges. This is a reflection of the multiple pathways that are provided for in the ToC, which accurately reflects the complexity of land governance as defined by FAO and offers different options – including several complementary activities where appropriate – for achieving the long-range goal of structural change in land governance.

126. Nevertheless, the focus on structural change in land governance carries with it the strong possibility of coming into conflict with established political positions which may reflect vested interests behind the scenes rather than making technical assessments of what is best for the country in terms of land governance. Engaging with governments over these issues is necessary, including the related and complex question of corruption and manipulation of existing land services to facilitate land-grabbing and state capture of local land. Evidently, how this is done is very much up to the LAS team working closely with the local EKN.

127. Especially in contexts where the prevailing land governance institutions are apparently influenced by interests, care must be taken from the first moment of project selection through to project formulation and implementation to ensure a minimal level of dialogue with government and others who may be affected by LAS-supported activities. In Mozambique, for example, the government was accepting of LAS-supported community titling activities but raised concerns when these appeared to challenge official procedures and regulations geared towards the needs of investors looking for land.

128. The MTR findings show how well-targeted and politically aware project implementation can also lay the groundwork for later scaling of successful activities.

6.2. Scaling

129. **‘Scaling’ is the third strategic principle of LAS.** For commendable strategic reasons, it took time to arrive at a definition for scaling through a bottom-up approach to the issue which did not decide beforehand what scaling is, but followed the lead and expertise of in-country partners and contexts, recognizing what scaling means in those contexts. The first clear definition of scaling was then presented in the 2022 Annual Strategic Plan (Box 2), after a first analysis of these practices and the lessons emerging.

Box 2 Scaling

Scaling should lead to **sustainable and structural change** in which the impact remains, or (preferably) increases, after the project end date without any additional (financial or operational) support. This is only possible when sufficient attention is paid to the **enabling environment**, meaning that political, legal, environmental, and socio-economic factors need to be considered. It is important to **add value to and align with ongoing processes** rather than attempting to achieve impact in isolation. Similarly, buy-in and engagement from relevant stakeholders are vital for success. Scaling strategies should therefore include **inclusive and multi-stakeholder approaches**. Finally, it is important to follow and adhere to **global standards and best practices with regards to (corporate) social responsibility**. (emphasis in original)

Source: Annual Strategic Plan 2021

130. Though an admirable approach, it may have held up the integration of scaling. Four years into the programme, in the 2023 LAS Exchange (attended by MTR team members), it was clear that many implementing partners still did not understand what scaling means. In interviews, only one project – the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) project that trains customary conflict mediators (Abunzi) in Rwanda – had a clear strategy where scaling was built in as a specific activity in the workplan. Even in this case however, it was still to be decided if ‘scaling’ meant extending activities across the one district where the project has been working, or extending it to all districts in the country.

131. Of course, in several projects, scaling is implicit in what they are doing (supporting ongoing initiatives that require further support for consolidating and extending their activities, as in the Sahel countries for example; and in the Palestinian Territories). In some, scaling is seen in terms of increasing the targets for LAS-supported activities. Thus, in Uganda for example, plans are in place to ‘scale up’ the number of customary titles being produced with LAS support to over 30,000. The LAS-Uganda project is also contributing to creating the enabling environment to have a functional local land governance system in place, which is fundamental for sustainability and impact in the long term. Burundi is also expanding the number of local land services (SFC) into neighbouring areas.

132. Scaling is also implied where projects are working with other local institutions to lay the foundations for future consolidation and expansion of activities presently supported by the programme. Activities that illustrate this point include projects that support the development of land governance content in local universities, or where LAS-supported activities are taken up by government as possible models for reforming current official practices.

133. Resource constraints were already affecting the ability of some projects to ‘go to scale’ across all the areas already designated for LAS supported activities. This was the case in

Mozambique, where plans to expand local government training across 33 districts across this vast country were not feasible within the LAS budget. Conversations with the project personnel do however point to the key contribution that LAS has made in developing a platform and acquired experience to support a request for additional funding through other donor channels.

134. 'Scaling' also has political and 'challenge' connotations, going into places where others fear to intervene, or where LAS-supported activities challenge conventional thinking on land governance. These very different views of what scaling means underline the point that much work still needs to be done to understand what scaling is and how to do it in practice. It was very good in this context to see a useful and informative training session on scaling provided by RVO on the second day of the LAS Exchange.

6.3. Knowledge management

135. In the first Annual Strategic Plan for 2020,¹⁸ knowledge management is defined as "the process of generating, sharing, using and managing information in order to contribute to the objectives of the LAND-at-scale program" and "will be facilitated by supporting knowledge creation, joint learning, and knowledge exchange within the field of land governance. Examples include programme synthesis, south-south learning and training".¹⁹

136. An effective KM component is critical for achieving scaling and for generating lessons leading to innovation and structural change. It is indeed "the glue of the programme" as it was called in several interviews. It is unfortunate therefore that the KM component, at least up to the beginning of the MTR, has not worked as intended.

137. Documents and interviews conducted during the MTR indicate that:

- the component has been constrained by its complex organizational structure and the complex relationships between them;
- despite having partners (ILC and Land Portal) specialized in organizing and running large online and other events, there has been an almost complete lack of regional and programme-wide exchange and dialogue (the annual LAS Exchange stands out as an exception and points to what could be achieved even with online meetings);
- some partners do not understand what KM is for and what it is in practice, and learning loops have only emerged to a limited extent;
- KM has not been built into most LAS project plans and budgets from the start; and
- with a relatively limited budget to fund several KM partners working in 12 different countries, there are questions over who funds KM activities on the ground, particularly where LAS funding is already allocated to the fieldwork and training etc.

¹⁸ RVO, 2020: LAND-at-scale Annual Strategic Plan 2020. 18 December 2019.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.5.

138. No evidence was found of LAS projects training or preparing community members to be active players in KM or dissemination. Despite the LAS emphasis on the local, the MTR team does not see evidence of the KM budget being utilized to help elevate the voices of those who are benefiting from LAS project activities.

139. The KM component has only recently been reorganized, and the concern of the MTR is not to assess what went wrong but to look ahead. The new structure puts RVO in control of the KM component, and able to direct the different partners to deliver exactly what LAS needs. It is useful in this context to be clear about what the MTR has revealed about how KM is working on the ground and what it should be delivering for LAS in the future:

- The MTR has shown that KM works well when dedicated resources are allocated to it at the time of project design and when the IPs have had a say in how it is integrated and what it is for (this is the case in Mali, for example).
- KM also works well where at least one of the IPs has a strong learning culture and can bring skills and experience to the task in the LAS project (Mali and Chad again stand out, where OXFAM Novib has been a key actor bringing clarity regarding the KM needs of the project).
- KM also works well in situations where local partners are brought in with specific knowledge management and research profiles, notably local universities that are either partners in the project from the start, or are brought in to address specific KM needs arising from its activities (Chad again illustrates the first case, while Colombia and the Palestinian Territories the second).
- There is a real need for more exchanges and cross learning, revealed in interviews and reaffirmed strongly by participants at the 2023 LAS Exchange in Utrecht (June 2023).

140. The new KM structure is already in place, but it is too early to say if it is working. It is not clear how joined up the KM pillar is across the whole programme – and there are still a lot of KM partners! KM is already working better in some countries than others, for simple reasons such as the KM partner having direct experience of country A or B.

141. The three Sahelian countries underline the importance of having more exchanges. There has already been a degree of exchange and cross-learning that has helped them to learn from each other and to get support and energy from others facing similar challenges. A budget to have more LAS Exchanges every year is unlikely, but RVO has good partners in ILC and the Land Portal who can organize and facilitate online meetings and exchanges.

142. Some projects are unique in content and context, but learning opportunities can be galvanized through exchange and meeting others working in the same programme. In the MTR Interactive Plenary Session at the 2023 LAS Exchange, participants were asked “between the LAS Exchanges last year and this year, have you been engaging actively with implementing partners in other countries adequately or do you want to engage more?” With the exception of the Sahel countries, who are close together and already sharing experiences, few partners seemed satisfied with their levels of exchange. One said that they would like guidance and support to meet more regularly between the annual exchanges; another suggested the annual exchange could take place in different countries so partners could learn from other projects.

143. The KM component must also accompany LAS activities and develop the lessons learned into products that feed into national and global debates on land governance and related issues. This has not been happening, and RVO now has a chance to work with the KM partners to ensure that it does. The next phase of implementation must create and present an effective narrative about the successes of LAS, following the MTR findings. This will also require closer links with Monitoring and Evaluation.

6.4. Monitoring and evaluation

144. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within LAS has also not been going as well as intended. Several issues were evident to the MTR:

- There is a strongly centralized approach to M&E driven by established **MoFA indicators**, with added complications with multi-donor arrangements.
- The MoFA indicators are too static and not appropriate for measuring the change that LAS is designed to promote and achieve, which requires qualitative assessment and evaluation to determine if structural and transformational change is emerging.
- The indicators are not measuring progress, in particular in the enabling institutional environment/policy domain and partnerships domain.
- Some partners have limited capacity in M&E and require much stronger support, as well as budget specifically allocated to it.

145. It is encouraging that RVO and its partners on the ground are willing and open to discussing these questions. All understand how effective M&E can improve performance and provide data to support narratives about their work and its impact, especially where their project plan includes engaging in policy dialogue and finding partners for scaling.

146. Fortunately, many LAS partners have considerable M&E experience themselves, and especially where LAS supports existing activities, the IPs will already have their own indicators to measure and evaluate what they are doing. LAS (and MoFA) should be more open to adopting, or at least including, these indicators within their own standard indicators.

147. M&E and KM partners should work more closely together. The two issues are evidently closely related and feed into each other. In this context it will be important to get the KM partners to gather together and synthesize information and data from the projects and package these into information products to use both nationally and globally.

7. Cross-cutting issues

148. Signs of an effective approach to CCIs is whether they are treated as key criteria for selecting countries and activities or are only additional or 'special issue' topics for knowledge management products such as research or webinars; and whether they are embedded into LAS programming across the board, at central level RVO and LAS Committee level, at EKN level, and at country level among the implementing partners.

149. These questions link directly to capacity and human resources issues at all levels of the programme: there are dedicated gender and climate personnel at central level; are there similar advisors and dedicated people in the EKNs accompanying LAS, and amongst all the

implementing partners on the ground so that CCIs are genuinely integrated in practice? These and other questions are addressed in the discussion that follows.

7.1. Gender

150. Gender is addressed throughout LAS at programme and portfolio level. This is to be expected given the unequivocal support of the GoN to gender and women's rights at home and in its development assistance programme. Gender analysis needs to be firmly embedded throughout the LAS programme and in all the projects and interventions it funds. The MTR finds that at the present time, this is *not yet* the case.

151. Gender issues have been discussed in selecting countries and activities. But it was not apparent that the LAS programme ensures *all* activities and interventions have designated people on their teams with responsibility for ensuring gender issues are mainstreamed.

152. The bigger question is not *if* gender is being addressed in LAS, but *how* it is being addressed. Are the LAS projects on track for promoting and contributing to transformational (i.e., structural) change in the gendered relations that condition land access and land rights for millions of women, disadvantaged men, vulnerable groups and marginalized people?

153. There is a clear understanding across the LAS programme that gender transformation around land governance requires attention to social norms. At the same time, *there is a lack of understanding across the programme, especially among some of the IPs, about what this means in practice.*

154. Addressing gender in land governance involves more than getting women's names onto land titles. It also requires all people to be meaningfully and effectively participating in land governance, including decision-making over land; and more attention paid to a much broader range of gender issues than comparing the situation of women to that of men.

155. Inclusivity and intersectionality also need to be addressed, as well as differentiation between people of the same gender. For LAS to be achieving its declared goal of structural change, its approach to gender must also be transformative, addressing the rules and the power relations clearly underlined by the FAO definition in Box 1 above.

156. Nevertheless, the MTR accepts that in some cases where there are deeply entrenched positions on women's rights and participation, the process of just getting women's names onto land documents can be the start of something more transformational. This is the case in several LAS projects, where the main indicator of success in gender terms *is* the presence of women's names on certificates and title documents, even though underlying gendered power relations and the real extent of women's rights to use and transact their land as they wish, remain unaltered.

157. In general, *the LAS programme and activities focus on women's land rights much of the time, rather than on 'gender'.* This distinction is important because the gender lens is essential for understanding the role that men play and how the rules and structures and power relations of land governance are gendered, often with negative consequences not only for women, but for all vulnerable groups and marginalized members of communities.

158. Furthermore, and again in general, LAS is not using 'gender' as a strategic entry point to include vulnerable and marginalized groups by looking at their specific circumstances and

land governance needs within a broader equality and human rights framework. *This is a missed opportunity and would benefit from the addition of substantive gender transformative expertise to support the RVO team and the implementing partners.*

159. A more transformative and strategic approach to 'gender' would involve shifting focus from treating women as a (the) vulnerable group with additional or special needs, towards integrating women (and people from other vulnerable groups) into LAS activities alongside men, as full and equal participants and beneficiaries – i.e., focusing on equality between people as a whole. This may require responses specifically targeted at different groups of women and men, to address intersectionality, differentiation, and wider gendered social norms and practices around land governance rules and institutions, both customary and statutory, making sure specific needs are acknowledged and responded to.

160. These may seem to be strong conclusions. Most, if not all, LAS projects have integrated gender to varying degrees into their Formulation Plans. They all have sections outlining the gender context in-country and make some mention of gender in other places too. Several go further and seek to be transformative in their approaches, others lay foundations for longer-term social norm change through varying emphases on awareness-raising activities, but others do not, and/or see gender as "too difficult", to quote an interviewee from one IP. The MTR finds that in most cases, the initial gender assessments have not translated into genuine mainstreaming of attention to *gender* and land across the project.

161. Notwithstanding, there are several interesting examples that show where LAS is definitely heading in the right direction. These include Uganda, Burundi, Mali, and Chad. Projects in all four countries face contexts surrounding gendered social norms that are found in many other countries (strong gender equality provisions in their Constitutions, some activity around women and title deeds, but different realities on the ground due to entrenched patriarchal social norms). All projects set good examples of trying to be relatively more gender transformative and innovative in their approaches.

162. Overall, Uganda is a good example for LAS, where one of the implementing partners, Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare (UCOBAC), is actively trying to incorporate gender transformative approaches. Moreover, the Uganda project, while following a common approach of getting more women's names on land titles as one project component and using that as a key indicator of impact evidence on gender, is also drawing strongly on Global Land and Tool Network's (GLTN) land tools which include a set of established gender tools that are underpinned by more gender transformative analysis.

163. The legal empowerment component implemented by UCOBAC aims to support women who participate in local decision-making forums under Uganda's quota-based system to be able to participate more effectively. Note, however, that the assumption that a 'consent clause' in the law will protect women's rights if their names are on joint land titles is questionable from a gender transformative perspective as patriarchal norms and unequal power relations between women and men still put women at a serious disadvantage when it comes to decision-making about land. All the IPs acknowledge this and are aware of its implications. While the Uganda project has definite gender transformative potential, it is too early to assess this, as well as difficult to assess given the current set of indicators mainly around titling, and with other indicators not being gender disaggregated.

164. In Burundi the LAS country project is working on awareness-raising and legal literacy with women. By focusing in one area of the country, where land conflicts are critical, the project has attempted to closely understand the local context, including on gender issues, and the IPs are working to share lessons on its innovations around securing the land rights of (illegal) polygamous wives, but again it is too early to assess this.

165. At the same time, as the Burundi case study has made clear through direct field observations, in terms of land recognition and land measurement, LAS-supported activities are not sufficiently gender sensitive. The project team intends to pay strong attention to this in the next phase, including with an expanded workstream on women's access to justice.

166. In Mali, the LAS project had support from a gender consultant to carry out additional analysis in project design that led to a clear gender strategy for implementation. The strategy seeks to address gender through three objectives: decision-making influence for women in land commissions (CoFos), equal accessibility to CoFos' services, and including women's inputs and opinions to evaluations of CoFos. The IPs are strongly committed to gender transformative approaches while acknowledging the sensitivity and importance of seeking to clearly understand how gender relations play out around land. This project has definite gender transformative potential.

167. The Chad project, "Land Reform based on rapid evolutions and present crisis", originated from three projects, one of which was a Civil Society Organization (CSO) led campaign for women's land rights. As a result of the campaign, traditional authorities in the province of Moyen-Chari have granted women and youth more than 1,800 hectares of land, with the intention of strengthening their economic wellbeing and livelihoods and that of their communities. The project is tracking land allocations to women's groups through the 'Fentometer', an innovative online platform that supports accountability of government.

168. However, the project is so far only supporting land allocations to women's groups, as it not legally possible to work on individual rights, and only men are involved in experimental work on land administration methods supported by Kadaster International. One IP suggested that it is not clear how much effect (if any) the LAS-supported national dialogue process has had in the rural areas where farmer-herder conflicts predominate in a violent culture where women often have no voice. At the same time, ongoing local dialogues utilizing Oxfam's gender transformative leadership methodology aim to support social normative change in a more structured way and have strong potential.

169. Other country projects have some women-focused activities, especially around land titling, but the projects are not really gender transformative in the full meaning of the word. Examples here include Mozambique, Rwanda, Burkina Faso and the Palestinian Territories. In other cases, lip service is paid to gender as a cross-cutting issue – either as an 'add-on' component within parts of a project, or as something that is only mentioned in the project formulation phase but put to one side as being too difficult.

170. With regard to gender expertise at country and project level, many IPs have strong resources they can draw on. Only one EKN was identified that had a gender expert on its staff; perhaps in specific project countries where the gender and land question is of particular importance and focus, thought could be given to outposting an RVO/LAS gender expert attached to the respective EKN. Notwithstanding these comments, it is clear that the

programme as a whole would gain from a gender review and the development, with expert support, of more transformational gender strategies at country level.

171. Table 4 below provides summary comments for the remaining eight country projects not yet discussed in the text, and an indicative Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Gender Equality Score for all 12 countries. However, the MTR finds the broad scores (0, 1, 2) not especially helpful in weighing the different nuances between the different country projects. None of the LAS projects have gender equality as a *principal* objective and for four countries it is not *targeted*, resulting in a score of 0. Other countries would all score 1 on the OECD criteria but there are huge differences between them, with several scoring a much 'higher' 1 than others).

172. MTR recommends that at a minimum all LAS projects should be scoring 1 on the OECD scale but would push LAS to be bolder on gender transformation, given its importance in land governance, and aim for a 'high' 1 in every case.

173. Finally, the role of the KM component in the development of the gender CCI throughout the LAS programme is critical. The MTR found that gender is indeed a clear topic of interest within the KM pillar, albeit with a study of gender (women's land rights issues) and land registration still not published over a year since the research took place. However, in general, the KM component is extractive rather than supportive/contributory towards implementing partners and is not currently supporting gender transformative approaches around land governance that can lead to Structural Change.

174. For example, there was a missed opportunity for real normative learning and sharing at the LAS Exchange in June 2023, where the 'gender' session – renamed on the spot as 'equal rights for all' – still ended up as a discussion around obstacles to women's land rights. The KM facilitator opened well by positing 'women's land rights' vis-à-vis 'land rights' rather than 'men's land rights'. Despite the plenary discussion then beginning with a contribution from an IP from Uganda who talked about social norms, there was limited discussion overall of differences between different groups of men and women, nor of intersectionality.

175. This observation leads on to another about the KM component: that it risks falling into the trap of equating gender and women, and that more effort is needed across the LAS programme to create opportunities to provide gender sensitization and training to IPs. This leads us to conclude that the LAS programme needs solid technical expertise to support it in being able to fulfil the gender transformative potential.

Table 4 Summary OECD Gender Equality Score for LAS Projects

Country	OECD score	Comments
Burkina Faso	1	Project proposal is weak on gender (poorly developed analysis relying on generic principles), with siloed women, youth, and Internally Displaced Person (IDP) focused activities. The project works with women’s groups (in agricultural collectives practicing ‘home gardening’) and focuses on women’s land titles rather than broader gender transformation in land relations.
Burundi	1	A ‘high’ 1. See comments in text above.
Chad	1	A ‘high’ 1. See comments in text above.
Colombia	0	Some activities focus on women (e.g., NGO partners insist on local schools choosing girls as well as boys for environmental training), but addressing gender is “too difficult” in the indigenous/cultural context and not embedded within the project. Some <i>ad hoc</i> activities try to enhance women’s participation, but intersectionality is not addressed, there is no gender strategy, and specialist support is needed to initiate gendered structural change in indigenous land governance.
Mali	1	A ‘high’ 1. See comments in text above.
Mozambique	1	IP Centro Terra Viva (CTV) is committed to strengthening gender equality within land governance, but gender transformation has not been an explicit objective of LAS country project design or activities.
Palestinian Territories	1	The case study shows frequent references to gender, but it is clearly equated to women’s land rights. There is no clear <i>gender</i> strategy despite support from a KM specialist partner. For example, the MT did not see issues of differentiation and intersectionality being addressed, focusing only on female-headed households and women’s groups. Most awareness-raising activities around gender targeted only women and exclude men; in a strong patriarchal culture this limits the potential for transformational change.
Rwanda	1	Locally elected men and women mediators (abunzi) receive basic legal training to help them adjudicate land disputes, but it is hard to assess how or if this has been used as an opportunity to challenge gendered norms that still mean men make most decisions over land, regardless of the fact that most land of legally married couples under the community of property regime (i.e., the majority of married couples in Rwanda) has been titled in joint names (prior to the LAS programme’s involvement).
Somalia	0	Limited scope for gender transformation due to pre-existing project modality and limited scope for LAS intervention. There is a commitment to address gender, but no gender indicators in project results framework, and serious practical constraints include all male local representative bodies. RVO being a minor stakeholder limits the influence of LAS, but forthcoming gender evaluation for Saameynta in collaboration with LAS KM has potential.
Uganda	1	A ‘high’ 1. See comments in text above.

7.2. Climate change

176. The link between land governance and climate (both as a cause of the climate emergency and an input to climate mitigation strategies) is underlined in a 2020 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)²⁰ that notes “Appropriate design of policies, institutions and governance systems at all scales can contribute to land-related adaptation and mitigation while facilitating the pursuit of climate-adaptive development pathways. Mutually supportive climate and land policies have the potential to save resources, amplify social resilience, support ecological restoration, and foster engagement and collaboration between multiple stakeholders.”

177. To adopt climate-smart technologies such as minimum tillage, soil and water conservation, climate resilient crop and livestock varieties, and conservation/regenerative/sustainable agricultural strategies, farmers and farming communities must be certain about their land rights. And wider land governance policy has to be set within climate strategies that provide real resources and support to farmers.²¹

178. Land governance must also strike a balance between national growth targets and food security needs for urban populations that may justify production-at-scale, and governance rules and practices aligned with VGGT principles. Policies that endorse or turn a blind eye to large-scale land acquisitions, or even worse to land-grabbing by private and state investors with the monoculture projects that usually result, can have massive impacts on biodiversity and contribute to increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

179. These are key areas where LAS can make a difference and develop innovative ideas for linking land governance to measures that will combat the trend towards rising global warming and facilitate effective and appropriate mitigation strategies.

i. Climate change and project formulation

180. The LAS Formulation Plans are the key base planning document for country projects, with climate change sections following LAS Formulation Plan Guidelines that require climate actions to be ‘project (area) specific’, taking into account climatic, ecological and environmental situations in the project areas). Formulation of climate activities is also guided by the LAS Climate Framework guidelines. These are methodologically elaborate and refer to OECD markers of climate change, asking that climate is integrated at all stages with “a gap analysis, stakeholder analysis, stakeholder consultation, impact assessment, and capacity estimate”. There is no reference to ensuring that climate analysis is “project area specific” and no standard format for project proposals prepared by IPs (though the document “LAS Guidance for project implementers on project management” gives limited advice on how to undertake climate-related activities).

181. Project proposals therefore do not include ‘area specific’ analyses and only have generic climate reviews (hazards and impacts) for the whole country. Neither Formulation Plan nor

²⁰ IPCC, 2020. *Climate change and land: Summary for Policy Makers*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

²¹ Quan J. and Dyer, 2008. *Climate Change and Land Tenure*. The implications of climate change for land tenure and land policy. Rome, FAO.

Proposals contain descriptions of risk and vulnerability (exposure, sensitivity, resilience capacity) and potential adaptive measures tailored to LAS project area needs.

182. The links between land governance and ownership, and climate resilience, are not addressed in a way that brings climate change centrally into project strategies and activities at local level. For example, supporting a village or community and its surroundings to develop climate resilient land use planning and implementation with components such as agroforestry, trees, soil and water conservation, and erosion control.

183. Despite the lengthy Framework guidelines, climate sections in Formulation Plans are rarely more than half a page (gender sections tend to be longer). Three IP Proposals out of the ten LAS projects under implementation have no reference to climate change at all (Burundi, Colombia and Mali), and the others (excepting Uganda) are not project area specific.

184. Other than Mozambique, no Formulation Plan or Project Proposal sets out an explicit climate strategy. The lead IP for the Saameynta project for Somalia has now organized a dedicated climate change study, with uncosted ambitious recommendations under review.

i. Implementation and results

185. Climate has not been adequately addressed beyond some references to climate-smart land planning. Despite the LAS guidelines calling for climate to be given attention as a key CCI in LAS projects, only three countries present any results related to climate change in their progress reports:

- Colombia, where community level training was provided for 22 young people in climate change adaptation (though not included in the original Kadaster International proposal, and carried out by another IP, the NGO ICCO, working at community level). The environmental activity also focuses more on forest degradation and recovery than on climate per se;²²
- Uganda, where results are presented for “climate-smart and inclusive land use planning”;²³ and
- Mozambique, where training sessions were held on natural resources management legislation and strengthening the technical capacities of government officials on land planning and climate change resilience.²⁴

186. The LAS Climate Framework suggests using OECD climate marker scores for measuring progress.²⁵ Looking at IP Proposals and available progress reports, and pragmatically applying the OECD markers to the ten active projects:

²² Kadaster International, ICCO Cooperation and Tropenbos Colombia (2022). LAND-at-scale Colombia – Progress Report III. Period: 01 January 2022–30 June 2022. Bogotá, July 2022.

²³ GLTN, 2022. *Scaling Up Community-Based Land Registration and Land Use Planning on Customary Land in Uganda - Semi-Annual Narrative and Financial Progress Report. April 2022.*

²⁴ Centro Terra Viva (2022). “*Scaling up Community Legal Literacy, Community Land Rights Certification and Climate Resilience in Mozambique*” – Narrative Report 2022. Maputo, March 2023.

²⁵ Principal (score 2) - if climate measures are fundamental and an explicit objective of the intervention; Significant (score 1) - if climate measures as part of an intervention are identified as important, but not one of the principal reasons for undertaking the activity; and Not targeted (score

- Four are rated 2, with climate references in project titles or statements of objectives (Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda);
- Three are rated 1, with mention of climate in Proposals (Burkina Faso, Colombia, and Palestine Territories);
- Three are rated 0, with no serious mention of climate (Burundi, Mali and Chad).

187. Moreover, explicit project climate strategies are not yet documented in any projects, with the possible exceptions of Mozambique and Somalia (climate consultancy report submitted). And systemic planning and management discontinuities at different levels impact adversely on climate change progress in all LAS projects:

- Although climate change is in all LAS Formulation Plans, it is in IP proposals for just seven out of the ten LAS implementing countries. In Burundi, there practically nothing in the Project Proposal.
- No consolidated climate change strategies are presented anywhere. Only in the Mozambique proposal is there a semblance of a climate change strategy linked to district level training in land use planning.
- There are gaps and a lack of coherence between planning documentation and what happens in practice. Colombia added climate change opportunistically in its community level training though it was not included in planning documentation.
- There is no mention of climate change in any LAS country summary or information, but there is an undated thematic brief covering three countries.
- The LAS Annual Strategic Plans vary in their coverage of climate change: there is a climate section in the 2021 Plan but not in the 2022 and 2023 Plans.

188. Other issues from interviews addressing results on the ground include:

- limited awareness of constraints limiting progress on climate change actions, and a general sense that other issues are more urgent (Palestine Territories, Iraq), relegating climate to be taken up at some later date;
- IPs do not have a mandate or sufficient expertise to plan and work on climate issues (Burkina Faso);
- where IPs do acquire some climate change experience through LAS (for example, the Palestine Territories), they have no clear climate strategy for the LAS project; and
- local governments have limited budgets and capacity to address climate issues (Uganda, but it can be assumed for all LAS countries and especially fragile states).

0) - if the possibility for climate measures as part of the intervention is assessed but found not applicable or significant.

189. The challenge facing LAS is how to link land governance work to climate change and promote the uptake of climate-smart and climate-resilient solutions. Solutions must be sector specific (e.g., agriculture, water, environment, infrastructure) and location specific. All will benefit from land governance measures that enhance tenure security and give men and women an equal stake in what kind of land use they undertake (ideally with government or development assistance support).

190. The reality is that developing and implementing climate strategies, including appropriate land governance measures, is seriously budget-constrained and a low priority issue in developing countries facing far more urgent priorities, ranging from security issues, the Covid-19 pandemic, and current food security challenges caused by the war in Ukraine.

i. Lessons learned and opportunities for the future

191. An entry point where LAS climate change adaptation has gained some traction has been through support to land use planning e.g., Uganda (community supporting wetland development planning and zoning), and Mozambique (local government training to develop district land use plans, and paralegals trained in planning and environmental issues).

192. In Rwanda, the climate focus has been limited to formal institutional capacity building for climate adaptation, with little if any activity at community level (i.e., planned activities to test out and prove new approaches that might link the land governance mandate of LAS with climate change and related environmental issues).

193. In Colombia, indigenous communities recognize the environmental degradation impacts of inappropriate farming and land use, and no longer allow these practices in their areas. Two NGOs whose presence precedes LAS help identify areas for reforestation and environmental recovery. There is an evident link between land governance (land rights and tenure security), and climate change or environmental issues, though this was not explicitly referenced in the FFP community titling project implemented by Kadaster International.

194. Factors impeding more effective and resilient climate and environmental strategies include rural development programmes where smallholders are encouraged to take part in inappropriate government farming projects; and a global food production system and government-backed investors committed to monoculture and other forms of land use that drive climate change. No LAS project addresses these issues in any substantive way.

195. While climate in LAS is essentially a bolt-on issue and not mainstreamed through the programme, its flexible demand-driven approach creates a major opportunity to firstly identify new ways of linking land governance and climate change; and secondly, target resources onto projects and activities that directly address the link between poor land governance and climate change. LAS projects can then provide entry points for climate change action either as a standalone land governance activity, or in a mixed bundle of activities (as in Colombia). Meanwhile, climate change opportunities for the remaining period of this LAS programme include:

- Working with other donor projects to create synergy between livelihoods, land governance, and climate-smart practices;
- Improving the enabling environment (legal and regulatory frameworks, institutional reforms, capacity building) to leverage the link between land

governance, livelihoods, and conservation/climate related activities (for example, Uganda project CCOs could allow smallholder farmers to access formal sector lending, contract into sustainable value chains, and participate in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) Plus activities linking land rights to sharing in carbon sequestration payments);

- working with Land Use Planning (LUP) initiatives to strengthen how they engage with community level climate-smart physical planning, predicated on communities having legally defined rights and control over their territories through land governance reforms and Fit for Purpose (FFP) collective titling and community rights recognition (Uganda, Mozambique, Colombia);
- expanding and deepening voluntary, low-cost collective land/parcel mapping, local land mediation, building climate-smart LUP into land governance activities supported by LAS (Colombia again), make better use of progressive legal frameworks (Mozambique, for example).

7.3. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the private sector

196. LAS provides an important opportunity to link good land governance with enhanced corporate responsibility which – in line with the VGGT – respects legitimate land rights when planning new investment projects. Issues explored during the MTR include:

197. The TMR looked at how LAS is working with communities to raise awareness of their rights and give them skills and support to negotiate more effectively with investors and the governments that support them. Unfortunately, it found little evidence of this across the present portfolio.

198. The MTR also looked at the way the programme is promoting inclusive development practices between local communities and private investors seeking to use local land for their projects. It looked at the new 'Land Desk' initiative, planned to be implemented by LAS at central level in the Netherlands to help guide Netherlands investors when they look for land in LAS-supported countries. RVO is well placed to do this as it has strong links to the Netherlands private sector through its other programmes. LAS therefore provides a unique opportunity to ensure that new investors are made fully aware of issues surrounding local land rights and how to work with local communities when planning and implementing projects, including respecting local land governance arrangements and ensuring that their planned activities do not harm community rights.

199. The MTR notes that several activities have been implemented by RVO/LAS to reach out to and discuss land rights and governance with investors. These include regular onboarding sessions for new RVO staff (also those working on investment programmes), webinar series for Dutch banks, training sessions for CSR advisors and the Dutch Good Growth Fund. RVO has also been active in promoting land-related due diligence, with LAS contributing to the e-learning-land rights initiative (internationalrbc.org) on due diligence for institutional investors. The RVO/LAS team has taken part in meetings with actors from the Netherlands, including FMO, Invest International, Atradius, and several Dutch banks, all under Chatham house rules to allow open and frank discussion of land-related conflicts linked to private investments and proper due diligence processes.

200. LAS has also provided inputs for the revision of the OECD guidelines on investment to include the issue of land (absent in older versions). More needs to be done, however, to provide advice to investors about how to deal with local land rights within approved global frameworks.

201. These are important initiatives, including the land governance support desk for Dutch enterprises and other stakeholders. A report by Resilience provided by the RVO/LAS team presents the results of a feasibility study of this proposal, noting that the idea of setting up a Land Desk emerged in response to cases where private companies and investors from the Netherlands “faced issues, or did not apply good land governance practices in the countries they operate and invest in”.²⁶ The Land Desk will be evaluated in 2023 and, “if deemed opportune, taken forward in the further development of LAS”.²⁷

202. The Resilience report foresees a three-phase process of building networks and a financial mechanism that companies can use; reaching out to external institutions that can help firms access land sustainably (e.g. training negotiating teams and credit officers, organizing facilitated dialogues); and opening the Land Desk to inquiries from Dutch businesses or investors.²⁸

203. However, at the point of the MTR, the Land Desk had not yet been established. The MTR finds that the Land Desk concept as discussed in the in the Resilience report requires significant rethinking, and notes that RVO also takes this position; as it is currently proposed, the Land Desk falls outside the *modus operandi* of LAS as a demand-driven programme that addresses land governance issues including how investors relate to and work with land-holding local communities. The current LAS portfolio does not address the issue of relations between communities and investors in any concrete sense, with little reference to land governance changes that promote inclusive investment models between existing local rights holders and state or private sector projects that need access to local land.

204. Two projects, in Chad and Burundi, refer to land-grabbing by vested interests that provide the political economy backdrop for LAS projects. In the case of Chad, the scaling phase does include a call for interested parties to tender for a project to “provide practical solutions and improvements to the land management practices at local level in Chad, with the ambition to also feed these experimented solutions into the legal framework.”

205. It is not clear why the portfolio does not include projects that directly address these issues, which is perhaps something that merits further investigation by the RVO/LAS team as it moves into the second phase of the current programme. It is certainly a question that should be considered far more strategically in any future iteration of LAS.

²⁶ Resilience, 2022. Improving Land Governance Abroad: Feasibility study on a LANDdesk at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). LANDac on behalf of LANDdialogue. August.

²⁷ RVO, 2023: LAND-at-scale Annual Strategic Plan 2023. February 2023, p.2.

²⁸ Resilience, 2022.

8. Conclusions

206. Land rights and how they are regulated and governed affects the livelihoods of billions of people; and as the IPCC has shown,²⁹ land use changes linked to irresponsible land governance have caused climate change, continue to drive it, and impede efforts to mitigate its worst impacts. LAS is a bold attempt to achieve, or at least initiate, structural change in an area of global concern, with an approach that has the potential to make a real impact at local, national, and international level. A senior member of the LAS Committee sums it up nicely: “I admire its ambition”.

8.1. Proof of concept

207. Through the RVO/EKN/IP triangle, LAS is identifying and aligning with innovative activities addressing key land governance issues in a range of different contexts.

208. A great strength of LAS in this context is that it is not a programme concerned with re-inventing the wheel, or taking leadership with its own start-up activities; rather, it seeks to align with partners whose work and commitment is already showing promise. With appropriate support from LAS, most if not all can drive structural change and achieve scaling.

209. LAS is managing to get resources down to local level, to small teams who are testing and proving innovation in the field, sometimes in very challenging circumstances. The programme is a coherent, relevant, and ambitious response to land governance challenges that not only underpins future livelihoods but can also contribute to the course of climate change and its consequences.

210. LAS shows that it is possible to design a programme that comes very close to being demand-driven without sending out technical teams on expensive project identification missions. The use of the EKN networks, building on earlier GoN land interventions, allows this demand-driven to work in a practical and inclusive way.

211. The ToC reveals multiple pathways towards structural change, and that no single intervention can achieve the long-range goal of enhanced livelihoods and other SDGs. This is an accurate reflection of the complex nature of land governance as defined by FAO. One way the ToC could be strengthened however is by making explicit reference to customary land governance systems (in terms of their continuing relevance and legitimacy, and the need to also look for changes here where appropriate); and to give greater prominence to the transformational nature of the changes that LAS seeks to promote.

212. The ToC serves well to guide LAS in its search for innovative ways to link different activities together, either within LAS consortiums and implementing partnerships, or by aligning with other initiatives and activities supported by other donors.

213. Its flexible and adaptive programme management approach is well suited to addressing land governance in complex and demanding working environments. LAS project in Colombia reveal how LAS ‘goes where other projects don’t go’, working closely with local actors and guided by gatekeeper role of local EKNs.

²⁹ IPCC, 2020.

214. The lack of performance data against established indicators does not mean weakness or poor design. LAS had an understandably long gestation period, having to establish a working capacity in land governance at RVO more or less from scratch followed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is now emerging as a vehicle for targeting technical support and resources as close as possible to where demand exists for improved land governance that can transform and improve lives and contribute to a sustainable planetary future. There is ample 'proof of concept' to support the proposal for further funding into the future, both to consolidate the existing portfolio and to expand it as resources come online.

8.2. Structural change and scaling with limited resources

215. Scaling ultimately does require that LAS-supported pilots and other interventions are adopted by government and/or other actors with more resources and who can provide a long-term framework within which the LAS activity can evolve and expand. As some LAS portfolio countries have shown, this is not always easy, especially where there are vested interests who support political economies which are inimical to changes in land governance that might rob them of their privileged access to land and natural resources.

216. There are good signs that LAS projects are promoting or contributing to structural changes in some countries. It is doing this by targeting ongoing activities with a potential for driving change, and in some cases, it is also supporting national dialogues on land governance. However, the programme is small in relation to needs and its own stated goals. A total of EUR 32 million after KM costs are deducted is not very much spread across 12 projects in diverse and often demanding settings.

217. It is doubly important that project selection is rigorous and focuses on tightly targeting LAS funding onto key land governance constraints and/or on ongoing activities where additional support can make the difference between limited impacts while current support is in place, and longer-term sustainability and continuity once support ends. Well-targeted small budgets *can* achieve considerable impact, a lesson from the MTR that underlines the need to really examine ideas and look for land governance constraints and issues that, if unblocked or resolved, can result in far greater impacts than might otherwise be the case. This is the essence of the programme.

218. Several LAS projects underline the importance of placing land governance activities within wider livelihoods and rural development strategies that offer practical ways to use tenure rights secured through LAS activities. Showing how LAS can promote investment and production is an excellent way of persuading government or other stakeholders to 'scale' LAS activities. It is important to ensure that alliances and partnerships are not simply treated as an add-on to project activities as they progress, but are given consideration while projects are being developed.

8.3. Cross-cutting issues

219. There are of course challenges. Perhaps the most glaring is the need to improve how LAS is addressing CCIs, through transformative (gender) and innovative (climate) activities. The MTR finds a strong commitment to gender and women's land rights, but a matching need to adopt transformational activities that work with both men and women to achieve real change in gendered relations that govern how land and natural resources are used.

220. LAS also needs to address controversial issues such as land governance practices that result in inappropriate forms of land use, foment corruption, and disempower ordinary people. These things in turn exacerbate climate change and nullify mitigation efforts in the shape of 'climate-smart' activities. There is a major opportunity here for LAS to identify and support activities that address the way that poor land governance contributes to climate change itself; changes here can have dramatic impacts of global significance.

221. New avenues need to be opened in the CSR department of LAS, looking at how to help government, communities, and investors, to work with existing land rights holders, respect and defend their rights, and develop constructive ways to engage with each other and work together sustainably and equitably.

8.4. Knowledge management

222. Knowledge management is rightly referred to as the 'glue of the programme' and is central to achieving structural change and scalability. KM is important in two respects: as a tool for supporting the LAS activity itself, with learning loops and feed back to enhance and consolidate project achievements on the ground; and as a means of learning from the project to inform government and others when they consider adopting LAS-supported approaches or begin discussing policy positions on land governance.

223. The KM component did not work as planned. RVO has reset it with a new structure giving it direct control over the activities of the still large number of KM partners. It is too early to assess if this is going to work but early signs and discussions at the 2023 LAS Exchange and in the 2023 LANDac Conference suggest that the changes may work.

8.5. Scope and geographical spread

224. Some in the LAS Committee and beyond consider the spread and diversity of the LAS portfolio to be too great an operational challenge, stretching available human and technical resources too thinly. The current total of 12 countries is higher than originally planned by the RVO/LAS team, with implications for the allocation of programme resources per project, and for the management and oversight challenges of working with 12 different countries and projects.

225. However, LAS was conceived as a global programme, and the response from EKNs to the call out for ideas reveals how central land governance is to addressing critical development challenges in today's world. The model works well and requires consolidation and a resource boost, not restructuring and downsizing.

226. LAS has established itself as the main vehicle for future funding from the Netherlands and support to land governance. In this context, an initial portfolio of 12 countries is better seen as an indicator of things to come; and the question now is how to address any weaknesses and operational problems, secure new budgetary resources to enable long range planning, and make LAS more effective.

9. Recommendations

227. The LAS is broadly on track, delivering on its stated objectives. The following recommendations are intended to adjust and improve LAS in the second half of its present project cycle, and to guide discussion as MoFA, RVO, and other partners, discuss the continuation of this bold and innovative programme into a second phase. Recommendations that apply particularly in the second context are presented in *italics*.

9.1. Programme issues

- **Human resources:**

- The present RVO team is meeting diverse challenges across many countries, particularly given the doubling of projects from the six originally planned, but *would benefit from reinforcing, especially in a future with new projects.*
- *Consider placing RVO resources into selected EKNs* (perhaps at regional level) in response to specific regional or country needs.
- RVO should consider contracting short-term specialist support to address specific CCI issues raised in the MTR (see 9.2 CCIs below).

- **Reconsider the timing and strategic consolidation of LAS projects:**

- *Adopt a more flexible approach to the present three-year limit on LAS projects, either allowing for longer periods in particular circumstances (for example, where start-up challenges are anticipated), or explicitly providing for the possibility of follow-on projects as part of the LAS scaling and structural change strategy* ('strategic consolidation', with follow-on projects building on success to achieve long-term sustainability and change).

- **Ensure that project selection adopts 'tight targeting' as its guiding principle:**

- In general LAS is successfully focusing its limited resources on specific activities that are likely to achieve change with enhanced support; due diligence when selecting activities should be guided by this 'tight targeting' approach, bearing in mind that small amounts of money tightly focused and aligned with potentially transformative activities can make a huge difference in the long run.

- **Be clear about the role of LAS resources allocated to much larger programmes:**

- LAS can bring land governance into the forefront of much larger programmes (such as the Saameynta project in Somalia), but *it is important to ensure that LAS retains a voice in the use and allocation of its resources*, given the likelihood of ideas from smaller programmes being in the LAS Committee pipeline.

- **Double down on the strategy to align with activities with transformational potential that are already underway:**

- The MTR shows how this strategy is working well in several LAS projects, providing critical material and capacity boosts that allow them to expand and consolidate their achievements.

- **Continue to be bold:**
 - LAS has provided support in situations where few other donors are prepared to work; *a lesson that can inform new project selection and be extended into being bold in supporting potential game changers in land governance terms.*
- **LAS Committee:**
 - Review the information provided to the LAS Committee when presented with ideas, including something about how the ideas might be implemented.
 - *Include guidelines about the risks of allocating limited LAS resources in countries where high levels of political fragility and/or insecurity may undermine any likelihood of achieving structural changes and scaling, unless the local EKN sees a clear strategic role for LAS support and can provide back-up and political support.*
 - *Revisit the contract between RVO and its expert members, to ensure continuity of this key element in the overall success of LAS and clarify their roles as the programme matures and expands.*
- **Continue with the current approach of supporting complementary bundles of land governance activities:**
 - Land titling and registration alone will not achieve LAS long-range outcomes and land governance activities without effective *appropriate* administration will not work either.
 - *The notion of bundles of activities should be explicitly built into the project selection and formulation process, in line with the ToC 'multiple pathway' approach.*
 - The current approach should be improved with more attention to *balancing budget allocations between components and to relationships between the IPs selected to implement them* (Colombia and Rwanda are useful cases, with very different institutions working together and significant differences in budget share).

9.2. CCIs

- **Gender:**
 - Consider *adding substantive gender transformative expertise to support the RVO team and IPs in using gender as a strategic entry point to support all vulnerable/marginalized groups more broadly.*
 - In specific project countries where the gender and land question is of particular importance and focus, thought could be given *to outposting a RVO/LAS gender expert attached to the respective EKN.*
 - The programme as a whole would gain from a gender review and the development, with expert support, of more transformational gender strategies at country level.
 - The MTR recommends that all *LAS projects should aim to score at least 1 on the OECD scale*, but given its importance in land governance, LAS should be bolder on gender transformation and aim for a 'high' 1.
- **Climate:**

- LAS should commission a study on the links between land governance and climate change looking at *how changes in land governance can contribute to global warming and enhance mitigation, and the implications for LAS-funded projects.*
- *An outline climate strategy should be provided in the Formulation Plan and a detailed strategy set out in IP Proposal documents, including local level climate analysis.*
- Outline climate strategies should be included in the RVO LAS Country Summary Briefings and Information Notes.
- As with gender, consider human resource interventions with specialist support and, where appropriate, outpost resources to selected EKNs.
- **Corporate social responsibility and the private sector:**
 - While the proposed Land Desk is an interesting innovation to promote more responsible corporate investment, *LAS as a governance programme should be more focused on supporting in-country projects addressing the question of large-scale land allocations within the objective of structural changes to land governance, including:*
 - *legal empowerment and capacity-building work to enable communities to defend their rights and engage with investors on a constructive, inclusive investment basis;*
 - *local government training to make administrators and others more aware of their role in mediating between investors and communities, with clear awareness of the need to follow VGGT and related guidelines; and*
 - *support policy engagement with governments favouring private investment that impacts on local rights (in which controversial issues such as corruption, land speculation, and 'land-grabbing' by elites and vested interests can be addressed).*

9.3. Knowledge management and M&E

- **Maximize the new RVO coordination and leadership role:**
 - Work with LAS project teams to identify KM needs and then match these needs with the expertise and skills available within the set of KM partners.
 - Provide support to lesson learning and identifying successes and constraints to develop **'learning loops'** that feed back into improved implementation.
 - Similarly, *learn from projects **to produce narratives** to strengthen the voice of LAS projects nationally, and feed into national and global debates.*
 - Look at how KM partners can improve their support to CCIs (for example, avoiding the trap of equating gender and women, with more attention to gender sensitization and training for IPs; promoting engagement around climate and CSR/private sector/inclusive development scenarios).
- **More sharing and exchanges:**
 - The demand for more exchanges beyond the annual LAS Exchange in Utrecht was clear at the 2023 LAS Exchange meetings – RVO/LAS can make greater use of remote workshop/webinar methods to work with key partners like the Land Portal to facilitate

more exchanges between partners, and where feasible, more face-to-face workshops and meetings should also be budgeted for and programmed.

228. Finally, the MTR began with the recognition that LAS has also served to establish a land governance capacity and possible centre of excellence within RVO as part of a broader MoFA strategy to change the way it supports land governance and related CCIs. If the GoN wants to capitalize on this investment, it needs to consider a second phase, at least of the programme. This opens the way for strengthening and adjustments as indicated above.

229. Secondly, the EKNs continue to play a key role within the GoN approach to land governance reform. However, the role of EKNs has changed significantly compared with the earlier approach. LAS has brought some EKNs into land governance in an active sense, and has created new networks in these countries, but the change in role in other countries may risk undermining the currency and utility that have enabled these networks to identify ideas (demand) so effectively. And the gap between local level partners and programme support is much wider than when EKNs have or had a more direct oversight or management role.

230. *It might be useful to reconsider the role of the EKNs in the operational context of LAS and combine this with a reassessment of how the LAS team operates, perhaps with dedicated resources in key EKNs or on a regional basis. This could take LAS support closer to participating countries and promote greater exchanges between them.*