

ReSAKSS

Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System
Facilitated by IFPRI 

MALAWI

RESAKSS CNA REPORT 1

Capacity Strengthening Strategy through Capacity Needs Assessment for Country Level Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (SAKSS)



MALAWI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings of the capacity needs assessment for the Malawi Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (SAKSS). The study was conducted from August to December 2012. The overall purpose of the country-level capacity needs assessment was to develop a country-specific capacity-strengthening strategy to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process. The specific objective of the capacity needs assessment in Malawi was to identify areas for improving the quality and utility of agricultural policy analysis, investment planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and knowledge management at the country level. The findings of the study have been used to draw up some recommendations and develop a capacity-strengthening strategy for the Malawi SAKSS.

The study adopted qualitative and quantitative approaches, and used several tools in gathering data and information, including extensive literature review. The latter provided some background material that assisted in understanding the capacity landscape in the public sector more generally and in the agriculture sector specifically. This research was complemented by key-informant interviews in target institutions to understand the composition of the Malawi SAKSS as well as its capacity needs to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process. Two generic questionnaires were also used in gathering data. One focused on organizational capacity needs while the second one focused on individual staff members' capacity needs within selected member organizations of the Malawi SAKSS. Unfortunately, feedback was poor, with only 12 individual members completing questionnaires and only two organizations providing partial information on organizational capacity. Hence much of the information and data used in the report were collected through key informants and secondary sources.

Summary Findings

The study results focus on three main areas of the assessment as guided by the terms of reference, as follows:

- Institutional capacity in policy processes
- Organizational capacity needs
- Individual capacity needs

1. Institutional Capacity in Policy Processes

Aberman and colleagues (2012) used an adapted Net-Map approach to collect data on the contemporary fertilizer policy landscape in Malawi. Because their data collection effort not only included questions specific to the case study but also assessed the on-the-ground reality of the actors involved, including power structures and the linkages among them, their findings shed light on the policy process in Malawi in general. The authors found that policy processes in Malawi are usually highly consultative, involving diverse individuals and organizations, including government departments and institutions (peopled by politicians and technocrats), civil society organizations, donors, private companies, and local government. However, the specific institutions or agencies involved in any given policy process depend upon the policy issue that is being debated or developed. Following are a few key issues highlighted by Aberman and colleagues (2012) that are relevant to the present study:

- The authors described a perfectly centralized network as one that has one main actor; the other actors are arranged around the main actor with no lateral links, such that all interactions go through the central actor. The Malawi policy process involves a high degree of network centralization.
- The fertilizer policy network, which was analyzed in this case and is typical of the policymaking process in Malawi, has a few highly central actors—the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS, the main implementer), the Ministry of Finance (the financier), and the president (the decisionmaker)—with all other actors arranged around them, trying to advise or influence their policy decisions.
- Aberman and colleagues (2012) also performed a core-periphery analysis, finding that the network core—made up of central actors that are highly linked to each other and surrounded by peripheral actors who are not well connected—consists of MoAFS, the Ministry of Finance, and because of his overlap with MoAFS, the president of Malawi.

This analysis demonstrated that although MoAFS has the highest degree of centrality, it is not the most influential actor in determining the level and shape of fertilizer policy. Instead, a majority of the fertilizer policy study interviewees agreed that the president is by far the most influential actor in this respect. This situation limits the objectivity and capacity of individual actors in agricultural policy processes in Malawi.

2. Organizational Capacity

The present study has established that the M&E system for the agricultural sector is well organized, with the extension delivery system forming its core skeleton. However, coordination is a major issue of concern. Additionally, the study looked at the Technical Working Group (TWG) on M&E, a body established by Malawi's Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp). The TWG on M&E is a group with representation from several government agencies (including Improvement of Coordination of ASWAp in the Ministry of Agriculture, or ICAM), civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, and the Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security. The TWG has created a critical mass of capacities for evidence-based policy formulation as well as for effective M&E. Despite the high level of capacity as a team, informants report a need to improve on knowledge management and sharing. As one interviewee noted, "The TWG on M&E in itself is not a major problem. It only requires more effective coordination of all the actors involved."

Additionally, capacity needs to be expanded in terms of actual numbers of people in the M&E section of MoAFS. In view of the fact that the other components (ICAM and the International Food Policy Research Institute, or IFPRI) of the TWG on

M&E are not permanent structures, a weak M&E Unit in MoAFS creates a lot of uncertainty as to the future of ASWAp M&E system coordination. In most cases, the few staff members that are available are overstretched, particularly during the implementation of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme, as has been noted in recent years. This leaves these staff members with little time to do any analysis of the data that they collect because they are always in the field. This problem is compounded by the poor coordination, which fails to take advantage of the diversity of skills and capacities that exist in the TWG on M&E membership.

Furthermore, the need to develop a harmonized M&E system following the adoption of ASWAp has created some gaps in the indicators being monitored as well as in the level of monitoring. Most of the indicators for ASWAp monitoring are at the high policy level, leaving out lower-level indicators such as child mortality monitoring, for example. Additionally, microlevel monitoring through decentralized structures (at the district, extension planning area, and section levels) where most projects capture their data is not adequately covered under ASWAp. While recognizing that harmonization of M&E systems is still a work in progress, these gaps need to be addressed.

Finally, the study has revealed that adoption of ASWAp as an overarching framework for guiding investments in the agriculture sector entails doing things differently from the way they were done in the past. Therefore, effective systems are needed to support monitoring of achievements under ASWAp that are consistent with the paradigm shift. This will involve, among other things, adoption of more inclusive approaches and processes to ensure wider acceptability and ownership of results and achievements.

3. Individual Capacity Assessment

In general, organizations that participated in the study have the necessary skills to use evidence for strategic analysis and other policy work. However, the level of competency varies across the different types of organizations. Government and research institutions boast relatively highly skilled individuals compared with donors and civil society organizations. The study results also reveal serious individual capacity gaps in the use of analytical as well as bibliographic software. However, individual capacities in Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Department of Agricultural Planning Services (within MoAFS) are relatively higher than in the other organizations interviewed. Despite the presence of highly trained individuals in government, respondents felt that low levels of funding limit their participation in policy analysis. On the other hand, civil society organizations are faced with shortages of staff able to conduct strategic analysis and policy-related work. While government agencies are faced with high staff turnover, arising mainly from poor incentive structures, donors and civil society organizations experience relatively stable staff complements. As noted already, the reported weaknesses at individual organizations as well as among individuals within those organizations can easily be addressed with proper coordination for the benefit of the whole SAKSS.

4. Lessons Learned from Policy Formulation and Implementation in Malawi

Of the factors identified in this report as impeding effective design and implementation of policies in Malawi, several could nevertheless serve as key lessons for future policy decisionmaking processes, including the formulation of a capacity-development strategy. The main lessons learned are the following:

1. Effective coordination is key to successful generation and sharing of data and information among all user groups and stakeholders in the country. However, besides the need for requisite human capacities at all levels of data generation and sharing, coordination is also contingent upon existence of the necessary infrastructure and equipment, such as means of connectivity.

2. Participatory and pluralistic policy formulation and decisionmaking processes usually receive support at all levels, leading to successful policy implementation.
3. An effective M&E system requires, among other things, that all stakeholders who contribute to and make use of it have adequate understanding of the indicators that make up the system. Such understanding must encompass the data that are required to measure progress toward achieving the various indicators as well as well how the data should be collected and analyzed.
4. Diversity of both skills and knowledge base is a major asset in knowledge management systems.

Recommendations

The findings of this study point to some recommendations to guide the design of the capacity-strengthening strategy for the SAKSS platform for Malawi. The key ones are the following:

- MoAFS needs to realize that successful implementation of ASWAp and indeed of the CAADP process in Malawi will depend on its M&E system. M&E constitutes a feedback mechanism for steering the strategic direction of the ministry. Hence, MoAFS should design appropriate mechanisms for strengthening the activities of the TWG on M&E, including its coordination.
- Members of the TWG on M&E need to be more aware of the CAADP process. The TWG should devise deliberate efforts to ensure that all the members understand this institution as well as the indicators that they are tracking.
- Some view the TWG on M&E as not inclusive enough because it leaves out key players in the sector, particularly from the private sector. We therefore strongly recommend revisiting its membership. A more inclusive membership of the TWG will, among other things, ensure preparation of more comprehensive joint sector review reports.
- MoAFS has to define the frequency for reporting on the various indicators in ASWAp, with a clear division of labor among the members. Failure to do so will mean that the TWG on M&E will continue to operate in an ad hoc manner, which would greatly compromise the success of ASWAp and CAADP implementation in Malawi. A more comprehensive and harmonized system is therefore necessary.
- To enhance its effectiveness and functionality, MoAFS should build the capacity of the CAADP focal point. This should take the form of purchasing equipment for the unit that would enable it to effectively communicate with the wider membership. Among other things, this would also necessitate embedding or integrating the CAADP focal point into the M&E Unit.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASWAp	Agriculture Sector Wide Approach
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CARD	Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (of Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources)
CISANET	Civil Society Agriculture Network
CSSP	country strategy support program
DAAE	Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics (of Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources)
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
DARS	Department of Agricultural Research Services
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning System Network
FtF	Feed the Future
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
ICAM	Improvement of Coordination of ASWAp in the Ministry of Agriculture
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
INTERFAIS	International Food Aid Information System
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
NARS	national agricultural research systems
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	nongovernmental organization
ReSAKSS	Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System
SAKSS	Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System
TWG	Technical Working Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. INTRODUCTION

The agriculture sector is the backbone of Malawi's economy and thus plays a pivotal role in achieving the national and international policy goals of economic growth and poverty reduction. To attain the nation's Vision 2020, the government of Malawi has put in place the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy as a medium-term strategy to create wealth through sustainable economic growth as a means of achieving poverty reduction, thereby transforming the country from a predominantly importing and consuming to a manufacturing and exporting economy. Malawi is also committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include the goals of halving poverty and hunger by 2015. To accomplish these goals, the government has implemented several sectorwide development strategies. Key among these is ASWAp, a strategic development and investment plan for the agricultural sector. The ASWAp document (Malawi, MoAFS 2011) articulates Malawi's ambition to transform, modernize, and diversify its agricultural sector with a view to raise agricultural productivity, improve food and nutrition security, and increase the agricultural incomes of rural people. The ASWAp implemented from 2010 to 2014 set a growth target of 6 percent per year for the agricultural sector, which is in line with the CAADP program of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In order to monitor and evaluate the performance of the agricultural sector in the country, the ASWAp document proposed the establishment of the TWG on M&E. This is one of seven technical working groups formed under ASWAp, each having defined mandates and terms of reference. The TWG on M&E is mandated to develop tools for monitoring the performance of the sector and to support the collection and dissemination of information pertaining to agricultural sector performance in order to facilitate evidence-based decisionmaking and accountability for the entire agricultural sector. In Malawi, in view of the fact that ASWAp is aligned to NEPAD/CAADP, the TWG on M&E has been identified as the SAKSS platform for the country, whose role is to monitor the implementation of these regional frameworks.

It is against this broad background that this study was conceived with the overall purpose of carrying out a capacity needs assessment so as to develop a country-specific capacity-strengthening strategy to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of Malawi's CAADP process.

1.1. Background of the Study

With the Maputo Declaration of agricultural ministers of African countries in 2003, CAADP became the vehicle for directing agricultural development efforts and partnerships in Africa. To date, more than 29 countries have gone through the CAADP round-table process, and a majority of them are now elaborating their agricultural investment plans, which detail key investment areas for achieving agricultural-sector objectives.

The CAADP process is progressing in these countries, albeit at various rates. One of the key elements needed for the success of the CAADP process and the achievement of its goals at the country level is the continuous generation of evidence for the design, implementation, and modification of various programs and interventions in the agricultural sector. To address this need, the country compacts signed so far identify the need to establish mechanisms for continuous analysis of emerging issues, constraints, and challenges facing the agricultural sector and to develop a system of information generation, M&E, and knowledge management. Thus, country-level SAKSS—that focus on country-specific analytical and capacity needs, working in close collaboration with the regional-level knowledge nodes (constituting the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System, or ReSAKSS), are an important initiative in the CAADP process.

At the heart of the CAADP agenda is the need to improve the quality of policy and strategy planning and implementation in order to accelerate growth and progress toward poverty reduction and food and nutrition security. This improvement calls for capacities, analytical tools, and information to generate credible, timely, and high-quality knowledge products to inform and guide agricultural-sector policies and, in particular, planning and review processes. However, capacity to generate evidence-based information, M&E, and knowledge sharing through effective communication of the information and knowledge to the policymakers and promotion of policy dialogue needs strengthening to varying degrees in all countries. Certain questions arise:

- What are the country-specific needs for strategic agricultural policy analysis and investment planning, implementation, M&E, and knowledge management?
- What individual capacities are needed in the short, medium, and long terms to satisfy those needs?
- How can these capacities be harnessed through their effective use in the organizations involved in the CAADP process?
- What institutional and capacity constraints in the policy process hinder the policy organizations from playing their role effectively to meet the objectives of CAADP?
- How can such capacity gaps be identified and filled?

Answering these questions through a capacity needs assessment and a capacity-strengthening strategy is an important first step in customizing the SAKSS concept (see Appendix 1) to each country's context and capacity needs.

Against this background, we conducted a capacity needs assessment in Malawi under the guidance of IFPRI researchers and ReSAKSS coordinators, with the aim of generating findings and recommendations from local reports to design and implement a country-specific capacity-strengthening strategy for the SAKSS platform in Malawi.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The overall purpose of the country-level capacity needs assessment was to develop a country-specific capacity-strengthening strategy to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process. The specific objective of the capacity needs assessment in Malawi was to identify areas for improving the quality and utility of agricultural policy analysis, investment planning and implementation, M&E, and knowledge management at the country level. The findings of the study have been used to design a capacity-strengthening plan for the SAKSS for Malawi.

1.2.1. Context, Levels, and Themes

This study developed the capacity-strengthening strategy in the context of contributing to the CAADP process through establishment of a SAKSS. It carried out the capacity needs assessment at three levels: individual, organizational, and policy process.

Specific thematic areas for the capacity needs assessment included generating evidence through the following means:

1. Strategic policy analysis
2. M&E

3. Knowledge management and sharing at the country level to help in the CAADP process

Capacity assessment for strategic policy analysis, for example, involved an examination of specific research and analytical skills involved in generating evidence. These further included skills for data generation and processing, analysis of policy alternatives, and impact assessment of the policies and programs that are implemented as part of the CAADP process.

To assess the capacity of M&E systems, for example, the study identified what systems for M&E are in place as well as what strategies would be feasible for strengthening them and improving their synergy to provide sufficient data for producing periodic reports on the performance of the agricultural sector and at the country levels (such as the ReSAKSS flagship Agricultural Trends and Outlook Reports). These included assessing the following:

- The evolution of the M&E system for monitoring food and nutrition security policies in Malawi
- Indicators (definitions and measurements) for tracking agricultural and rural development policy and planning processes and agricultural funding, for monitoring performance in the agricultural and rural sectors, and for monitoring changes in development outcomes (such as poverty, food and nutrition security, and hunger)
- Data sources on the above, including instruments and tools
- Periodicity of data collection and reporting on indicators
- Data and knowledge management and analytical tools
- Integration of different data and M&E systems for monitoring and reporting on overall national growth and development objectives, and for assessing the impact of policies

To assess the capacity for knowledge management and information sharing, we borrowed findings from work done by IFPRI-SAKSS, which examined systems for storing and managing data and for communicating information using different knowledge products and channels to target different audiences. This also included a brief summary of the findings by IFPRI in a discussion paper titled *Who Talks to Whom in Agricultural Research Information Networks? The Malawi Case* (Droppelmann et al. 2013). All of this was supplemented with our own assessment of the institutional linkages between those who generate information and those who use it.

The rationale behind this approach is that strengthening capacity in the policy process could help to identify opportunities for encouraging policy decisionmakers to demand policy analysis outputs and put them into effective use. Although the policy process differs from country to country depending on the nature of leadership and governance, the mapping of the policy process by identifying key players and actors, their roles, and their influence helped in identifying opportunities for strengthening the policy processes for effective implementation of CAADP investment plans in Malawi.

1.2.2. Specific Tasks of the Study

The study carried out the following specific tasks:

1. Assess the existing capacity for strategic policy analysis and investment planning at the country level. This step required identifying key individuals within the organizations that are currently contributing to evidence generation for policymaking in the agricultural sector. This level of assessment included the following:

- Key-informant interviews to assess the need for human capacity in terms of total number of professionals needed for strategic policy analysis, M&E, and knowledge management and sharing
 - Using formal instruments to identify the existing human capacity in the organizations involved in policy research and analysis, M&E, and knowledge management and sharing
 - Identifying capacity gaps at the individual level
 - Developing a baseline database on individual capacities by organization, which will be used for periodic monitoring of progress made toward implementing the capacity-strengthening strategy
2. Assess the organizational capacity and identify areas for improving the quality and utility of agricultural policy analysis, investment planning and implementation, and M&E, including strengthening organizations' capacity to produce periodic reports on the performance of the agricultural sector, such as the ReSAKSS flagship Agricultural Trends and Outlook Reports. This part of the study included, but was not limited to, the following:
- Compiling an annotated list (including a map showing linkages) of the roles and responsibilities of the major state and nonstate organizations involved in strategic policy analysis, investment planning and implementation, M&E, and knowledge management and sharing
 - Assessing the existing organizational capacity for investment planning and implementation related to agricultural and rural development, and identifying areas where systems should be strengthened for effective and efficient performance
 - Assessing the existing data and M&E systems related to agricultural and rural development, and identifying areas where systems should be strengthened for effective and efficient performance
 - Assessing the existing content and knowledge management systems related to agricultural and rural development, and identifying areas where systems should be strengthened for effective and efficient performance
3. Assess the institutional and capacity constraints in the policy process related to CAADP implementation (including development and implementation of investment plans) with particular reference to effective use of evidence (including policy analysis results and M&E data) in policy and program design and in investment planning. Specific activities and outputs included the following:
- Through discussions with key informants, develop a network map of major decisionmakers in the agriculture and rural development sectors (for example, ministers, principal secretaries, directors, parliament members, other cabinet members, and donors), their roles, and their levels of influence
 - Assess the demand for and use of policy analysis results, M&E data, and other forms of knowledge by various players and actors in the policy process. Identify the cycle of major agricultural and rural development–related events, policy discussions, and planning processes (such as budget preparation), and the key M&E data and policy analysis used and demanded.
 - Analyze the current institutional and capacity constraints in the policy process that impede the design and implementation of investment plans, and identify specific opportunities for strengthening the policy process
4. Based on the above three levels of assessment across the three themes, develop a capacity-strengthening strategy for the country SAKSS. This step included, but was not limited to, the following:
- Identify specific capacity-strengthening activities and opportunities for strengthening the individual, organizational, and policy process capacity with particular reference to the components and structure or architecture

of the country SAKSS—for example, coordination team, network and members (institutions and key individuals), host institution(s), governance structure and members

- Relate the capacity-strengthening activities identified to the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and organizations involved in strategic policy analysis, M&E, development and implementation of investment plans, and knowledge management
- Develop an initial capacity-strengthening work plan for the SAKSS, including inputs, outputs, and expected outcomes, as well as the roles and responsibilities of different actors to be involved

1.2.3. Deliverables and Timeline

The main deliverable of this exercise is a comprehensive, peer-reviewed ReSAKSS working paper on the country-level capacity-strengthening strategy, based on the capacity needs assessment. The working paper will contain three major elements:

1. Capacity needs assessment report: The needs assessment component, delivered within two months of signing the contract, is based on the first three tasks listed above.
2. Baseline database for capacity M&E: A major output of the capacity needs assessment exercise is the baseline database that can be tracked and monitored in Malawi. This has been presented as an appendix to the current report.
3. Capacity-strengthening strategy and full report: Key elements of the capacity-strengthening strategy have been detailed at the end of this report.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative and quantitative approaches and used several tools in gathering data and information. An extensive literature review provided some background material that assisted in understanding the capacity landscape in the public sector generally and in the agriculture sector specifically. This was complemented with key-informant interviews in target institutions to first understand the composition of the Malawi SAKSS platform as well as its capacity needs to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process. Two generic questionnaires were also used in gathering data. One focused on organizational capacity needs, the other on individual staff members' capacity needs within selected member organizations of the Malawi SAKSS platform. Unfortunately, feedback was poor, with only 12 individual members completing questionnaires and only two organizations providing partial information on organizational capacity. Hence much of the information and data used in the report were collected through key informants and secondary sources.

The country-level capacity needs assessment for developing a capacity-strengthening strategy for the CAADP process involved understanding what capacity existed, what capacity was needed, what gaps existed, and how to fill the gaps. The assessment was conducted at three levels: the policy process level, the organizational level, and the individual level. It focused on thematic issues related to (1) strategic policy analysis, (2) M&E, and (3) knowledge management and sharing at the country level to help in the CAADP process or National Agricultural Investment Plan implementation process. The specific methods used at these levels are discussed below.

2.1. Policy Process Level

This component involved identifying major actors and players in the policy process through a network mapping exercise. Initial consultations and key-informant interviews revealed that findings of recent network mapping exercises were available and could be used for this study. Two case studies of recently developed policies or strategies in the agricultural sector were used to develop the network map of the policy process, the Farm Input Subsidy Programme and ASWAp. Specifics from the two case studies informed the analysis of issues related to the demand for and use of policy and strategic analysis as well as entry points for the use of information from policy analysis, data and briefs from M&E, and knowledge sharing. The report from a third network mapping exercise conducted by IFPRI, titled *Who Talks to Whom in Agricultural Research Information Networks? The Malawi Case* (Droppelmann et al. 2013) was also consulted in the course of revising the report. This study mainly focused on information flows among agricultural research institutions in the country. Finally, the institutional and capacity constraints in the policy process as indicated by the interviews were documented using a formal questionnaire.

2.2. Organizational Level

Organizations identified through the policy process mapping exercise were interviewed for their capacity needs in accomplishing tasks related to the thematic issues. The interviews used a questionnaire on the characteristics of the organization and its role in the policy process and in the thematic areas identified above. The questionnaire also collected information related to how the organizations and their units are administered, coordinated, and led for accomplishing tasks related to strategic analysis, M&E, and knowledge sharing. Further questions related to how the data, M&E, and knowledge sharing systems are organized, what challenges they face, and what outputs are produced. Finally, interviews identified capacity

needs for improving the systems, as well as the issues, constraints, and challenges that organizations and their units face in their efforts to improve effective functioning.

2.3. Individual Level

A pretested formal questionnaire was used to collect information on individual capacity in the organizations that contributes to the thematic issues addressed above. The survey involved interviewing heads of the organizations (identified through the two levels above) for information on the individuals involved in the thematic areas, their current qualifications, the need for additional skills and tools, and the gaps that need to be filled through capacity-strengthening activities. This exercise faced major challenges because most people who received the questionnaire did not return it.

3. POLICY ANALYSIS AND M&E IN MALAWI

3.1. Background on SAKSS

SAKSS is a network of people and institutions that provides timely, credible, and evidence-based knowledge and analysis to inform agricultural and rural development strategies in Africa. Researchers at IFPRI originated SAKSS based on their many years of providing key data analysis, policy research, and capacity strengthening to governments and donors in Africa who were formulating and implementing development strategies. The network involves a number of key international and local actors from academic, research, government, and nongovernmental institutions located in a specific country or region, including researchers, policy analysts, statisticians, geographic information systems analysts, government technocrats, practitioners, and policymakers. The actors who make up the SAKSS network contribute their expertise and knowledge to analysis, peer review, and dialogue surrounding the evidence generated for agricultural and rural development strategies (Johnson and Flaherty 2011).

The SAKSS concept has evolved over time and has since been adopted widely among most developing countries. At the multicountry level, the SAKSS concept was also adopted as a framework to help establish an Africa-wide network, known as ReSAKSS, in support of implementing CAADP, a program of the African Union and NEPAD. Three nodes were set up, one in each of the African regional economic communities (the Common Market of East and Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community, and the Economic Community of West African States) under the guidance and cooperation of IFPRI and four other Africa-based international agricultural research centers. Members from each country include individuals from analytical units of agriculture ministries, statisticians, university professors, researchers from national agricultural research institutions, members of think tanks, and others.

Today, both the country and regional SAKSS networks share the following principles: (1) providing timely and credible analysis and data to policymakers to strengthen the evidence during deliberations about future agricultural and rural development investments and policies, (2) promoting locally relevant research and analysis based on needs, and (3) working to strengthen local capacities for analysis and evidence-based dialogue.

3.1.1. The SAKSS-Malawi

MoAFS in Malawi, in collaboration with development partners and other relevant stakeholders, formulated ASWAp as a vehicle for achieving agricultural growth and as a means of reaching the poverty reduction targets set forth in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. ASWAp is a strategy, spearheaded by government, that prioritizes activities in the sector that aim to increase agricultural productivity, enable access to nutritious food for people, and increase the contribution of agro-processing to economic growth. ASWAp is a single, comprehensive program and budget framework that has a formalized process for better donor coordination, harmonization of investment, and alignment of funding arrangements between the government of Malawi and donors in the agricultural sector. It promotes increased use of local procedures for program design, implementation, financial management, planning, and M&E.

In order to monitor and evaluate the performance of the agricultural sector in the country, the ASWAp document proposed the establishment of the TWG on M&E. The working group is mandated to develop tools for monitoring the performance of the sector and to support the collection and dissemination of sector performance information in order to facilitate evidence-based decisionmaking and accountability for the entire agricultural sector.

As already pointed out, ASWAp sets a growth target of 6 percent annually for the agricultural sector, which is in line with the targets of NEPAD and CAADP. Since in Malawi, the responsibility to monitor and evaluate agricultural policies and investment falls under the TWG on M&E, it has also been deemed logical to identify this technical working group as the SAKSS platform for the country. The group is made up of government departments, donor agencies, civil society organizations, and academic and research institutions (Table 3.1).

BOX 3.1. RECOMMENDATION

Key-informant discussions revealed and the report dissemination meeting confirmed that the Technical Working Group on Monitoring and Evaluation is not inclusive enough. Therefore its membership should be revisited to ensure that all key stakeholders are represented. Such a membership revision would also help meet the need for a more harmonized monitoring and evaluation system with enhanced information sharing and mutual accountability.

Source: Author 2013

TABLE 3.1. COMPOSITION OF TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Government departments	Civil society organizations	Donor agencies	Academic and research institutions
Director of agriculture planning services (chair)	Farmers Union of Malawi	Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security—two representatives	International Food Policy Research Institute
Ministry of Trade and Industry—director of planning	Civil Society Agriculture Network		Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (formerly Bunda College)
Ministry of Finance, Department of Development Planning—director of monitoring and evaluation	Malawi Economic Justice Network		
Ministry of Finance and Development Planning	Famine Early Warning Network		
National Statistical Office			
Office of the President and Cabinet, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS—director of planning			
Reserve Bank of Malawi			

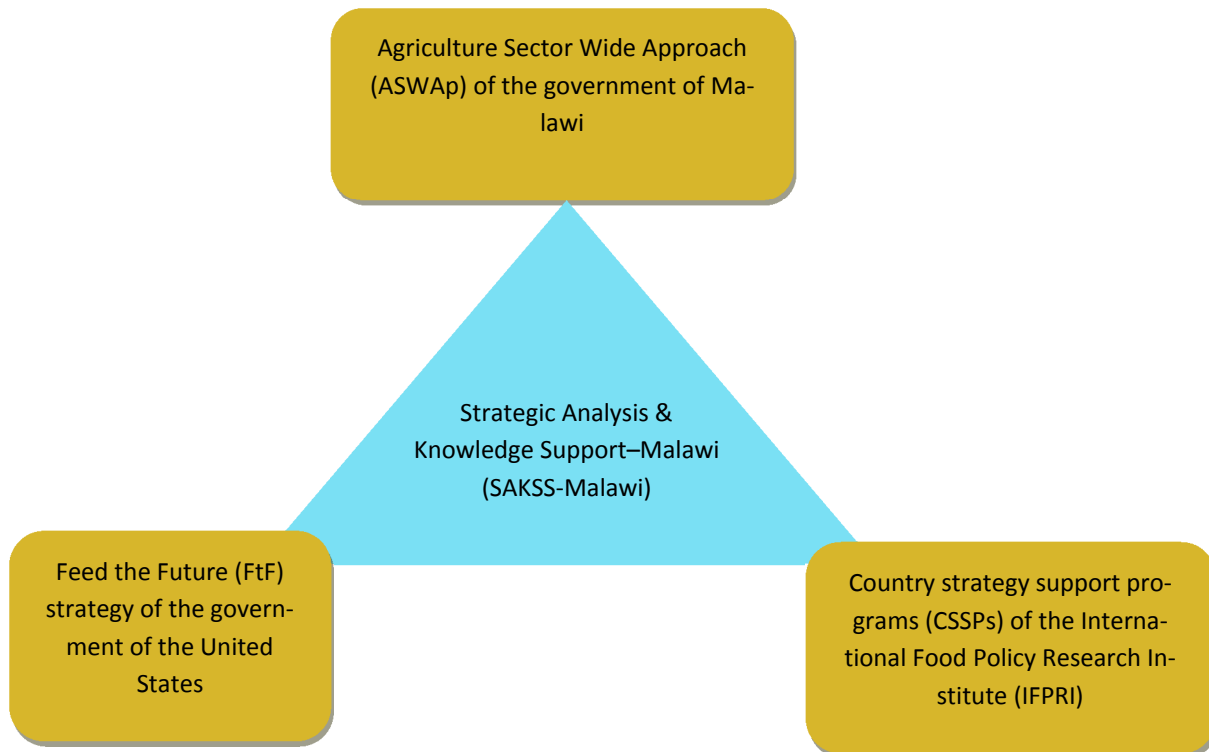
Source: GoM/MoAFS (2010): ASWAp Management Structure: TWGs Composition

3.1.2. The IFPRI-SAKSS Project

In 2008 MoAFS adopted SAKSS in Malawi to promote capacity-building and policy research activities aligned to ASWAp. Specifically, the objective of the project was to help facilitate and promote evidenced-based dialogue and decisionmaking during the formulation and implementation of strategies and policies linked to the ASWAp goals for food security and for agricultural and rural development. These objectives are achieved through strategic collaborative research, capacity strengthening, and policy dialogue. SAKSS-Malawi is attached to the Department of Agricultural Planning Services within MoAFS.

The SAKSS-Malawi project brings together MoAFS, USAID (the United States Agency for International Development), and IFPRI as partners to move the development process in Malawi forward through implementing the ASWAp/CAADP agenda. The development objectives of SAKSS-Malawi therefore underpin the broader, long-term development strategies of the three partner institutions. The ASWAp document is one of the guiding strategic documents of the government of Malawi, with MoAFS playing a leading role in its implementation. The Feed the Future (FtF) strategy of the US government, which is being implemented by the USAID Malawi country office, in turn, guides the US government’s development support worldwide. Finally, IFPRI increasingly implements country strategy support programs (CSSPs) in developing countries where IFPRI sees the need to have a more visible presence and contribute to the development process. ASWAp, FtF, and CSSPs therefore provide the strategic context of the SAKSS-Malawi project (Figure 3.1).

FIGURE 3.1. SAKSS-MALAWI’S STRATEGIC CONTEXT



Source: SAKSS/IFPRI-Malawi

As it supports ASWAp implementation, the SAKSS project also aims to provide technical support to the TWG on M&E in analyzing the information and data collected so as to generate evidence-based information for strategic policy decisionmaking in the country’s agricultural sector. Specifically, the role of the IFPRI/SAKSS-Malawi project is to assess trends on various indicators related to ASWAp as well as CAADP using the data that are being generated through the TWG on M&E. SAKSS-Malawi personnel believe they can provide such policy analysis support by regularly participating in TWG meetings so as to identify issues that require policy analysis. Issues thus identified could be presented to the Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security for financial support and to academic institutions, in particular Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Chancellor College, for technical support.

3.1.3. Importance of TWG on M&E in ASWAp

Recognizing the importance of agriculture as an engine for overall national development and growth, the government of Malawi, in collaboration with development partners and other relevant stakeholders,¹ formulated ASWAp as a vehicle for achieving agricultural growth (2011–2015) and as a means of reaching the poverty reduction targets set in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (Malawi, MoAFS 2011). ASWAp is a strategy, spearheaded by government, that prioritizes activities in the sector that aim to

- increase agricultural productivity,
- enable access to nutritious food for all people, and
- increase the contribution of agro-processing to economic growth.

ASWAp has three focal areas, two key support services, and two cross-cutting issues (Table 3.2).

TABLE 3.2. ASWAP FOCUS AREAS, SUPPORT SERVICES, AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Focus areas	Support services	Cross-cutting issues
Food security and risk management	Technology generation and dissemination	HIV prevention and AIDS impact mitigation
Commercial agriculture, agro-processing, and market development	Institutional strengthening and capacity building	Gender equity and empowerment
Sustainable agricultural land and water management		

Source: GoM/MoAFS (2010): ASWAp Document

ASWAp is implemented by the Malawi government through MoAFS in collaboration with key stakeholders in the agricultural sector. ASWAp is oriented toward results and focused on contributing to a minimum 6 percent annual national economic growth, sustainable food security, and sustainable natural resource management. ASWAp was derived from the medium-term policy goal of Malawi as stipulated in the Growth and Development Strategy. Apart from the Growth and Development Strategy, ASWAp is also driven by the national policy context as articulated in the National Agricultural Policy Framework. At the same time, it is consistent with CAADP (Malawi, MoAFS 2011).

¹These include various central government ministries, local district councils, civil society organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and cooperating partners, as well as academia, the private sector, and the general public.

In order to monitor and evaluate the performance of the agricultural sector in the country, the ASWAp document proposed the establishment of the TWG on M&E. The TWG on M&E is mandated to develop tools for monitoring the performance of the sector and to support the collection and dissemination of sector performance information in order to facilitate evidence-based decisionmaking and accountability for the entire agricultural sector. In addition, the ASWAp document stipulates that the TWG on M&E should be responsible for three key activities: (1) to support all stakeholders on M&E methodologies for the successful implementation of ASWAp, (2) to advise decisionmakers on ASWAp M&E issues and sector performance, and (3) to compile information from different sources on ASWAp implementation.

The ASWAp document sets out guidelines for establishing the proposed TWG on M&E. The guidelines are a first step toward putting in a place a formalized mechanism for tracking progress of the implementation of ASWAp and for tracking sector performance through a sectorwide, multistakeholder, inclusive forum.

In order to enhance M&E, the ASWAp document calls for a number of surveys, including the Beneficiary Impact Assessment Baseline Survey, which MoAFS has implemented under the Agricultural Development Program Support Project to serve as the reference point. In addition, MoAFS is implementing regular monitoring surveys. ASWAp includes plans to fund additional regular agricultural surveys, including the annual Agricultural Production Estimates Sample Survey, to increase the availability of statistical data necessary for planning, policy formulation, and early warning. These surveys will be implemented in close collaboration with the National Statistical Office. Thus, the TWG on M&E will carry out these monitoring surveys, tracking a total of 18 indicators from ASWAp plus 56 indicators² from the former Food and Nutrition Security Technical Secretariat (now known as ICAM). MoAFS has also adopted some indicators from CAADP, mainly those focusing on investments and on research and development, which the TWG on M&E is likely to monitor as well.

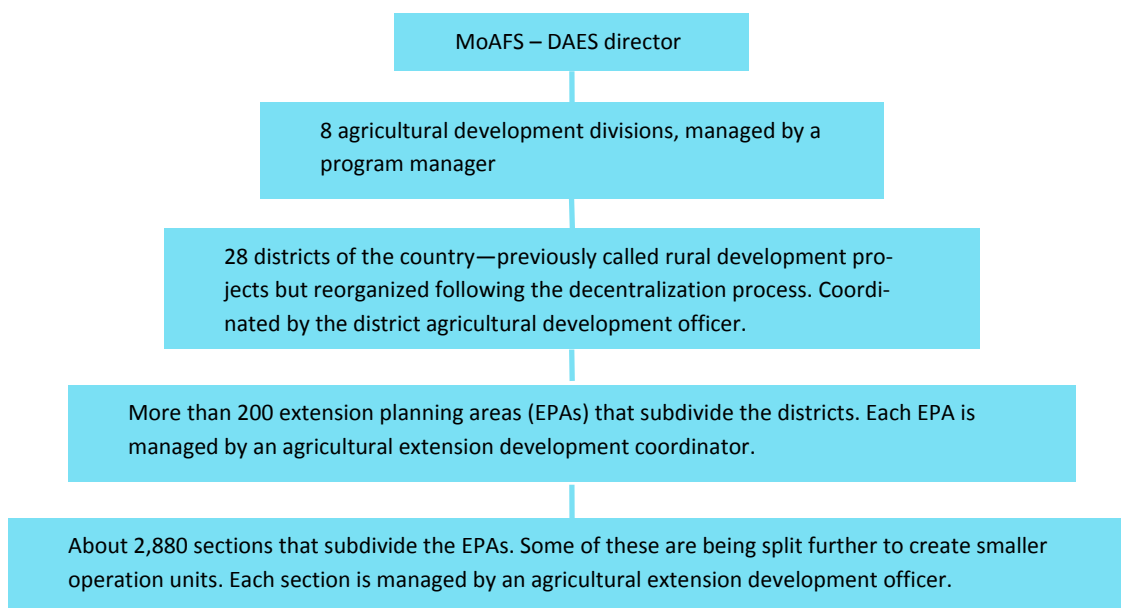
The M&E Unit of MoAFS, ICAM, and IFPRI-SAKSS constitute the key pillars of the TWG on M&E coordination for ASWAp. In other words, they constitute the secretariat for the joint sector review or monitoring of the sector.

3.2. The M&E System of ASWAp

The M&E system of the agriculture sector has evolved significantly over the last decade. The Department of Agricultural Planning Services and the agricultural extension delivery system under the Department of Agricultural Extension Services constitute key components of the M&E system in MoAFS. It should be pointed out, however, that all other departments in the MoAFS structure play a role in the M&E system, mainly as sources of data that are then channeled through the extension delivery system. In addition, for more than a decade, the Food and Nutrition Security Technical Secretariat (now ICAM) has supported the Department of Agricultural Planning Services in monitoring the implementation of policies, projects, and programs in the sector. Figure 3.2 shows the agricultural extension delivery system, which is also the feedback and monitoring system for projects and programs implemented at decentralized levels.

² Following a recent review, some of these 56 indicators have been condensed and others dropped. The informant who provided this information did not elaborate the specifics of the final set of indicators.

FIGURE 3.2. STRUCTURE OF EXTENSION DELIVERY IN MALAWI



Source: Phiri (2010).

Notes: DAES = Department of Agricultural Extension Services; MoAFS = Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

To provide background on the current M&E system under ASWAp, the next sections aim at briefly discussing the M&E system that has been used to monitor implementation of policies, projects, and programs in the agricultural sector since 2005.

3.2.1. M&E of the Food and Nutrition Security Policies

Malawi’s cabinet approved its food and nutrition security policy in 2005; the policy was later split into two: a food security policy and a nutrition security policy. The formulation of these policies was an attempt to effectively address the recurrent and deteriorating food insecurity situation in the country and to reduce malnutrition, which had remained at unacceptably high levels for many decades. The government is particularly concerned with the negative impact of undernutrition on child development and maternal health as well as the accompanying impact on long-term economic growth. The country is also committed to the achievement of the MDGs, in particular MDG 1, which seeks to eradicate poverty and hunger (Malawi, MoAFS 2012a). The right of every Malawian to adequate nutrition and good health is enshrined in the country’s constitution and is also reflected in the opening statement of the food and nutrition security policy. It was thus necessary to establish a comprehensive M&E system that could be used to track the level of achievement in policy implementation.

Following the 2005 approval of the food and nutrition security policy, the government set up a multisectoral working group to collect and analyze critical data for a total of 57 indicators, forming a part of the M&E system for the policy. The main aim of the M&E system was to identify policy strategies that were working and those that were not and, where possible, come up with recommendations at either policy or program level for consideration by government, donors, and civil society. The indicators were monitored at three levels:

1. Level 1: 27 indicators that tracked outputs from policy strategies (output indicators)
2. Level 2: 16 indicators that assessed achievement of policy objectives (impact indicators)
3. Level 3: 14 indicators for monitoring the broader policy environment within which the policy was being implemented. This broader policy environment, external to the sectors of food security and nutrition, can influence the success or failure of the policy (cross-cutting indicators).

These indicators were further categorized into four broad themes: (1) food production and storage, (2) macroeconomic and environmental, (3) nutrition and health, and (4) poverty and poverty alleviation.

Composition and Activities of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Working Group

The purpose of the food and nutrition security policy M&E system was to generate information that would permit the government of Malawi and other stakeholders to systematically monitor resource allocation, soundness of implementation processes, and impacts of the food and nutrition security interventions. The system also enabled decisionmakers in government, the donor community, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to make informed decisions on improving both implementation approaches to and impacts of strategies outlined in the policies. In addition, target populations—whether individuals or interest groups (such as the Civil Society Agriculture Network, or CISANET)—would be able to use the information generated for further analysis to independently judge the performance of the policy in relation to their own expectations and to lobby for relevant policy changes in support of their goals. In order not to reinvent the wheel, the structure of the M&E system was designed to build, as much as possible, on existing national M&E systems including, but not limited to, the following:

- Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy M&E system
- Common Approach to Budget Support M&E System
- Health Sector Wide Approach M&E System
- Health management information system
- Education management information system
- Agricultural Market Information System
- Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee
- Famine Early Warning System
- Malawi Integrated Nutrition and Food Security Surveillance System
- World Food Programme International Food Aid Information System (INTERFAIS) database and community and household surveillance system
- National Statistical Office database
- Reserve Bank of Malawi and Ministry of Finance monetary and fiscal databases

As a result, a large proportion of the membership of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Working Group was drawn from these systems. The working group was expected to meet twice per year, in March and September, to discuss progress made

in relation to agreed-upon targets for each indicator as well as carry out analyses of trends and propose some recommendations for consideration and further analysis by the various subcommittees of the Food and Nutrition Security Joint Task Force³ before they are submitted to the plenary session of the task force.

During the biannual review meetings, each member of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Working Group was expected to present the status of achievement on each indicator he or she had been assigned to monitor. In addition to showing trends, reports used color coding to show the level of achievement under each indicator: (1) **Green**—significant positive change on the targets set, (2) **Amber**—improvement on the indicator, (3) **Red**—little or no progress made on the indicator. Based on the various presentations, the task force sometimes recommended detailed studies as a way of elucidating levels of achievement under indicators where inadequate information was available. Furthermore, in view of the apparent rigorous nature of gathering and analyzing data under each of the 57 indicators, the members were supposed to be kept up-to-date with analytical tools and appropriate data-gathering processes. Hence, when membership changed (sometimes with poor handover), training was supposed to be organized for the new members.

Until the adoption of the ASWAp framework, the food and nutrition security policy monitoring system had constituted the main tool for assessing achievements at the policy and program levels in the sector. Activities of the working group were coordinated by the Food and Nutrition Security Technical Secretariat⁴ and co-chaired by the M&E Unit in MoAFS.

3.2.2. Project-Level Monitoring

The Food and Nutrition Security Policy Working Group, through the Technical Secretariat, also used to capture information on the contribution of various projects on food and nutrition in the country, including those implemented by NGOs. The group monitored a total of 24 indicators (15 output and 9 impact indicators) at the project level to assess how projects were contributing to food and nutrition security in the country. In order to ensure that the partners implementing projects captured the right information using appropriate methodologies, the Technical Secretariat facilitated training sessions of project implementers or relevant staff in the target organizations through cost-sharing arrangements. The training was aimed at informing implementers about the food and nutrition security policy M&E framework, including the indicators, how to capture data, and how to report. Each project using the data collected was therefore expected to indicate which indicators (among the 24) the project addressed. This meant harmonization of the two levels of reporting in terms of the units of measurement for each indicator. The Technical Secretariat then consolidated information gathered from all the projects within agreed-upon time frames and used the consolidated data and information to establish a measure of the level to which these projects were contributing to the respective indicators.

Deducing from the level at which projects are usually implemented, the food and nutrition security policy M&E system thus ensured that data were captured at all decentralized levels, in this way establishing a clear linkage between the projects and higher policy-level monitoring. The main challenge, however, was that the projects did not always have resources earmarked for capturing data and reporting on indicators as required by the food and nutrition security policy M&E system. Among other things, this lack of budgeting affected the comprehensiveness of the data capturing and reporting from these organizations.

³ See Appendix 3 for the composition of the task force.

⁴ Now ICAM.

3.2.3. ASWAp and Harmonization of M&E Systems

When the government adopted ASWAp in 2010 as an overarching framework for guiding budgeting, investments, and donor coordination in the sector, a harmonized M&E system became necessary. This necessity also arose from the recognition that donor and nongovernment support to the sector is highly fragmented, mainly taking the form of multiple independent projects. Furthermore, as highlighted in the ASWAp document (Malawi, MoAFS 2011), most of the larger projects funded by donors are implemented by MoAFS, usually through project implementation units, while some are implemented by the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development (funded by the African Development Bank) and others by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development). This fragmentation in funding and implementation results in multiple M&E systems. Different projects addressing similar issues have different systems to measure the results and impacts of their interventions. Even when the same indicators are used, different methods are used to collect the data, making it difficult to compare the results achieved by the different projects (Malawi, MoAFS 2012b). Hence, the ASWAp document points out that in moving toward a prioritized annual work plan and budget that details activities to be implemented by the districts, agriculture development divisions, and departments of all relevant ministries in the sector, as well as NGOs and civil society organizations, it has been necessary to harmonize planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems and procedures. Both planning and M&E thus need to be linked directly to the output targets of ASWAp.

What this has meant is developing a common M&E system by consolidating indicators from three systems—CAADP, ASWAp, and the food and nutrition security policy—into one common framework. Hence, currently all M&E reporting in the sector has to be done at the level of ASWAp themes. As discussed above, for ASWAp implementation monitoring, the TWG on M&E was established to harmonize the reporting.

As part of the transformation, the Technical Secretariat has been renamed Improvement of Coordination of ASWAp in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (ICAM). As the new name suggests, ICAM plays a crucial role in ASWAp implementation monitoring. The M&E Unit of MoAFS, ICAM, and IFPRI-SAKSS constitute the key pillars of TWG on M&E coordination for ASWAp. In other words, they constitute the secretariat for the joint sector review or monitoring of the sector.

3.2.4. Challenges for Effective ASWAp/CAADP Monitoring

Harmonization of M&E systems in the agricultural sector is a welcome move for more comprehensive capture and analysis of data generated by various players. If systems are well coordinated, all key players will identify themselves with the levels of achievement in the sector. All other things being equal, there will be more transparency and accountability at all levels because stakeholders will, with time, learn to share successes and failures in a more mutual way. However, informants report that several challenges still impinge on achieving these outcomes:

- First, the biannual sector reports are distributed mainly to TWG on M&E members and not widely disseminated to policymakers. The purpose of an M&E system is to influence decisionmaking processes, including at the policy level. Thus, efforts should be made to ensure that these reports, including joint sector review reports, are widely disseminated to all relevant stakeholders in the sector.
- Second, in the consolidation of the three M&E systems into one, some of the relevant indicators have been left out, creating gaps. While cognizant of the fact that harmonization and alignment of M&E systems is still a work in progress, informants point to indicator gaps as an area that requires ReSAKSS support to correct.

- Third, most of the indicators consolidated for ASWAp implementation monitoring are at the policy level, largely leaving out project microlevel monitoring. The success of policies starts at the grassroots level, where much of the project activity takes place. Hence, decentralized data gathering and analysis systems must be strengthened in order to be able to assess how the various projects or microlevel activities contribute to food and nutrition security as well as poverty reduction in the country.⁵ Harmonizing the two levels of monitoring into one comprehensive system will enhance transparency and accountability.
- Fourth, the TWG on M&E is coordinated by a secretariat whose future is precarious for a number of reasons. First, ICAM, which constitutes about two-thirds of the coordination role of the TWG on M&E, has a life span only up to December 2013. How will this gap be filled after December? Second, the M&E Unit of MoAFS currently has only four staff members, two of whom are due to leave for further studies in the next few weeks. What measures has the ministry put in place to fill the gap that will be created? Finally, IFPRI-SAKSS is a donor-funded unit/project whose future also depends on continued donor interest in supporting its activities. What will happen after this component goes away? These uncertainties call for urgent action to redesign the coordination of the ASWAp monitoring system. In other words, the whole coordination aspect of the ASWAp M&E system requires urgent examination and answers.

3.3. Information Exchange among Research Organizations

ASWAp has two support pillars, one of which is the technology generation and dissemination component. This component aims at improving research services with a focus on results- and market-oriented research on priority technology needs in the sector. The component also deals with the needs of the stakeholders for technical and regulatory services, complemented by efficient farmer-led extension and training services. In light of the crucial role that research plays in driving the ASWAp agenda and cognizant that this strategy is also aligned to the CAADP process, the importance of information sharing and dissemination cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, sharing of information generated from research is pivotal to the overall purpose of this study, to develop a specific capacity-strengthening strategy to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process.

However, the main question is to what extent information sharing among research organizations in support of ASWAp takes place in Malawi. Who plays the most central role in information generation and sharing in agricultural research in the country? Simply put, who talks to whom in Malawi's agricultural research information networks? Droppelmann and colleagues (2013) conducted research to find answers to these questions and thereby assess the readiness of Malawi's national agricultural research systems (NARS) to respond to the national agricultural research agenda. Specifically, it analyzed the responsiveness of Malawi's NARS to ASWAp.

This study focused on actors in the Malawian NARS. According to the authors, Malawi's NARS consists of a wide array of actors, including a public agricultural research department that has several research stations throughout the country, agricultural academic institutions, semiautonomous research institutions, private companies, and international agricultural research institutions. The study sampled several research units and sections within the public agricultural research department because they each have separate core functions and mandates. Other research institutions sampled included CGIAR

⁵ Figure 3.2 gives an idea of where capacity building in the decentralized structure will be required.

centers operating in Malawi, private seed companies and seed industry associations, farmers' organizations, and academic as well as other types of research institutions.

The study employed social network analysis, "a tool to analyze structural patterns of social relationships [that] provides measures to identify and analyze networks within and between organizations" (Droppelmann et al. 2013, 2). Social network analysis, the authors stated, "helps to identify information pathways, brokers, and gatekeepers, and it supports processes of knowledge sharing within and between organizations. In social network analysis, the density of a network refers to the proportion of ties (or relationships between actors) expressed as a percentage of all possible ties in that network. The denser the network, the higher the number of potential ties present. The network density gives insight about the speed at which information diffuses among the network actors" (Droppelmann et al. 2013, 2).

Based on the findings of the social network analysis exercise, with the government's Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS) treated as a single entity, the network has a density (proportion of ties present out of all possible ties) of 44.3 percent. The authors indicate that the central location of DARS in the network is apparent and, as expected, indicates its importance, power, and influence within the network. The size of its ego network and number of ties, combined with high levels of "betweenness" and closeness, and high information sending and receiving means, all confirm that the DARS occupies an influential position within Malawi's agricultural research information network. The authors note, however, that its reach efficiency is relatively low compared with that of other actors within the network, indicating that its reach beyond primary points of contact is relatively low.

When separate DARS sections were treated as individual entities, the picture changed substantially. The results indicated an increased density of the network, 53.3 percent. It was also readily apparent which DARS sections play a more central role within the network—namely, Plant Protection and Quarantine Services, and Technical Services, and to a lesser degree Maize Breeding, Soils and Chemistry, and Horticulture. The authors also noted that this scenario caused the Natural Resources College to move to a more central position within the network. However, the authors observed that many CGIAR centers, private-sector companies, and industry associations remained on the periphery of the network.

Further analyses confirmed the influential roles of the aforementioned DARS sections (Plant Protection and Quarantine Services, Technical Services, Maize Breeding, Soils and Chemistry, and Horticulture). Plant Protection and Quarantine Services and Technical Services displayed very high means for both information sending and receiving, and high levels of closeness and betweenness, indicating influential roles in information exchange. The same measures for the other three sections were also relatively high and indicated their importance in the network. Private seed companies (SeedCo, Monsanto, and Pannar Seed) continued to occupy positions of relative influence and power, as indicated by relatively high means of information sending and receiving, closeness, and betweenness. The Natural Resources College occupied a significantly more important position in this example, particularly as a receiver of information with a high level of closeness. Relatively low means for information sending and receiving for CGIAR centers, private-sector companies, and industry associations confirmed their relatively less influential and less powerful positions within the network.

This research concluded that although several units under the public agriculture research department play important roles in Malawi's agricultural research information network, there is scope for improvement to increase the efficiency of information exchange and contribute to implementation of the country's sectorwide strategy for agricultural development. Furthermore, the authors pointed out evidence that many important players in the system are not fully integrated into the network, such as the CGIAR centers, private-sector companies, industry associations, and other academic institutions. Many of those players are somewhat cut off from the public agricultural research department and rely on their own networks

(primary and secondary contacts) to send and receive information. However, the authors observed that although the networks of some of those players are not as broad as those of the public department, in many cases they reach deeper and further through the network due to reach efficiency or reliance on friend-of-a-friend information flows.

It is clear from the findings of the study by Droppelmann and colleagues (2013) that a coordinated effort to harmonize information generation and sharing is a major challenge among the players in the network. As discussed later in this report, similar observations have been made with respect to M&E systems in the sector. In addition to being disparate in methodology, M&E systems are also poorly coordinated, thereby failing to effectively monitor implementation of ASWAp.

3.4. Types of Organizations That Generate and Use Information

The organizations that generate and use information for evidence-based decisionmaking in Malawi form a web, interacting at various levels and through different types of forums. These organizations and agencies could be grouped into five different categories:⁶

First category: This category comprises the main generators of evidence-based information that guides policy decisionmaking in the agricultural sector. These are mostly academic institutions, with the primary ones being Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, where the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics (DAAE) and the Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD) play a pivotal role; the University of Malawi (Chancellor College—Department of Economics and Centre for Social Research, and The Polytechnic—Department of Commerce); and Mzuzu University. The international agricultural research centers, such as IFPRI, the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, and the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-arid Tropics (to mention only a few) also play a crucial role in generating information that is used in policy decisionmaking. Through their core research activities as well as commissioned activities, these agencies serve as think tanks in policy decisionmaking processes. They could be classified as primary sources of information for evidence-based policy decisionmaking.

Second category: This category generates information but also uses information generated from the category above in lobbying the government for better policies. Farmer and civil society organizations fall into this category. The main ones in Malawi are the Farmers Union of Malawi, CISANET, and Malawi Economic Justice Network. Other donor-funded projects, such as the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET), also play a crucial role in generating information that is used in policy decision processes while at the same time using information from other sources in their own decisionmaking processes and policy advocacy activities. In addition to these agencies, private-sector agencies (such as seed and fertilizer companies and consulting firms) also generate a lot of information while simultaneously relying on information from the first category.

Third category: The Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security occupies this category. Using information generated through various sources, the committee plays a crucial policy advisory role to MoAFS.

Fourth category: This category mainly comprises government departments and agencies, such as the Department of Agricultural Planning Services; the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS; and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, to mention a few. Using different models of partnership, these agencies work with a wide range of the agencies

⁶ Table 3.3 gives a detailed list of institutions.

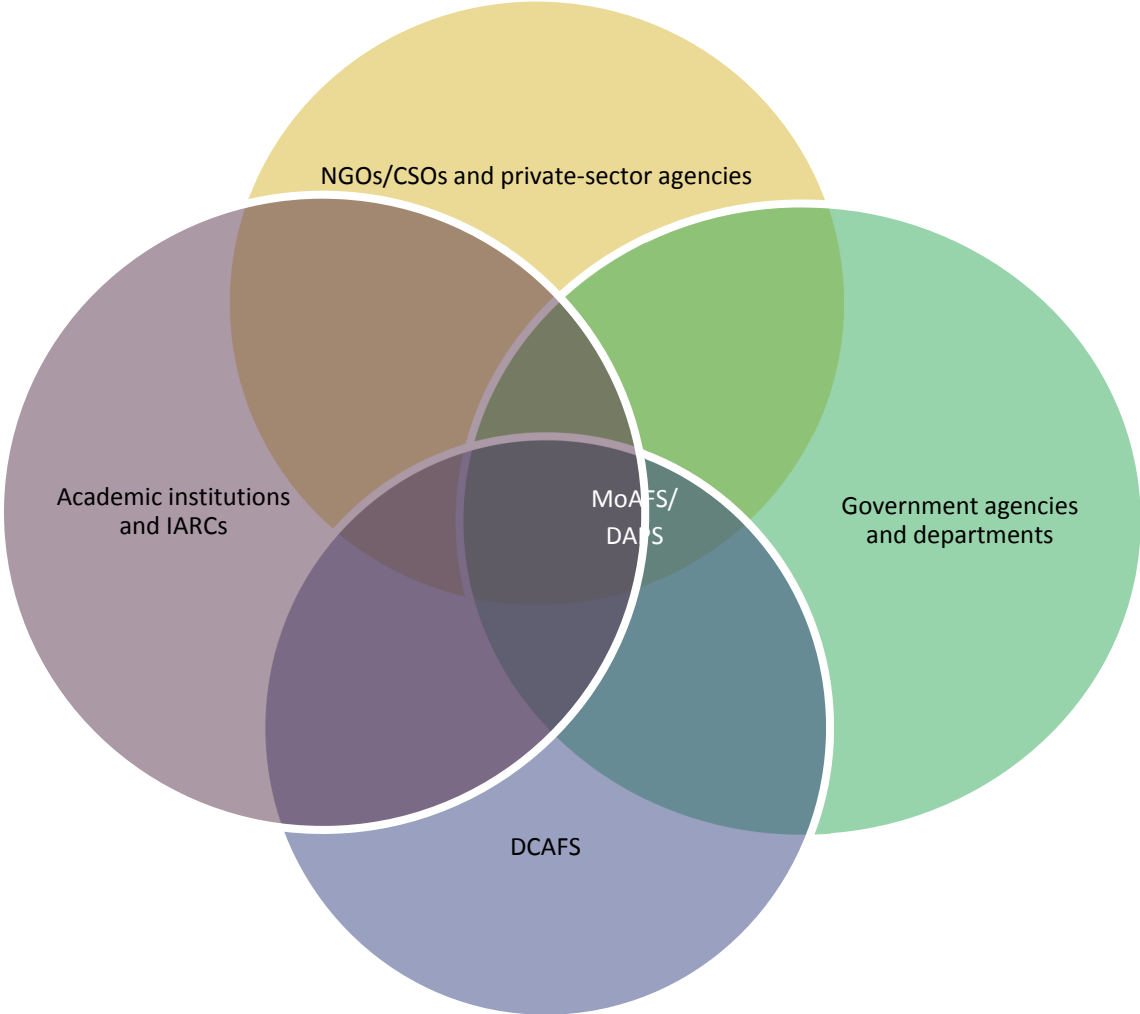
mentioned above in generating information but also in translating evidence-based information as guided by MoAFS headquarters.

Fifth category: The center of the web, represented by MoAFS headquarters, is the core user of the information and policy guidance from the outer layers.

These descriptions show that no single agency or category is complete without the others. The weblike structure also demonstrates the interdependence among the various components, which calls for close collaboration and effective coordination of the parts to the benefit of each while serving the needs of the whole. The main question, however, is to what extent the information generated by various agencies is used for policy decisionmaking.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the interaction between institutions that generate and those that demand information in the agriculture sector in Malawi. Generating and demanding information is an interactive process, wherein all the various players highlighted in the diagram may generate and share information with others but will also gain some information from others. On the one hand, some of the institutions are mainly generating information to the benefit of others; on the other hand, some of the institutions are mainly demanders of information, though they may also produce some information. For example, as explained in relation to the various categories above, academic and research institutions are mainly generators of information, though they may also demand some information from others as they carry out their research. These relationships are summarized in Table 3.3. Similarly, while most government agencies and departments may mainly be users of information for policymaking, they also generate a lot of information that is used by others. Thus, in our view, there are no pure users or pure generators of information. Most institutions perform both tasks. The central position of the MoAFS Department of Agricultural Planning Services in Figure 3.3 shows that the generation and use of information is for the benefit, through this department, of MoAFS, the main coordinating institution in the agriculture industry.

FIGURE 3.3. INFORMATION GENERATION AND USE FOR EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONMAKING



Source: Author’s own reconstitution

Notes: CSO = civil society organization; DAPS = Department of Agricultural Planning Services; DCAFS = Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security; IARC = international agricultural research center; MoAFS = Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; NGO = nongovernmental organization.

TABLE 3.3. INSTITUTIONS THAT GENERATE AND DEMAND INFORMATION ON AGRICULTURE IN MALAWI

Institutions that demand information	Institutions that demand but also generate information	Institutions that generate information
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Security Unit; Department of Agricultural Planning Services; • Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; • Improving Coordination of ASWAp in Malawi; • Department of Agricultural Extension Services; • Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development; • Department of Agricultural Research Services (Chitedze Agricultural Research Station) 	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Agricultural Planning Services; • Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; • Improving Coordination of ASWAp in Malawi 	Academic institutions
Ministry of Finance		Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (formerly Bunda College): Chancellor College, Centre for Social Research, The Polytechnic
Ministry of Economic Planning and Development	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development	
Ministry of Trade and Industry	Donor agencies	
Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS in the Office of the President and Cabinet	International Monetary Fund	Malawi Institute of Management
	World Bank	
UN and donor agencies	United States Agency for International Development	Mzuzu University
International Monetary Fund	UK Department for International Development	Livingstonia University
World Bank	African Development Bank	Natural Resources Management College
Irish Aid		Mwimba Agricultural College
		Catholic University
Norwegian Embassy		International agricultural research centers
Japanese International Cooperation Agency	Academic institutions	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
Flanders International Cooperation Agency	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (formerly Bunda College): Chancellor College, Centre for Social Research, The Polytechnic	International Potato Center

United States Agency for International Development		International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics
UK Department for International Development		International Food Policy Research Institute
African Development Bank	Malawi Institute of Management	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
United Nations Development Programme		International Centre for Agro Forestry
Food and Agriculture Organization	Mzuzu University	World Fish Center
European Union	Livingstonia University	Public agencies and parastatals
World Food Programme	Natural Resources Management College	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security: Food Security Unit; Department of Agricultural Planning Services; Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; Improving Coordination of ASWAp in Malawi; Department of Agricultural Extension Services; Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development; Department of Agricultural Research Services
	Mwimba Agricultural College	National Statistical Office
	Catholic University	Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund
	Civil society and farmers' organizations	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
	Civil Society Agriculture Network	Tobacco Control Commission
	Famine Early Warning Network	Auction Holdings Ltd.
	Farmers Union of Malawi	Agro-economic Surveys Department
	Malawi Economic Justice Network	Agricultural Research and Extension Trust
	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi	Private sector
		Malawi Agricultural Commodity Exchange
		Fertilizer Association of Malawi
		Seed Trade Association of Malawi
		Grain Traders and Processors Association
		Civil society and farmers' organizations
		Civil Society Agriculture Network
		Famine Early Warning Network
		Farmers Union of Malawi
		Malawi Economic Justice Network
		National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi

Source: Study Findings.

Note: ASWAp = Agriculture Sector Wide Approach.

3.4.1. Role of Research Evidence in Policy Decisionmaking

Research in agricultural policymaking has historically played a marginal role. To become more relevant in the policy process in the future, researchers will have to become more familiar with the complex local political and socioeconomic realities in Malawi. Certainly, the experience of the creation of the 2005–2006 fertilizer subsidy underscores the complexity of Malawi’s policymaking process (Keeley and Scoones 2003); it involved negotiation and bargaining among many coalitions and actors, and the political and economic resources available to each (Sabatier 2007). This complexity has multiple implications. Many groups fail to foresee policy failures because they do not understand the intricacies of policy implementation or why particular policies lack local relevance.

The net-mapping case studies discussed below and the description of generators of information for evidence-based policy decisionmaking all highlight the existence of a gradient in the flow of information. However, the level to which such information is actually used to guide policy decisionmaking processes is yet another complex domain that cannot easily be predicted.

3.5. Capacity Assessment in the Public Sector

Several capacity assessments of various public-sector agencies have been carried out over the years. What is common to most of these studies as reported in key-informant interviews is that government is failing to adequately address the capacity challenges and weaknesses that the studies highlight. Relevant issues from a recent study of capacity development for public-sector management (Malawi, OPC 2008b) are discussed below.

3.5.1. Human Resources Issues

The main issues relating to human resources from this study were the following:

- **High vacancy rates:** Almost all the government institutions reviewed under this capacity assessment suffered from high vacancy rates. However, few have taken concerted action to address this problem, with the major exception being the Ministry of Health under the Health Sector Wide Approach.

One of the key departments with high vacancy rates that is a pivotal arm of the M&E system in MoAFS is the Department of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES). The DAES (Malawi, DAES 2008) staff rationalization report pointed out that effectiveness of the DAES toward improving agricultural development has been reduced over the recent past owing to low staffing levels and low-skilled personnel in the department. An analysis of the staffing situation in DAES at the national level reveals that most of the posts are vacant. The situation is more critical at the agriculture development division level, where 45 percent of the posts are vacant. Informants report that the situation has not improved since 2008 in most sections of the department, and in some cases it has become worse.

- **Poor skills of staff:** Staff members lack critical skills, both on entry and later, due to lack of training opportunities. This issue arises in part because of the relatively unattractive career paths in some common services—for example, human resources and procurement have not really achieved the status of “profession” that the finance, audit, and economics cadres have achieved. Training seems to have a number of problems across the government of Malawi, including these: training courses not linked to training needs, a culture of managers dipping into their training budgets for other purposes, some individuals seeing training primarily as an opportunity to travel or receive extra

allowances, poor cost control of training as a whole (on the one hand not always seeking the lowest-cost local training options, but on the other hand sometimes not spending training budgets), and lack of coordination between ad hoc trainings delivered through donor projects.

- **Recruitment bottlenecks:** It is important to distinguish between recruitment to vacant posts (that is, where the post is already established) and the establishment of and subsequent recruitment to new posts. Both processes in the government of Malawi are very slow and involve many different actors. There is a clear need to reexamine the processes involved and question whether all the current steps are necessary—in particular the Ministry of Finance’s role in approving recruitment to vacant posts that are already funded and paid for. Amendments to the recruitment process were proposed in 2003 but have not yet been implemented.
- **Pay and allowances:** There is much resentment about the widely differing terms and conditions of employment available in the government of Malawi. Some senior management positions are paid in foreign currency at relatively high rates and offer access to vehicles, while similar positions in other ministries have standard government salaries with no access to other benefits. More broadly, low pay leads to a flow of qualified professionals (such as information and communication technology staff and economists) to the private sector. More broadly still, anecdotal evidence suggests that an “allowance culture” persists across many government institutions, with staff unwilling to turn up to meetings unless they are paid to do so.⁷
- **Lack of performance appraisal:** The reality is that most government staff members do not have performance appraisals, a situation that tends to exacerbate the problem of lack of motivation in public service offices.

3.5.2. Lack of a Performance or Compliance Culture

Many government stakeholders in this study complained about the lack of a compliance culture in the Malawi public service. One senior official highlighted this as the single biggest problem in the government, arguing that the capacity of Malawians is more than adequate but good results are not achieved because individual good performance is not rewarded and poor performance is not punished.

3.5.3. Communication

The problem of communication or coordination between the center and the units in the line ministries comes out consistently across the capacity assessments. The general view is that central agencies find coordination and communication with their units difficult, citing lack of resources to carry out these functions (both staff and finances). The units view the central agencies as not playing their role in coordinating, communicating with, and leading them.

3.5.4. Management Information

This problem seems mainly due to lack of appropriate monitoring frameworks and appropriately qualified staff in M&E units. These gaps are exacerbated by the apparent lack of demand by senior management for accurate information. Furthermore, there is a related problem with the sheer proliferation of data requests from central agencies and donors to line ministries.

⁷ This issue greatly affected the outcome of this study and the scope of the results.

3.5.5. Financial Resources

A common complaint from government respondents during the consultations undertaken as part of the capacity assessments (Malawi, OPC 2008a–f) was that they did not have enough money to implement improvements. However, this view was not generally perceived as such. Clearly, financial resources are a problem in many government institutions; however, it is also clear that many improvements can be made without large amounts of money. Many overarching needs across the different functional areas, such as improving communication, strengthening compliance, instituting performance management and reporting structures, and updating manuals/guidelines, do not require large investments of government or donor funds.

4. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY IN THE POLICY PROCESSES

4.1. Actors Involved in Policy Processes

Aberman and others (2012) used the Net-Map approach to examine the contemporary fertilizer policy landscape in Malawi. Net-Map combines the mapping of social-political networks through in-depth qualitative discussions with additional information about actor goals and influence. The authors adapted the approach to include questions specific to the case study and on-the-ground reality with respect to the actors involved, including the power structures and linkages among them. Their work defines and clearly explains the policy processes in Malawi and therefore applies to the current study as well.

BOX 4.1. A CASE STUDY OF FERTILIZER INPUT SUBSIDY POLICY

Researchers used the Net-Map tool to gather information on actors, links, and networks on the agricultural policy scene in Malawi, using the country's fertilizer subsidy program as a case study. Results from this study, presented in Figure 4.1, show that the fertilizer policy network has three hubs (MoAFS, the Ministry of Finance, and the president), with all other actors arranged around them, trying to influence their policy decisions. Of the three hubs, MoAFS has the most central role in the network, whereas the president is by far the most influential actor.

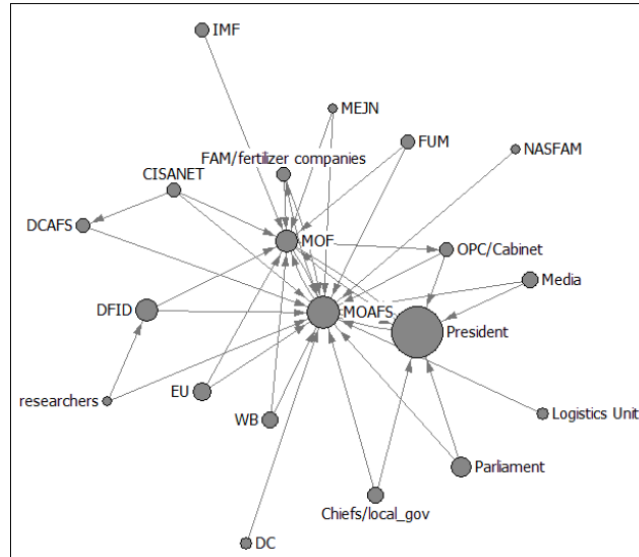
Source: Aberman et al. 2012.

Note: MoAFS = Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

Policy processes in Malawi are usually highly consultative, involving diverse individuals and organizations, including government departments and institutions (staffed by politicians and technocrats), civil society organizations, donors, private companies, and local government. However, the specific institutions or agencies involved in policy processes within these categories depend upon the policy issue that is being debated or developed. Aberman and others (2012) used institutions that participate in the fertilizer component of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme as a case study. As mentioned, this case study covers the same organizations that participate in all the different policy processes in the country.

The first striking characteristic of the network as shown in Figure 4.1 is its high centralization. The researchers indicated that a perfectly centralized network has one main actor with the other actors arranged around it, with no lateral links such that all interactions go through the central actor. The fertilizer policy network has a few highly central actors—MoAFS (the main implementer), the Ministry of Finance (the financier), and the president (the decisionmaker)—with all other actors arranged around them, trying to advise or influence their policy decisions. According to the core-periphery analysis, the network core—made up of central actors that are highly linked to each other and surrounded by peripheral actors who are not well connected—is made up of MoAFS and the Ministry of Finance. Because of the overlap of the president and MoAFS, the president is also considered to be a part of the core.

FIGURE 4.1. FERTILIZER SUBSIDY PROGRAM NETWORK



Source: Aberman et al. (2012).

Notes: CISANET = Civil Society Agriculture Network; DC = district commissioner; DCAFS = Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security; DFID = (UK) Department for International Development; EU = European Union; FAM = Fertilizer Association of Malawi; FUM = Farmers Union of Malawi; IMF = International Monetary Fund; MEJN = Malawi Economic Justice Network; MOAFS = Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; MOF = Ministry of Finance; NASFAM = National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi; OPC = Office of the President and Cabinet; WB = World Bank.

Further analysis compared individual actor characteristics: namely degree of centrality and attributed influence. While MoAFS had the highest degree of centrality, it was not the most influential actor in determining the level and shape of fertilizer policy. Instead, a majority of the interviewees in the sample for this study agreed that the president was by far the most influential actor in fertilizer policy.

The authors indicated that the perception of the president as the most influential actor was unsurprising. At the time of the interviews in this study, the president of Malawi was also serving as minister of MoAFS. In addition, the president had publicly promoted the fertilizer subsidy as an important part of the country's agricultural policy and, ultimately, its overall national development strategy for achieving income growth, food security, and poverty reduction. It is unsurprising again that the current president has taken a similar position, recognizing that the Farm Input Subsidy Programme has become a strong political weapon in the country. Thus, not until after the general elections in May 2014 is any significant policy change to the subsidy program likely, although many studies, including ongoing public expenditure reviews, point to the need for scaling down the proportion of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme in the agricultural budget.

4.1. Case Study 2: Participatory Agricultural Policymaking—ASWAp

Krampe and Henning (2011) mapped the key players in the development of ASWAp in Malawi following its 2010 signing. To assess conflicts of interest in participatory policy processes, the researchers identified all actors relevant to agricultural decisionmaking in Malawi and their political positions and interests. They were especially interested in the actors' social networks, because belief formation essentially takes place within social networks. Social networks are defined as a specific

set of linkages among a defined set of persons, while the linkages give information about the social behavior of the persons involved (Mitchell 1969). In this study, the focus was more on organizations than on persons.

The study used two methods: the position method and the reputation method. The position method involved exploring the institutional setup of Malawi to collect information on players who possess decisionmaking power about agricultural policy due to their formal position within the system. To analyze the social network using the reputation method, researchers asked experts to mention people they considered the most influential players in Malawi.

The authors compiled the results from both methods into a complete list of actors considered influential in the policy process (Table 4.1). Influential persons in Malawi's agricultural policy process belong to these categories: (1) the executive branch, (2) the legislative branch, (3) donor organizations, (4) research organizations, and (5) private-sector and civil society organizations.

TABLE 4.1. AFFILIATION CATEGORIES OF STAKEHOLDERS

Class	Affiliation category	Subgroup
Executive	Government	President Ministries
	Public sector	Public-sector agencies Local government
Legislative	Legislative	Political parties Parliamentary committees
Donor	Donor	International National
Research	Research	College, university
Private-sector and civil society organizations	IG: Agricultural industry and trade IG: Agricultural producer organizations and cooperatives IG: Economic governance IG: Trade unions and consumer organizations Churches Media	

Source: Krampe and Henning (2011).

Note: IG = interest group.

Despite the fact that most stakeholders viewed the development of ASWAp as largely participatory and although NEPAD attempts to include nonstate actors in the CAADP policy process, civil society organizations did charge that the state actors had mainly worked on the program behind closed doors.

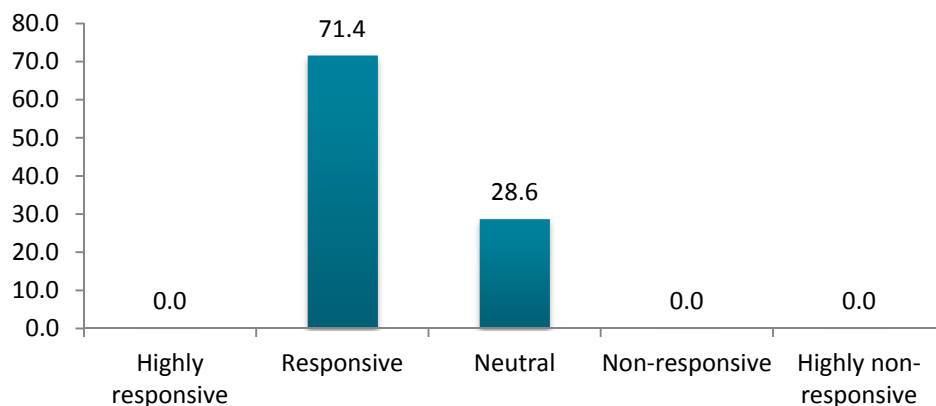
5. CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

A total of 12 respondents provided feedback for the capacity needs assessment. The discussion below uses the results of the data collected through the individual questionnaires, supplemented with information gathered through key-informant interviews.

5.1. Effectiveness of Leadership in the Policy Process

MoAFS is the lead institution in agricultural policy processes. In general, 71.4 percent of the respondents indicated that the political leadership in agricultural policymaking processes is responsive, while the remaining 28.6 percent considered it to be neutral (Figure 5.1).

FIGURE 5.1. EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE POLICY PROCESS



Source: Study Findings.

Respondents reported the following strengths in MoAFS as a leader:

- Orientation to results
- Direct communication with all stakeholders involved in the policy processes
- Well-qualified staff

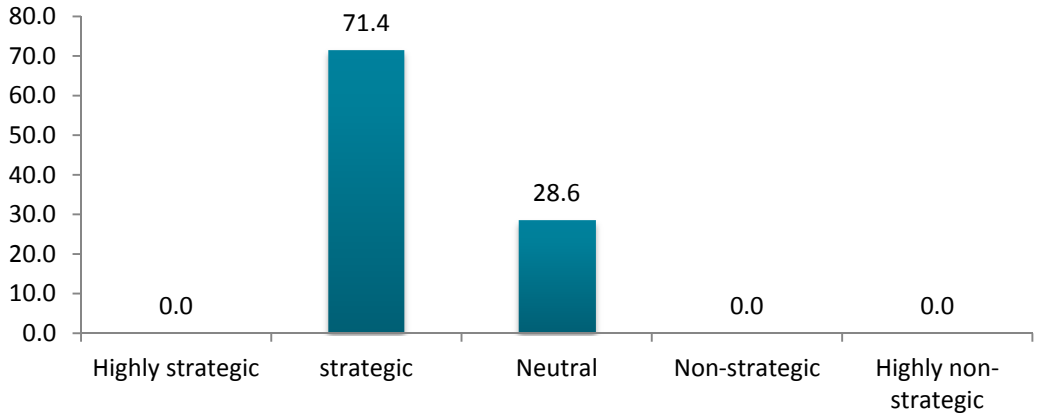
The main reported weaknesses included these:

- Low levels of funding to facilitate policy M&E
- Political interference that overrides the recommendations drawn from consultative processes

5.2. Strategic Guidance by Organizational Leaders

Respondents were asked to what extent leaders of the organizations involved in policy processes provided appropriate strategic guidance. A majority of the respondents (71.4 percent) thought leaders provided strategic direction to members of their organizations but felt that more could be done (Figure 5.2).

FIGURE 5.2. STRATEGIC GUIDANCE BY ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS



Source: Study Findings.

5.3. Availability of Skills and Incentives

In general, organizations that participated in the study reported having the necessary skills to use evidence for strategic analysis and other policy work (Table 5.1). However, the level of competency varied across the different types of organizations. Government and research institutions boasted relatively highly skilled individuals compared with donors and civil society organizations. Despite the presence of highly trained individuals in government, respondents felt that low levels of funding limited their participation in policy analysis. On the other hand, civil society organizations were faced with a shortage of staff able to conduct strategic analysis and policy-related work.

TABLE 5.1. AVAILABILITY OF SKILLS AND INCENTIVES

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	1	Highly skilled
Civil society	3	Average
Donor	2	Skilled
Research and academic	1	Highly skilled

Source: Study Findings.

5.4. Staff Turnover

Participants in the study were asked to report on member or staff turnover in their organizations (Table 5.2). Overall, staff turnover was reported to be low, but it was lowest among the donor agencies and highest in public service. As already pointed out, key-informant interviews revealed that all capacity assessments of various public-sector agencies have in the past identified high staff turnover as a major issue of concern, somewhat linked to the low incentive package.

TABLE 5.2. STAFF TURNOVER

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	3	Agree
Civil society	2	Agree
Donor	1	Strongly agree
Research and academic	2	Agree

Source: Study Findings.

5.5. Staff Incentives

Respondents reported that most institutions (apart from donors) do not offer good incentives to their staff, with government at the bottom of the ranking (Table 5.3). As already pointed out, anecdotal evidence suggests that an “allowance culture” persists across many government institutions in Malawi, with staff unwilling to turn up to meetings unless they are paid to do so.⁸ It can be deduced that low salaries for most government staff exacerbate this problem.

TABLE 5.3. STAFF INCENTIVES

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	4	Low
Civil society	3	Average
Donor	1	Very high
Research and academic	3	Average

Source: Study Findings.

5.6. Adequate Funding to Cover the Cost of Operations

The study found government and donor agencies to have adequate financing, while civil society and research institutions have moderate funding that is often tied to specific activities other than evidence-based policy analysis and data generation (Table 5.4). Civil society organizations’ activities in Malawi are concentrated in agriculture and other social sectors, while funding for academic institutions is primarily for teaching, not research.

TABLE 5.4. ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE COST OF OPERATIONS

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	2	Adequate
Civil society	3	Neutral
Donor	1	Highly adequate
Research and academic	3	Neutral

Source: Study Findings.

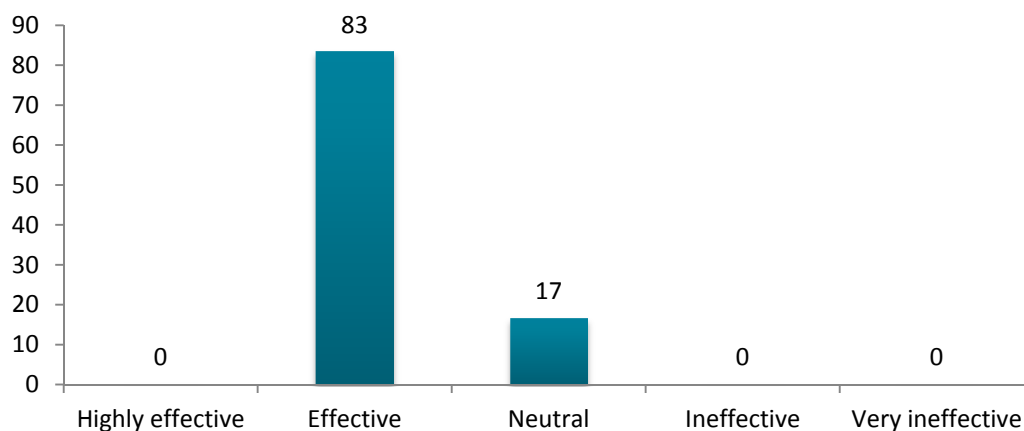
⁸ This issue also greatly affected this study because respondents wanted compensation for filling in the questionnaires.

5.7. Level of Effective Application of M&E

The M&E system for the agricultural sector is well organized. As discussed above, the M&E system in MoAFS and the system for monitoring food security in the country provide a comprehensive M&E system for the sector. Participants in the study indicated that the existing M&E system is effective. Furthermore, as noted in the summary of institutional human capacity in Appendix 2, the composition of the TWG on M&E membership shows a critical mass of capacity in the agricultural sector for evidence-based policy formulation as well as for effective M&E. Some respondents, however, reported a need to improve on knowledge management and sharing. In the words of one participant, “The TWG on M&E in itself is not a major problem. It only requires more effective coordination of all the actors involved.” Additionally, as mentioned elsewhere, more staff members are needed in the M&E section of MoAFS. In most cases, the few staff members that are available are overstretched, particularly during implementation of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme, which leaves most staff members with little time to do any analysis of the data they collect because they are always in the field.

The study further found a lack of consistency in operations. The TWG on M&E, respondents reported, is active only when other institutions lend external support. For example, of the two meetings that the group had during 2012 the first was supported by the IFPRI/SAKSS and the second by the Technical Secretariat, a European Union project within MoAFS. As a result, activities, when they occur, are carried out in an ad hoc manner.

FIGURE 5.3. LEVEL OF EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION



Source: Study Findings.

Key-informant interviews revealed that adoption of ASWAp as an overarching framework for guiding investments in the agriculture sector entails doing things differently than in the past. Accordingly, effective systems consistent with the paradigm shift are needed to support monitoring of achievements under ASWAp. For example, although ASWAp includes a set of indicators that need to be monitored, no systems are in place to ensure consistency in data collection and sharing. Currently, the major weakness in the M&E system is a lack of readily available data to monitor progress toward achieving the indicators in the sector. Moreover, the lack of consistency in data collection is compounded by confusion concerning the indicators to be monitored.

The plan to dissolve the Technical Secretariat and integrate its activities into existing government structures created some confusion about effectively monitoring both the new ASWAp indicators and those that were being monitored under the Technical Secretariat. As noted, the two systems seem not to be effectively harmonized. While ASWAp mainly monitors performance indicators, the Technical Secretariat system monitors output indicators. Ideally, the ASWAp indicators are supposed to capture performance of the whole sector and all aspects of agriculture; the Technical Secretariat mainly focuses on food and nutrition security issues. Similarly, while ASWAp sets targets to be achieved in a given time frame, the Technical Secretariat indicators focus on thresholds. Some stakeholders pointed out that the Technical Secretariat indicators, because they have been in application longer and are therefore better understood by most stakeholders, tend to overshadow ASWAp indicators. Hence, there is a need to consolidate the indicators into one comprehensive M&E system.

In addition, despite the fact that ASWAp was developed through a very participatory process, most stakeholders view it as a product of MoAFS, not of the sector. This issue became very clear in a 2013 joint sector review meeting held in Lilongwe.⁹ Key players in the sector, such as fertilizer and seed companies, were absent from this meeting. Moreover, many stakeholders had not been involved in writing the main joint sector review report, and the report itself lacked data on certain indicators. Some participants pointed out that MoAFS has a tendency to believe that by inviting apex organizations such as the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi, the Farmers Union of Malawi, and CISANET, it has made sure that everyone is represented.

The membership of the TWG on M&E also lacks representation for some of these key stakeholders. Not only does the TWG on M&E need to be more encompassing in its membership, but it should also be used as a vehicle for developing more inclusive indicators that elicit the contributions of all key stakeholders. Such changes will enhance not only the credibility of the defined indicators but also the ownership of ASWAp as a policy document representing everyone in the sector. The link between the TWG on M&E and ASWAp should be strengthened through a common package of indicators that are understood by all who are expected to contribute to them and that are used in policy decisionmaking. One element required for this process is a comprehensive database that can be captured and used at all levels in the sector. Such a database, in turn, will necessitate restructuring the human capacity at all levels and providing personnel with the means for mobility and communication, such as vehicles, computers, and the necessary software and connectivity for an effective M&E system in the sector. A huge gap in capacity is reported, but this tends only to capture the situation in MoAFS. With effective coordination and effective synergies through *genuine* public-private partnerships, some of these M&E capacity gaps in MoAFS could actually be dissipated.

Furthermore, despite the fact that ASWAp makes an explicit reference to CAADP/NEPAD, the understanding of this framework among the members of the TWG on M&E seems to be limited. As a result, reference to CAADP among them tends to be *de facto* and not explicit. To remedy this situation, the CAADP/SAKSS focal point office needs to step up transmission and sharing of information from CAADP to all members of the TWG. Stronger linkages are needed between the CAADP focal point and all the members of the TWG, and indeed with other TWGs within the sector. But the main challenge for the CAADP focal point is that it has limited connectivity. In brief, the focal point needs additional capacity to enhance communication and linkages with other sectors. The situation at the moment does not permit all this to take place. In Malawi, these challenges are compounded by the fact that the CAADP focal point is in the Trade and Marketing Unit of MoAFS, while the actual SAKSS coordination is within the M&E Unit. Thus, under this setup, the CAADP focal point is expected to attend all meetings in the M&E Unit and play a crucial role in its activities, which is not always technically feasible.

⁹ The author attended this meeting, held on May 23, and used it as an opportunity to gather more information for this report.

Respondents also reported the following other major challenges with regard to the activities of the TWG on M&E:

- Lack of joint M&E within the members, mainly emanating from lack of joint planning, resulting in the TWG’s only reviewing government implementation of ASWAp
- Failure to submit progress reports on ASWAp’s high-level indicators by those institutions responsible, leading to gaps in the TWG report
- Limited capacity of the M&E Unit, which affects its ability to implement surveys to collect data on indicators on which the ministry needs to report. This is compounded by government regulations on expenditure control.
- Bureaucratic procurement procedures and delays in payment of consultants
- High vacancy rates at headquarters, departments, agriculture development divisions, and districts, as well as inadequate analytical skills of existing staff at all levels

Despite these major weaknesses in the M&E system operations in the sector, the existence of several data-collecting systems and capacity-building programs running in the country presents an opportunity for addressing these problems. What is required, however, is to properly coordinate all these systems so as to obtain a coherent picture of the situation on the ground. As shown in this study, the TWG on M&E (the Malawi SAKSS), if it functions properly, is a good avenue for bringing about tangible results and impact. Additionally, the several existing TWGs in the sector and the country need a provision to facilitate within- and across-sector interaction so that they can share experiences.

5.8. Use of Evidence in Strategy and Policy Formulation

Despite the positives associated with using evidence in strategy and policy formulation, its use in MOAFS has been limited (Table 5.5). Respondents from government departments felt that recommendations made at sector reviews are only partially taken on board and that the role of M&E to influence policy is hampered by political motives. They reported that the influence of politics tends to be worse as the country approaches elections. On the other hand, participants from civil society organizations indicated that their strategy is influenced by evidence because of their reliance on external funding from institutions that demand evidence-based strategies.

TABLE 5.5. USE OF EVIDENCE IN STRATEGY AND POLICY FORMULATION

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	3	Neutral
Civil society	2	Effective
Donor	4	Ineffective
Research and academic	4	Ineffective

Source: Study Findings.

5.9. Internal Management and Evaluation That Stimulates Critical Reflection

When asked whether internal management and evaluation of their organizations stimulates frequent critical reflection, participants said they felt that their organizations do effectively draw lessons from previous interventions (Table 5.6). However, the main weakness cited was the time lag between identifying challenges and taking corrective action.

TABLE 5.6. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION THAT STIMULATES CRITICAL REFLECTION

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	2	Effective
Civil society	2	Effective
Donor		
Research and academic		

Source: Study Findings.

Besides internal evaluation, organizations have employed a variety of methods to obtain input from stakeholders to enhance reflection on issues. The most common ones include websites and annual stakeholder reviews.

TABLE 5.7. EFFECTIVENESS OF BODIES EMPLOYED BY ORGANIZATIONS

Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	2	Effective
Civil society	2	Effective
Donor	4	Ineffective
Research and academic	3	Neutral

Source: Study Findings.

5.10. Effective System to Stay in Touch with General Trends

In general, all organizations employ various strategies to stay in touch with general trends and developments in the food and agriculture sector (Table 5.8). These strategies are particularly important for civil society organizations that seek to remain relevant in policy processes and in the development arena.

TABLE 5.8. EFFECTIVE SYSTEM TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH GENERAL TRENDS

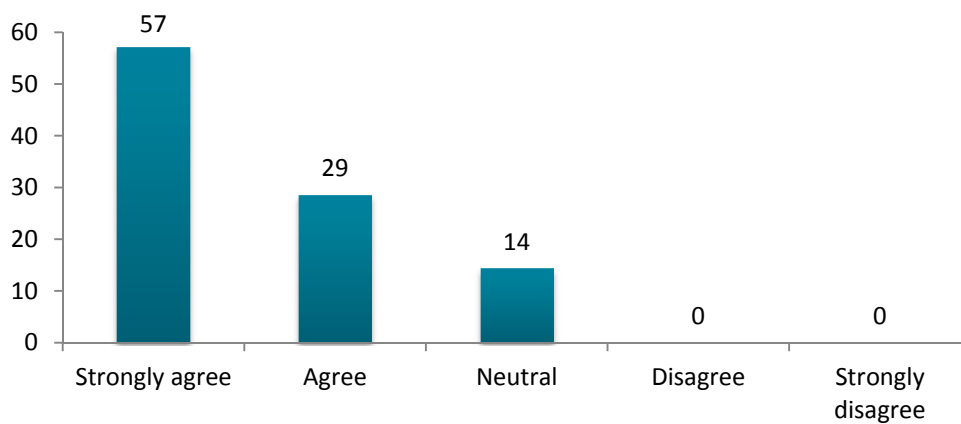
Institution type	Average score	Level
Government	1	Highly effective
Civil society	1	Highly effective
Donor	1	Highly effective
Research and academic	2	Effective

Source: Study Findings.

5.11. Capability to Deliver on Mandate and Development Objectives

Respondents were asked whether their institutions have clear objectives and a clear mandate that all members and staff understand, whether annual work plans are prepared and the budget is made available to all members, and the extent to which the institutions deliver on planned outputs. Most of the respondents (57 percent) strongly agreed that their institutions have, work toward, and ultimately deliver on clear objectives; 29 percent agreed and 14 percent were neutral (Figure 5.4). This means that despite some of the capacity challenges already reported, most organizations manage to deliver some of their outputs according to plan.

FIGURE 5.4. CAPABILITY TO DELIVER ON MANDATE AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

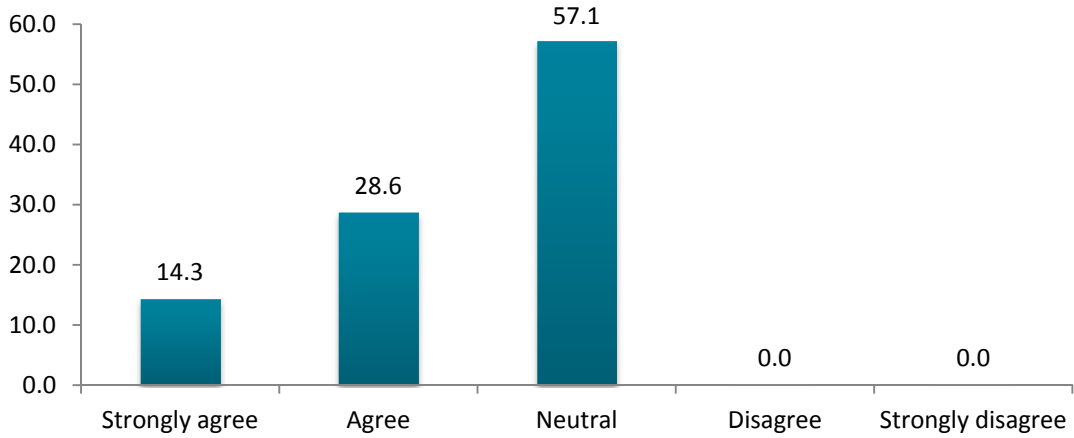


Source: Study Findings.

5.12. Extent to Which Institution Delivers on Planned Outputs

The study results revealed that organizations in the sector appear not to invest much in verifying that client expectations are met with slightly half of the respondents agreeing that their organization has mechanisms to check if expectations are met. In addition, the majority of those the respondents indicated that they were neutral (57.1 percent) on the extent to which their organization maintains effective relationships, followed by 28.6 percent of them who agreed and only 14.3 percent strongly agreed (Figure 5.5).

FIGURE 5.5. EXTENT TO WHICH THE INSTITUTION DELIVERS ON PLANNED OUTPUTS

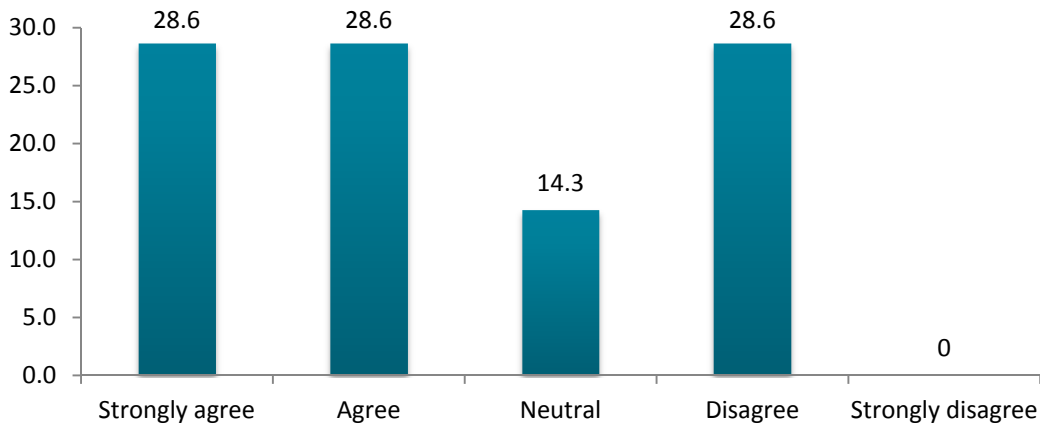


Source: Study Findings.

5.13. Mechanisms in Place to Verify That Services Meet Client Expectations

Organizations in the sector seem not to invest much in verifying that client expectations are met, with only 29 percent of the respondents strongly agreeing that their organization has mechanisms for this purpose. Likewise, 29 percent agreed and 29 percent disagreed; 14 percent were neutral (Figure 5.6).

FIGURE 5.6. MECHANISMS IN PLACE TO VERIFY THAT SERVICES MEET CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

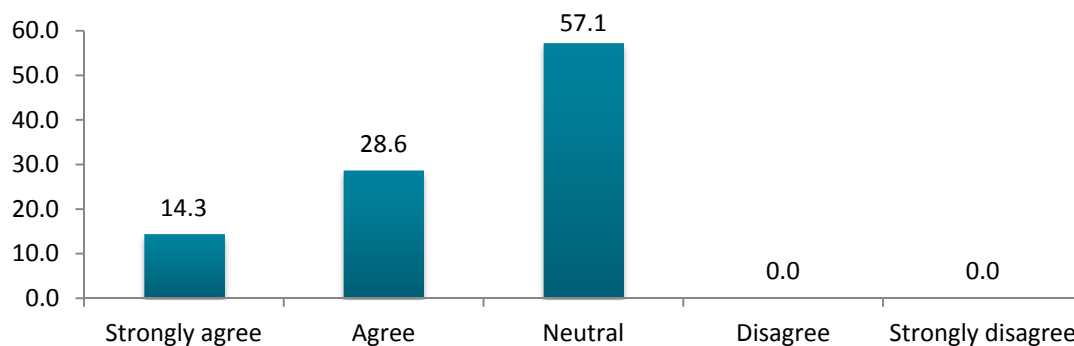


Source: Study Findings.

5.14. Extent to Which Organization Effectively Maintains Relationships

Only a small percentage of the respondents (14 percent) were of the strong view that their organization effectively maintained relationships with other organizations (Figure 5.7). Twenty-nine percent agreed and 57 percent were of a neutral opinion.

FIGURE 5.7. EXTENT TO WHICH YOUR ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVELY MAINTAINS RELATIONSHIPS



Source: Study Findings.

5.15. Capacity of Selected TWG Member Institutions in Use of Analytical Software

The study also assessed the capacity of selected TWG on M&E member institutions in the use of analytical and bibliographic software. With the exception of members from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DAAE and CARD) and from the MoAFS Planning Department, all the other government agencies (ICAM; the Land Resources Department; the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS; and the Office of the President and Cabinet)¹⁰ revealed major capacity gaps in the use of this software. In ICAM, all 5 staff members use the statistical program SPSS as well as Microsoft Excel and Access; however, SPSS and Access are rarely used—only on a quarterly basis. On the other hand, only 1 staff member in ICAM out of the 5 knows how to use OneNote, 2 know how to use ArcGIS, and 4 know how to use Epi Info. The situation is a lot better for the Department of Planning in MoAFS. Out of the 16 staff members that responded to the questionnaire, 11 (69 percent) know how to use Stata and use it quarterly. Similarly, 12 (75 percent) of the respondents in the Department of Agricultural Planning Services know how to use SPSS. However, none of the respondents knows how to use General Algebraic Modeling System (GAMS) and other more complex statistical software. The rest of the findings for this department are shown in Table 5.9.

¹⁰ Other members to whom the questionnaire was sent did not provide any feedback.

TABLE 5.9. CAPACITY TO USE ANALYTICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOFTWARE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PLANNING SERVICES

Name of software	Number of researchers or staff with skills	Frequency of use			
		Daily	2–3 times a week	Monthly	Quarterly
	<i>n</i> = 16				
Stata	11				5
Minitab					
SPSS	12			3	5
MATLAB	1				1
EViews	4				1
Reference Manager	1				Very rarely
EndNote	1+				Very rarely
Others, specify:					
Excel	6	2		1	
Access	3				

Source: Study Findings.

The summary of results for Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DAAE and CARD) reveals much stronger capacity in the use of various types of analytical software (Table 5.10). All the staff members who responded to the questionnaire know how to use Stata, SPSS, and Excel software. All staff members in DAAE were trained in Stata in 2012 under German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) financial support. However, the skills and frequency of application of the software among them vary quite significantly. In addition, even the academic staff members have limited skills in bibliographic software. The rest of the results for CARD and DAAE are shown in Table 5.10.

TABLE 5.10. CAPACITY TO USE ANALYTICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOFTWARE IN CARD AND DAAE

Name of software	Number of researchers or staff with skills	Frequency of use			
		Daily	2–3 times a week	Monthly	Quarterly
	<i>n</i> = 13				
Stata	13		4	2	7
Minitab	2				2
SPSS	13		5	6	2
MATLAB					
EViews	5			4	1
SAS	11				11
General Algebraic Modeling System (GAMS)	3				3
Atlas.ti	1			1	
Reference Manager	7				
EndNote	3				
OneNote	1				
NVivo					
Others, specify:					
Access	10			7	3
Excel	13	13			
ArcView GIS	2			1	1

Source: Study Findings.

Notes: CARD = Centre for Agricultural Research and Development; DAAE = Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. Both are departments at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Of the rest of the TWG member institutions that returned the questionnaire, five staff members in the policy section of the Office of the President and Cabinet have basic skills in Stata, eight know how to use SPSS, only two know how to use EViews, and one can use SAS. All of these software programs are only rarely used in the department. On the other hand, out of the nine staff members that responded to the questionnaire in the Land Resources Department, only three (33 percent) know how to use SPSS, and it is used only quarterly.

BOX 5.1 RECOMMENDATION

Findings suggest that academic institutions such as Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources can be a major resource in providing organized training in analytical and bibliographic software. It is therefore recommended that the university's Centre for Agricultural Research and Development, and its Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, with support from the International Food Policy Research Institute–Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System, play a key role in building the capacity of other members of the Technical Working Group on Monitoring and Evaluation in the use of relevant software for policy analysis.

Source: Author.

5.1.6. Lessons Learned from Policy Formulation and Implementation in Malawi

Of the factors identified in this report as impeding effective design and implementation of policies in Malawi, several could nevertheless serve as key lessons for future policy decisionmaking processes, including the formulation of a capacity-development strategy. The main lessons learned are the following:

1. Effective coordination is key to successful generation and sharing of data and information among all user groups and stakeholders in the country. However, besides the need for requisite human capacities at all levels of data generation and sharing, coordination is also contingent upon existence of the necessary infrastructure and equipment, such as means of connectivity.
2. Participatory and pluralistic policy formulation and decisionmaking processes usually receive support at all levels, leading to successful policy implementation.
3. An effective M&E system requires, among other things, that all stakeholders who contribute to and make use of it have adequate understanding of the indicators that make up the system. Such understanding must encompass the data that are required to measure progress toward achieving the various indicators as well as well how the data should be collected and analyzed.
4. Diversity of skills and knowledge base is a major asset in knowledge management systems.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this country-level capacity needs assessment was to develop a country-specific capacity-strengthening strategy to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process. Despite the serious challenges that have been faced in conducting this study, some conclusions could still be drawn from the findings.

The SAKSS platform in Malawi is represented by the TWG on M&E, which was established to serve the main monitoring role for ASWAp implementation in the country. Since ASWAp in Malawi is aligned to the CAADP process, the same monitoring framework is used to monitor indicators from both agricultural strategies. Malawi has a comprehensive M&E system for the agricultural sector, which is linked to the overall M&E framework of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, with overall coordination in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. However, the existence of a multiplicity of parallel M&E systems, mainly at project level, makes it difficult to assess the contribution of various projects and programs to food and nutrition security as well as to poverty reduction. Hence, following the adoption of ASWAp as a single policy strategy guiding investments into the sector, it has been necessary to develop a harmonized M&E system. However, the harmonization of M&E systems to ensure more coherent monitoring and reporting on the achievements of ASWAp implementation has resulted in the omission of some crucial indicators, thereby creating gaps in the system. Nevertheless, if managed properly with adequate financial and human resources, the harmonized system would ensure an effective flow and analysis of information and data for evidence-based policy formulation.

Furthermore, the analysis of available information and data suggests that the Malawi SAKSS is, in principle, a very strong aggregation of capacities from various member organizations. Although the individual organizational capacities vary quite significantly across the members of the TWG on M&E (the Malawi SAKSS), the blending of these organizations has created a critical mass of human capacities capable of providing an effective mechanism for monitoring ASWAp/CAADP in Malawi. However, several weaknesses make this M&E system ineffective, thereby negatively affecting policy decisionmaking, including measurement of achievements under ASWAp and, by the same token, under CAADP implementation in Malawi.

First, the operations of the TWG on M&E are ad hoc, almost always dependent on external financial support. Currently there is no regular forum that comprehensively monitors and evaluates the performance of the agricultural sector in the country. Different actors track the progress of various aspects of the sector in which they have a vested interest—for example, food and nutrition security is tracked by the M&E working group of the information systems subcommittee of the Food and Nutrition Security Joint Task Force. Sharing of information on sector performance and progress is also ad hoc because the members of the TWG on M&E rarely meet, resulting in a lack of the concrete evidence on sector performance that is needed for decisionmaking in the agricultural sector. The lack of information sharing is compounded by poor reporting on various ASWAp indicators, which leads to weak M&E reports from the TWG. Now almost two years into the implementation of ASWAp, the large membership of the TWG on M&E is still poorly coordinated.

Second, although MoAFS calls for joint sector reviews, usually once a year with much of the input into the process coming from the TWG on M&E, this exercise does not capture all the activities of the sector. Thus, the joint sector review is viewed by most stakeholders in the sector as a MoAFS activity, not one of the whole sector.

Third, limited human capacity in terms of both numbers and skills hinders evidence-based policy analysis using the data collected from the M&E activities, particularly in individual member organizations of the SAKSS platform. In view of this limitation, some stakeholders believe that ASWAp will only turn into a white elephant, not adequately providing strategic policy direction for the agricultural sector. The adoption of ASWAp for the agricultural sector as a vehicle for achieving

agricultural growth (2011–2015) and as a means of reaching the targets set in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy for reducing poverty indirectly entails a paradigm shift in the way investments are made in the sector. Yet the lack of a more robust M&E system in the sector preserves the status quo—the problems of the past seem to be taken forward.

Fourth, the merging of the M&E of ASWAp, which is driven by the TWG on M&E, with the M&E systems of the former Food and Nutrition Security Technical Secretariat (now known as ICAM) has created major confusion about indicators. While the ICAM M&E system mainly has output indicators with special focus on food security, ASWAp mainly has performance indicators at policy level. Some stakeholders perceive that the ICAM indicators are overshadowing the performance of ASWAp—meaning that ASWAp is not properly monitored.

Fifth, although ASWAp explicitly highlights its link to CAADP, most members of the TWG on M&E seem to have a poor understanding of the latter. This is despite the fact that the CAADP focal point was identified more than two years ago. Infrequent meetings resulting in lack of interaction among members of the group in part explain this knowledge gap.

Furthermore, although Malawi adopts a participatory approach to policy formulation in the agricultural sector, on strategic policy issues such as the Farm Input Subsidy Programme, the president has the final say. One may ask, why consult other stakeholders in the policy process when the final choice of a policy direction is vested in the president? In short, there is limited real dialogue in Malawi on issues of strategic policy concern in the sector. Similarly, what place does evidence-based policy formulation have in Malawi? For example, MoAFS calls for joint sector reviews, yet there is usually no systematic follow-up and implementation of recommendations made during these reviews. Again, the key question is why conduct a review if the recommendations made during such meetings are never implemented or closely followed up? The TWG on M&E could actively play not only the role of ensuring implementation of recommendations made in joint sector reviews but also that of developing mechanisms to involve all the key stakeholders in the sector, recognizing the fact that MoAFS is promoting strong public-private partnerships.

There seem to be more questions than answers on policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring in the agricultural sector in Malawi.

6.1. Recommendations

The findings of this study point to some recommendations to guide the design of a capacity-strengthening strategy for the SAKSS platform for Malawi. The key ones are the following:

- MoAFS needs to realize that successful implementation of ASWAp and indeed of the CAADP process in Malawi will depend on its M&E system. M&E constitutes a feedback mechanism for steering the strategic direction of the ministry. Hence, MoAFS should design appropriate mechanisms for strengthening the activities of the TWG on M&E.
- Members of the TWG on M&E need to be more aware of the CAADP process. The TWG should devise deliberate efforts to ensure that all the members understand this institution as well as the indicators that they are tracking.
- Some view the TWG on M&E as not inclusive enough because it leaves out key players in the sector, particularly from the private sector. We therefore strongly recommend revisiting its membership. A more inclusive membership of the TWG will, among other things, ensure preparation of more comprehensive joint sector review reports.

- MoAFS has to define the frequency for reporting on the various indicators in ASWAp, with a clear division of labor among the members. Failure to do so will mean that the TWG on M&E will continue to operate in an ad hoc manner, which would greatly compromise the success of ASWAp and CAADP implementation in Malawi. A more robust and harmonized system is therefore necessary.
- To enhance its effectiveness and functionality, MoAFS should build the capacity of the CAADP focal point. This should take the form of purchasing equipment for the unit that would enable it to effectively communicate with the wider membership. Among other things, this would also necessitate embedding or integrating the CAADP focal point into the M&E Unit.

7. PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF THE MALAWI SAKSS

The purpose of this country-level capacity needs assessment was to develop a country-specific capacity-strengthening strategy to meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process. The study has established that the Malawi SAKSS platform is the TWG on M&E. This is a group of several organizations comprising government agencies, civil society organizations, farmers' organizations, academia, and the donor community. The main mandate of this group is to monitor implementation of ASWAp. Since ASWAp for Malawi also serves as the mechanism for aligning country strategies to CAADP, the TWG on M&E also monitors this regional framework.

The study has found that while some weaknesses at individual TWG on M&E member organizations exists, as a team, these organizations represent a critical mass of capacities that, if properly harnessed, would meet the strategic-analysis and knowledge management objectives of the country CAADP process and at the same time effectively support implementation of ASWAp. However, there is poor coordination of these organizations, with each one managing individual M&E systems with limited deliberate focus on ASWAp and the CAADP process. The need to strengthen the coordination capacity of the SAKSS platform can therefore not be overemphasized. With technical support from IFPRI-Malawi SAKSS and the ReSAKSS in Pretoria, this process has to start by lobbying MoAFS to transfer the Malawi SAKSS focal point to the M&E Unit in the ministry. The separation from the M&E Unit has been viewed as a key point of disconnect that hinders effective coordination of ASWAp M&E activities. Additionally, effective coordination entails putting in place the requisite structures for effective communication among the members. Thus, the SAKSS focal point first needs financial resources to be able to call for regular meetings and not wait for external support. Second, the coordination unit needs to be strengthened by ensuring that it has the necessary equipment and other facilities to be able to maintain regular communication with the members of the TWG on M&E.

In addition, as a team, the SAKSS has clear terms of reference for its role in ASWAp/CAADP. The SAKSS also has clear indicators that are to be monitored under ASWAp. These indicators need to be redefined, and the responsibilities of reporting on each one need to be shared among the members with clearly spelled-out timelines to deliver the required outputs. Some of the indicators may require regular, well-designed studies that could be allocated to members with the capacity to carry out such studies. In view of concerns about lack of representation of some of the key stakeholders who are expected to provide data and information on what is happening in their subsectors, the membership of the TWG on M&E (hence the representation of various stakeholders in the SAKSS platform) needs to be revisited.

Further, there is a need for the SAKSS focal point to call for a meeting where the members of the SAKSS platform will establish a prioritized timetable of capacity-building activities based on the findings of this report. The Malawi SAKSS is quite rich in capacity, so members of the group could facilitate the planning meeting as well as conduct some of the capacity-building activities that will be identified. As part of the planning process, then, potential trainers could be identified from within the group's membership.

Last, but not least, financial support is required for all these activities to be carried out. MoAFS is about to establish a Multi-Donor Trust Fund, coordinated by the World Bank. The ReSAKSS coordinator needs to closely monitor this process so that any financial support for strengthening the Malawi SAKSS that could be mobilized through ReSAKSS could be channeled through the pooled funding. If this is not possible, financial support from ReSAKSS could be channeled through the IFPRI-Malawi SAKSS, which is playing a crucial role in supporting the implementation of ASWAp/CAADP in the country.

7.1. Strategic Interventions

The strategic interventions outline in more detail the broad strategy that has been outlined above. These will be guided by the mission statement, vision statement, and objectives to ensure that the implementation of the capacity-strengthening strategy for Malawi is coherent and focused. These are outlined in the sections that follow.

7.1.1. Mission, Vision, and Objectives

Mission Statement: To strengthen capacity of all key players in the food and agriculture policy process by improving coordination and skills to ensure quality of data collection and analysis for effective strategic policy decisionmaking and implementation.

Vision Statement: Strengthen the Malawi SAKSS to ensure an evidence-based strategic policy decisionmaking process in the promotion of agricultural development for the achievement of sustainable food and nutrition security, and poverty reduction in Malawi.

Objectives: In order to realize the outlined mission and vision statements, the following objectives will be pursued:

1. Strengthen capacity of key players in strategic agricultural policy analysis, investment planning, and M&E
2. Establish a platform that brings together institutions that demand and those that generate information as a mechanism for ensuring that strategic policy decisionmaking is informed by rigorous policy analysis
3. Strengthen the coordination and the knowledge management and sharing among stakeholders in order to effectively support the implementation of ASWAp/CAADP in Malawi

7.1.2. Key Thematic Intervention Areas

The key thematic interventions have been developed based on the specific objectives outlined above. Detailed activities have been proposed under each of the thematic interventions, as summarized in Table 7.1. The proposed activities are only indicative. Hence, as already pointed out above, they could be validated through one of the activities under this strategy.

TABLE 7.1. SUMMARY OF CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES AND ESTIMATED COSTS

Thematic intervention area	Detailed activities	Estimated costs (US dollars)
Thematic intervention area 1: Strategic policy analysis and investment planning	Training in development of tools for data collection and study design	25,000
	Training in data collection and analysis	30,000
	Skills development in use of tools and computer packages for data analysis	30,000
	Review of existing manuals and harmonization of existing monitoring and evaluation indicators	20,000
	Skills development in writing of policy briefs	20,000
	Subtotal	125,000
Thematic intervention area 2: Establishing a platform for agricultural policy dialogue and advocacy	Establishing an agricultural policy dialogue platform, including defining the structure, membership, and terms of reference of the various key players	30,000
	Training in policy advocacy and lobbying	20,000
	Training in facilitating policy dialogue	20,000
	Management of the biannual policy dialogue meetings	50,000
	Subtotal	120,000
Thematic intervention area 3: Coordination and knowledge management	Establishing structures and systems for knowledge management	40,000
	Developing a code of conduct to enhance knowledge management and sharing among all stakeholders	15,000
	Training and deployment of more staff in the Monitoring & Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	50,000
	Subtotal	105,000
Seed funds for operationalizing the strategy		50,000
Grand total for the strategy		Us\$400,000

Source: Study Findings.

Note: The costs are only indicative. Some seed money to be sourced through ReSAKSS has been proposed to facilitate development of a detailed activity plan and budget.

Thematic intervention area 1: Strategic policy analysis and investment planning

Some key players have a limited capacity in various areas, which limits their ability to carry out strategic agricultural policy, investment planning, and M&E. This thematic area's main activities will involve the following:

1. Development of tools for data collection and study design
2. Data collection and analysis
3. Skills development in use of tools and computer packages for data analysis
4. Review of existing manuals and harmonization of existing M&E indicators
5. Skills development in writing of policy briefs

The development of skills among key players at various levels is pivotal to ensuring evidence-based policy decisionmaking processes. Participants in these training activities will be identified through a properly coordinated mechanism. As much as possible, capacity-building activities will make use of the existing skills within the country while also benefiting from support services from the ReSAKSS coordinating office in Pretoria.

Thematic intervention area 2: Establishing a platform for agricultural policy dialogue and advocacy

Research in agricultural policymaking has historically played a marginal role in Malawi. To make research more relevant in the policy process of the future, researchers will have to become more familiar with the country's complex local political and socioeconomic realities. There must be a paradigm shift if research is to make any meaningful contribution to agricultural policymaking in Malawi. A platform for policy dialogue and advocacy will enable policy analysts on the one hand and policymakers including politicians on the other to freely dialogue on issues of national and policy concern based on evidence generated from various activities outlined in thematic intervention area 1 above. Planned as a biannual event, linked to the agricultural production cycle of Malawi, this activity will be broader than the joint sector reviews, in which politicians rarely participate. The Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Food Security will be the main political wing involved in these dialogue sessions. Main capacity-building activities will be as follows:

1. Establishing an agricultural policy dialogue platform, including defining the structure, membership, and terms of reference of the various key players
2. Training in policy advocacy and lobbying
3. Training in facilitation of policy dialogue
4. Management of the biannual policy dialogue meetings

Before the agricultural policy dialogue platform can be established, key stakeholders will need to meet to debate the structure, membership, and defining terms of reference of the various players in the platform. Furthermore, to ensure that the platform is indeed used as a mechanism for ensuring a paradigm shift in policymaking processes in the country, participants will need to be trained in the requisite skills for policy advocacy and lobbying, including how to facilitate such large gatherings of stakeholders with diverse interests. Participants should also be trained in skills for engaging with donors to obtain financial support for the activities of the Malawi SAKSS.

Thematic intervention area 3: Coordination and knowledge management

One respondent stated, “The TWG on M&E in itself is not a major problem. It only requires more effective coordination of all the actors involved.” This is one of the key messages from this study. Several gaps hinder effective coordination and knowledge management for strategic policy analysis and implementation. All key stakeholders in the sector need to understand the concept of knowledge management. The main activities under this thematic intervention area are as follows:

1. Establishing structures and systems for knowledge management
2. Developing a code of conduct to enhance knowledge management and sharing among all stakeholders
3. Training and deployment of more staff in the M&E Unit in MoAFS

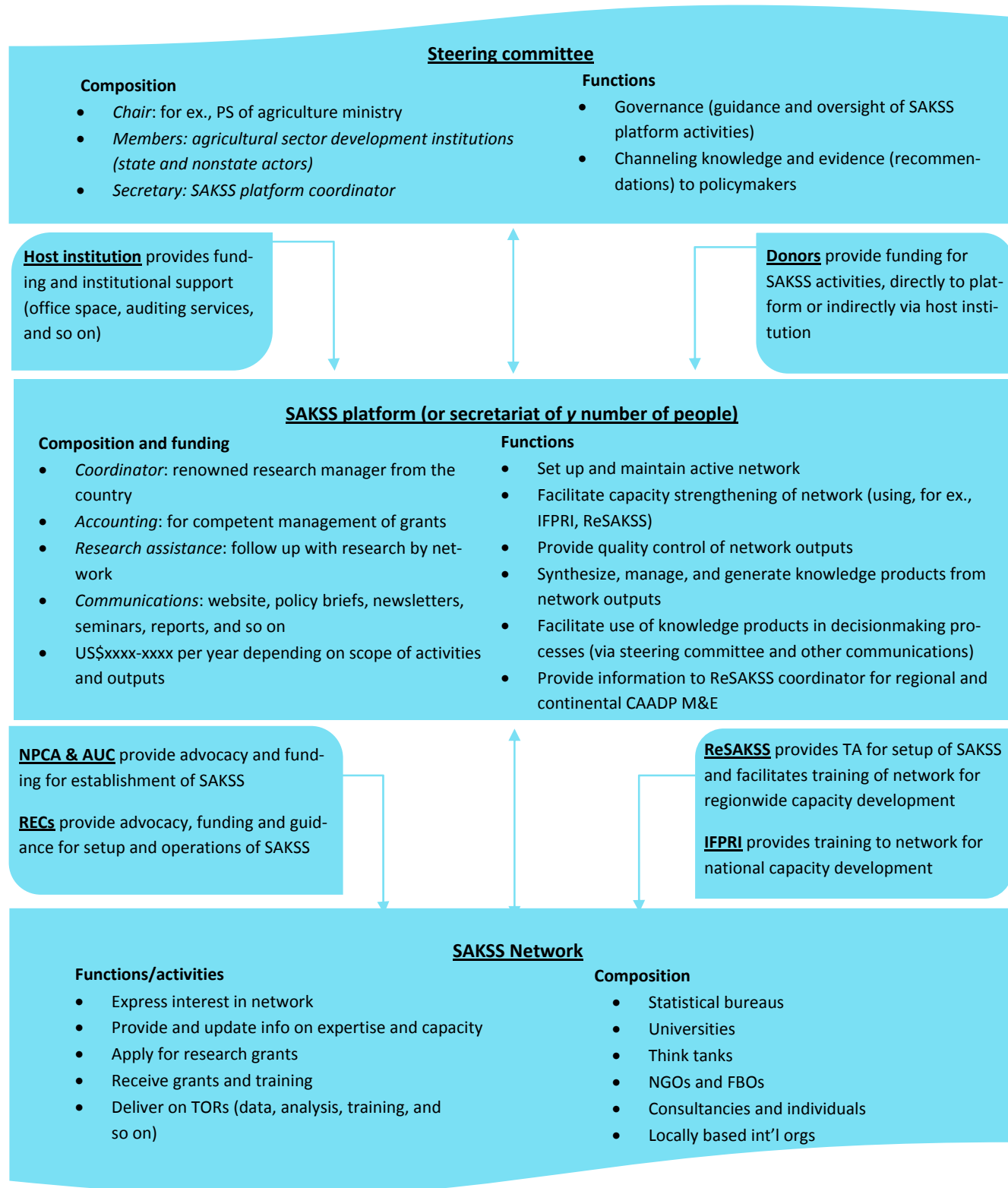
The agricultural sector in Malawi is rich in information. A mechanism needs to be established for this information to be consolidated into a single mega-database for access and use by all stakeholders. This process will require, among other things, information technology and communication equipment, such as computers, Internet connectivity, and the like, to ensure that the information and data can be shared and accessed by all. In addition, a wide range of institutions and organizations in Malawi generate information. Therefore a code of conduct should be developed to guide all the stakeholders in knowledge management and sharing practices. Because knowledge management is one of its core mandates, ReSAKSS will play a crucial role in this component. The experience of ReSAKSS personnel will be a valuable asset to the national-level knowledge management activities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: A Potential Country SAKSS Operational and Governance Structure



Source: Study Terms of Reference

Notes: AUC = African Union Commission; CAADP = Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme; FBO = faith-based organization; IFPRI = International Food Policy Research Institute; M&E = monitoring and evaluation; NEPAD = New Partnership for Africa's Development; NGO = nongovernmental organization; NPCA = NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Authority ; PS = permanent secretary; REC = regional economic communities; ReSAKSS = Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System; SAKSS = Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System; TA = technical assistance; TORs = terms of reference

Appendix 2: Current Capacity of TWG on M&E Member Organizations

Member	BSc	MSc	PhD	M	F	Total	Comments
Famine Early Warning System Network		2		2		2	These are the national technical manager and assistant technical manager, whose main mandate is to monitor the food markets situation in the country and cross-border flows of food produce.
Civil Society Agriculture Network	2	2		3	1	4	This is a network of civil society organizations working on agriculture. Its main focus is to monitor government policies that directly or indirectly affect the agriculture sector. This includes close monitoring of national budget allocation and implementation. It has a lean complement of staff funded by various donors.
Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources		7	12	18	1	19	A very strong concentration of capacity of agricultural economists, including 3 full professors, 1 associate professor, and 4 senior lecturers. The RUFORUM-supported PhD program in agriculture resource economics was introduced in the department in recognition of this capacity. Since 2008, the department has been accredited to implement a collaborative master's in agricultural and applied economics, supported by the African Economics Research Consortium. This was also based on the capacity assessment of the department.
Farmers Union of Malawi	2	6		4	4	8	The core management staff at headquarters has 1 economist who is directly linked to the TWG on M&E. However, the union also has some of its staff in the districts, who work in close collaboration with district-level agricultural staff in monitoring projects and activities.
M&E Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	1	3		3	1	4	These are 1 chief economist, 1 principal economist, and 2 economists. The unit reports that with its current workload, mainly in view of ASWAp monitoring, the staffing levels are inadequate. Proposed staffing is as follows: 1 chief economist, 2 principal economists, and 4 economists.
M&E Unit in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development							
M&E Unit in the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS	5	2		6	1	7	These include a director with an MSc, 1 chief economist with an MSc, and the rest economists with first degrees. In general, the unit reports have enough equipment and good connectivity. However, a key weakness is poor documentation of issues.
Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security	Human capacity varies over time. But in general it has strong capacity in various aspects.						The permanent members are currently Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the European Union. JICA is currently a co-chair of the TWG on M&E, which is chaired by the director of agricultural planning services.

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)		1	3	3	1	4	Through the SAKSS project, IFPRI provides, among other things, technical and financial support to the TWG on M&E as well as for overall ASWAp implementation. One of its staff members works directly with the TWG. The aim is to strengthen evidence-based policy analysis in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.
National Statistical Office							The office mainly monitors macrolevel indicators, not necessarily specific to the agriculture sector.
Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee	2	1		3		3	This represents only staff at the coordinating unit in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, whose head is a technical advisor with an MSc. However, the unit has a wide range of personnel with varying degrees of capacities.

Source: Author.

Notes: Personnel reported for Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources include only academic staff members from the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics and research fellows from the Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD). Research fellows (agricultural economists) from CARD also participate in teaching and supervising students in the department. The two units are also involved in joint policy research activities.

ASWAp = Agriculture Sector Wide Approach; M&E = Monitoring and Evaluation; RUFORUM = Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture; SAKSS = Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System; TWG = Technical Working Group.

Appendix 3: Composition of the Food and Nutrition Security Joint Task Force

The Food and Nutrition Security Joint Task Force comprises a number of subcommittees, each with specific terms of reference. The subcommittees operate and make decisions based on the information generated by the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Working Group. The plenary session of the task force is a meeting where all subcommittees present and discuss achievements within their terms of reference. Following are the subcommittees:

1. Food Security Policy and Programs Subcommittee (co-chaired by MoAFS and Ministry of Economic Planning and Development)
2. Humanitarian Response Subcommittee (co-chaired by Department of Poverty and Disaster Management, and Ministry of Health)
3. Strategic Grain Reserve and Commercial Maize Subcommittee (co-chaired by MoAFS and Ministry of Finance)
4. Information Systems Subcommittee (co-chaired by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and the Ministry of Agriculture)
5. Imports and Logistics Subcommittee (chaired by Ministry of Transport and Public Works)
6. Nutrition Subcommittee (chaired by Office of the President and Cabinet, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS)

Appendix 4: List of People Interviewed

Name	Title and organization	Contact details
Klaus Droppelmann	IFPRI-SAKSS team leader	
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James Bwirani	National technical manager, FEWSNET	Tel: +265 (0) 999 298 211
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G. Chisanga	ICAM M&E specialist	Tel: +265 888 511 589
Cindy Kibongwe	ICAM, MoAFS	Tel: +265 888 846 313 cindy.kibombwe@moafsmw.org

Source: Author.

Notes: CAADP = Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme; CARD = Centre for Agricultural Research and Development; CISANET = Civil Society Agriculture Network; DNHIV = Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS; FEWSNET = Famine Early Warning System Network; ICAM = Improvement of Coordination of ASWAp (Agriculture Sector Wide Approach) in the Ministry of Agriculture; IFPRI = International Food Policy Research Institute; M&E = Monitoring and Evaluation; MoAFS = Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; MVAC = Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee; SAKSS = Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System.

Appendix 5: Participants in the Dissemination Workshop

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Source: Author.

Notes: CARD = Centre for Agricultural Research and Development; DAHLD =Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development; ICAM = Improvement of Coordination of ASWAp (Agriculture Sector Wide Approach) in the Ministry of Agriculture; IFPRI = International Food Policy Research Institute; IWMI = International Water Management Institute; LRCO = Land Resources Conservation Department; LUANAR = Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources; M&E = Monitoring and Evaluation; MoAFS = Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; MoF = Ministry of Finance; OPC = Office of the President and Cabinet; ReNAPRI = Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes; ReSAKSS-SA = Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System for Southern Africa.

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Established in 2006, the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) supports evidence and outcome-based planning and implementation of agricultural-sector policies and strategies in Africa. In particular, ReSAKSS offers high-quality analyses and knowledge products to improve policymaking, track progress, and facilitate policy dialogue, benchmarking, review and mutual learning processes of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) implementation agenda. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) facilitates the overall work of ReSAKSS working in partnership with the African Union Commission (AUC), the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), and leading regional economic communities (RECs). At the regional level, ReSAKSS is supported by Africa-based CGIAR centers: the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Kenya, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in South Africa, and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria. www.resakss.org.

ReSAKSS has been established with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. ReSAKSS also receives funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFAN). ReSAKSS-WA also receives funding from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

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