



# LIFT's 2015-2019 Evaluation and Learning Questions

Insights &  
recommendations

28 February 2020



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# Overview

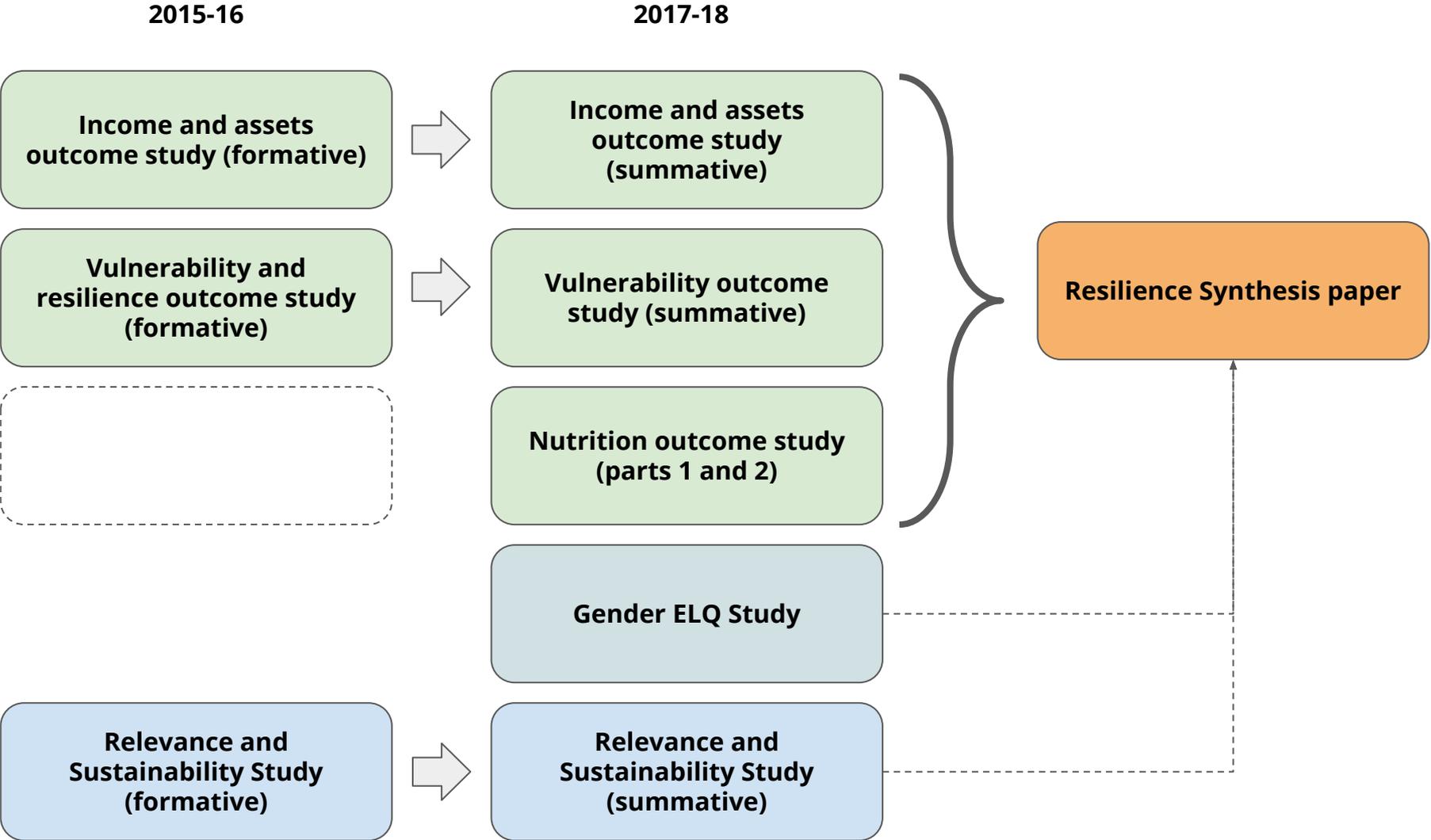
- LIFT's ELQs
  - LIFT interventions and beneficiaries
  - LIFT's contribution to purpose outcomes
  - LIFT's contribution to programme outcomes
  - Resilience, coping strategies and wider systems
  - Relevance and sustainability
  - Recommendations
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**LIFT's Evaluation  
and  
Learning Questions**

# The ELQs

- **Relevance:** To what extent have the LIFT strategy and LIFT interventions been relevant to the needs of the people it intends to reach?
  - **Effectiveness:** To what extent has LIFT contributed to strengthening the resilience of poor people in Myanmar and helped them to hang in, step up and step out?
  - **Sustainability:** To what extent has LIFT identified and established socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable approaches for achieving the purpose and programme outcomes?
  - **Gender:** To what extent has LIFT contributed to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment?
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# From Outcome Studies to Synthesis Paper



# Overview of ELQ studies

	Income and assets outcome study (summative)	Vulnerability outcome study (summative)	Nutrition outcome study (parts 1 and 2)	Gender ELQ	Relevance and Sustainability Study
OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on key impact pathways related to increased income and assets</li> <li>• Considers effect of exposure to shocks and stresses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explores changes in multi-dimensional vulnerability over time</li> <li>• Considers effect of exposure to shocks and stresses with strong emphasis on coping behaviours</li> <li>• Substantial qualitative component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of key linkages between nutrition and resilience</li> <li>• Focuses on changes in child and maternal nutrition and household food security</li> <li>• Uses village level shock and stress module</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing the degree to which LIFT's gender strategies' objectives have been achieved</li> <li>• Identifying effective ways for LIFT to further gender equality and women's empowerment in the future.</li> <li>• Across key thematic and geographic areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of standardised tools to assess project relevance and sustainability</li> <li>• Focus on key drivers of sustainability and relevance</li> </ul>
DATA SOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHS 2015 &amp; 2017</li> <li>• HHS Expenditure module</li> <li>• Case study of selected projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHS 2015 &amp; 2017</li> <li>• Qualitative interviews</li> <li>• Case study of selected projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHS Nutrition module 2015-2017</li> <li>• HHS Village module</li> <li>• Online survey w/ IPs</li> <li>• Case study of selected projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qual + quant</li> <li>• 35 FGDs (women and men beneficiaries)</li> <li>• 36 KIIs (FB, FMO, IPs)</li> <li>• 22 IPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 MTRs in Round 1</li> <li>• 50 MTRs and Project Evaluations in Round 2</li> <li>• Project documents</li> <li>• Interviews with LIFT POs</li> </ul>

**LIFT interventions  
and  
beneficiaries**

# LIFT interventions

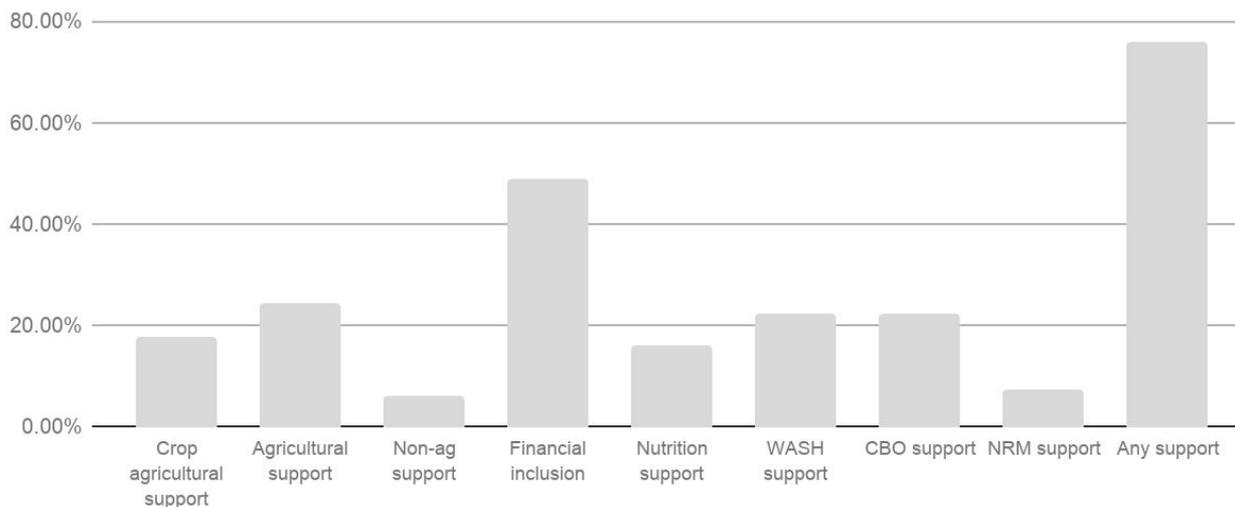
Between 2015 and 2018, LIFT supported over 60 interventions in the Delta, Dry zone, Uplands and Rakhine regions. These interventions can be classified into several key thematic areas:

- Sustainable agricultural development.
- Migration and decent work.
- Financial Inclusion.
- Nutrition and WASH.
- Cross-cutting work on gender, CSOs and policy.

# LIFT beneficiaries

76% of households in LIFT-supported villages received some kind of development assistance

Figure 1: Percent households receiving support of different types



# LIFT beneficiaries

**55%** of supported households received 2 or more types of support

**34%** of supported households received a combination of financial and non-financial support

**22%** received only financial support

**20%** received only non-financial support

# LIFT beneficiaries

Despite development assistance becoming more inclusive since 2015, **female-headed households and the poorest households were still less likely to receive support** than male-headed households and wealthier households.

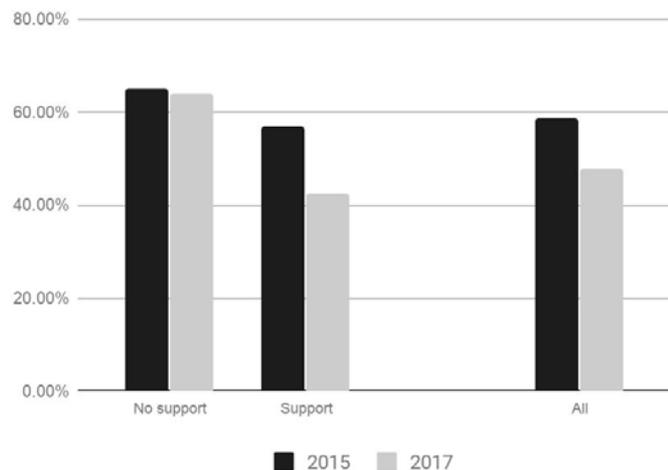
**In 2017 around 80 per cent of households in the highest wealth quintile received support compared to 70 per cent of those in the lowest wealth quintile.**

**LIFT's contribution  
to purpose  
outcomes**

# Purpose Outcomes: Income (poverty)

Overall reduction in poverty, with reductions concentrated amongst households that received LIFT support

Figure 2: Poverty by year and whether received LIFT support using national poverty line



Between 2015 and 2017, 25% of households moved out of poverty, while 14% fell into poverty.

This corresponds to **a net reduction in poverty of 11%**.

Reduction in poverty was highest (14%) amongst households receiving LIFT support.

# Purpose outcomes: Income (and consumption)

Modest improvements in income and consumption, on average, though some households getting worse off.

Households exposed to LIFT support were more likely to see incomes increase, with the largest increases amongst households receiving multiple interventions.

Consumption expenditure increases with LIFT support, but the share of food expenditure remains high.

Considerable increase in casual labour as a source of income (from 29% in 2015 to 41% in 2017).

## **Purpose outcomes: Income (assets)**

Substantial growth in assets, partly fueled by improved access to credit.

Gains in asset ownership higher for LIFT supported households, though female headed households gained less than male-headed households.

# Purpose outcomes: Vulnerability

Overall modest reduction in vulnerability from 25 per cent at baseline to 22 per cent at endline.

**17%** households changed from vulnerable to non-vulnerable  
*Increased asset ownership and income are driving the reductions in vulnerability*

**14%** whose status changed from non-vulnerable to vulnerable.  
*Reduced social capital, poor health are driving the increases in vulnerability*

Effect of LIFT support in reducing vulnerability strongest amongst households affected by shocks by stresses.

# Purpose outcomes: Vulnerability

Debt-related vulnerability presents a somewhat mixed picture across regions (worsening in Delta and Dry Zone but getting better in Uplands and Rakhine).

Economically weaker households saw greatest gains in reduced vulnerability.

Female headed households and households with people with disabilities did not see the same reductions in vulnerability as economically weaker households.

# Purpose outcomes: Nutrition

Seasonal food shortages remained, but households were more food secure.

Child malnutrition remains prevalent, with significant disparities across regions and household types.

Progress on exclusive breastfeeding and meal frequency, but drop in adequate dietary diversity.

Underweight rates for women (MUAC) with children under 2 have remained constant at around 20%.

89% of sampled women still not meeting women's minimum dietary diversity.

# Purpose outcomes: Nutrition

Nutrition and WASH interventions appear to be mitigating nutritional deterioration amongst children.

Diarrhoea, sex (m) and location found to be key drivers of wasting in children.

Education of household head and access to proper toilets are key factors in risk of stunting.

**LIFT's contribution  
to programme  
outcomes**

# Agriculture / inclusive value chains

- Households receiving agricultural support twice as likely to trial new practices as those that didn't
- Households trialling new practices more likely to report increases in income (though also more likely to report decreases)

But only found 15% of reached households reported that they had trialled new practices!

## GENDER

- Women heavily involved but often not considered as 'farmers' and have limited access to resources (inc. land), inputs, markets, opportunities
- Some projects 'gender blind' - risk of making things worse for women
- Married women carry disproportionate share of ag work - migration & time poverty
- Limited analysis of sex disaggregated data on beneficiaries for adaptive management
- Activities not tailored to women's timings/convenience
- Low women's leadership in community groups

## RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Often have the lowest relevance, **complicated design, too many overambitious components, non-adaptive, top-down management driven by targets**
- Often perform relatively poorly on considerations of sustainability, with **direct support mechanisms** and **lack of clear focus on sustainability** of specific entities and **insufficient incentives**
- More sustainable initiatives tended to have fewer components, started as they intended to continue and focused on clear entities with specific incentives to sustain

# Financial services

- 77% of households took a loan from any source - moneylenders, government and microfinance the most common sources
- 50% of households received support related to financial inclusion
- Households receiving financial support + non-financial support most likely to experience income increase.
- Limited gains from non-financial support alone and almost imperceptible gains from only non-financial support

## **GENDER**

- MFIs highly relevant to women's needs
- MFI project staff have limited gender awareness
- Those without start-up/business excluded
- FL materials not sufficiently gender-sensitive
- Skewed household decision-making not addressed
- Limited awareness amongst women of different types of loan available
- Women's unpaid care work is not addressed

## **RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- Generally have the highest levels of sustainability - MFIs have strong institutional commitments and incentives to achieving sustainability

# Migration / non-agricultural support

*Note: Limited coverage under the 2015 & 2017 HH Survey*

- Households receiving non-agricultural livelihood support were more likely to report an increase in income than those that did not.

## **GENDER**

- Mostly of high relevance to different target groups (women, youth, men)
- IPs have core competencies in place to address gender issues and intentional about addressing gender issues
- Occupational segregation remains, but efforts in place to tackle
- Difficulty in providing services (inc. legal) at destination for mobile populations and vulnerable groups

## **RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- No specific findings on these interventions

# Nutrition and WASH

- Significant increase in use of improved water sources amongst households receiving LIFT support; no change for households without support.
- Infant and young children feeding knowledge and practices improved.
- Quality of food increased, but most mothers still did not meet minimum food diversity.

## **GENDER**

- Gender sensitive IEC Materials
- Cash transfer modalities have different impacts on women
- Mostly target women
- Variation in messaging
- Some involvement of non-traditional beneficiaries

## **RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- No separate analysis

# Social protection

Not specifically addressed through the HH Survey.

Overall access to social protection, especially health-related, found to be very limited (work on social pensions and MCCTs notwithstanding).

## **GENDER**

- Opportunity for female elders to take on leadership roles
- Low self-esteem of female elders poses a challenge
- Approach considered care work and power dynamics
- Women and girls with older males are more vulnerable

## **RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- Ranked highest in terms of relevance and sustainability
- Tended to work with one key partner and provide facilitation (rather than direct) support to help them develop some kind of improved or extended services
- Worked well in communities with a strong sense of social cohesion and organisation with community partners who could do more with a little organisation and investment

# **Resilience, coping strategies and wider systems**

# Resilience: Exposure to shocks

- Shocks and stresses affect 56% of households in total, and one-third of households severely or somewhat severely, with considerable variation across regions
- Communities and households affected by shocks and stresses are **more likely to experience worsening nutritional outcomes, increases in poverty and vulnerability, and reduced incomes.**
- Some households were found to be at risk of entering a **spiral of increasing vulnerability and hardship** as a result of exposure to shocks and stresses. These were likely to be the most vulnerable households — either female-headed households or those having persons with disabilities.

Type of shock	% reporting	Severe?	Delta	Dry Zone	Uplands	Rakhine
Severe illness/injury/death of household member	25.80%	16.50%	20.30%	13.60%	11.90%	24.30%
Natural disaster	13.00%	13.00%	9.60%	16.90%	9.60%	19.20%
Unexpected crop failure	19.30%	9.80%	8.70%	11.10%	10.60%	7.40%
Unexpected death of major livestock	18.80%	7.90%	11.00%	4.00%	8.00%	10.20%
Lost regular job/income source	11.80%	7.50%	9.90%	4.60%	7.70%	9.60%
Any shock	56.00%	33.80%	37.90%	30.50%	30.20%	40.10%

# How are people coping with shocks and stresses?

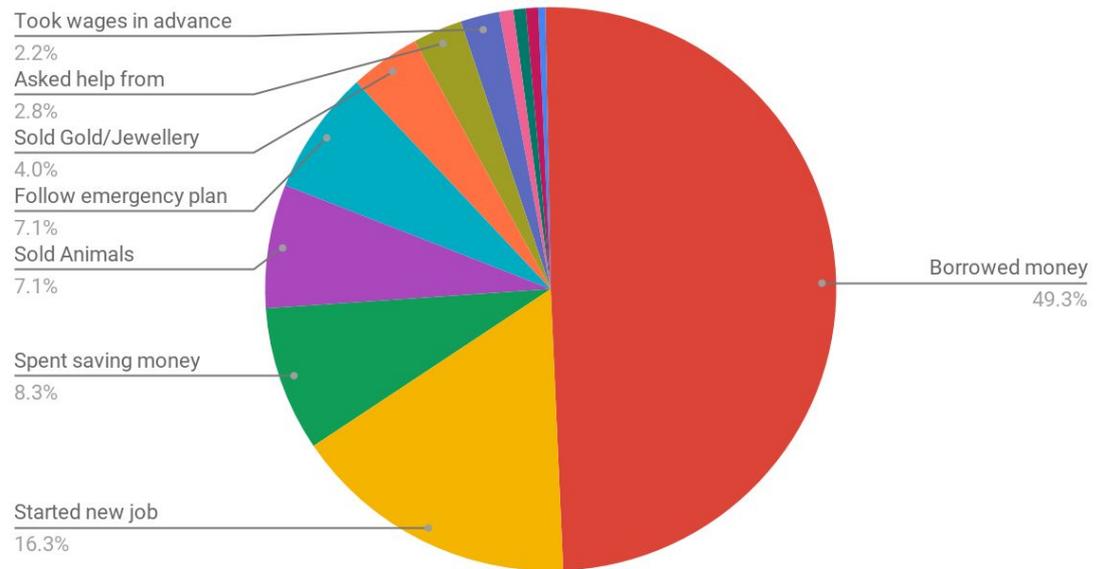
Asset depletion often indicates spiraling vulnerability

Credit expands the range of coping options available to vulnerable households

Livelihood diversification crucial but it matters how it is done

Migration remains a vital coping strategy

Percent of respondents adopting various coping strategies



- Households **benefiting from LIFT support** were more likely to fare better
- **The more support a household received, the more likely they were to cope successfully.**

# Impact of coping strategies

Different coping practices appear to have different payoffs and risk profiles.

Some households adopt a series of negative practices and enter a downward spiral of poverty and increased vulnerability.

Wider systems and structural factors can have a significant impact on households' coping capacity - especially:

- Wider economic trends and market dynamics
- Determinants of social inclusion
- Public infrastructure and services
- Health of traditional social institutions

# Relevance and sustainability

# Relevance (overview)

The relevance of projects across the portfolio was found to be strong:

**86%** of reviewed projects were relevant (50%) or highly relevant (36%).

**14%** (seven projects) were found to be only partly relevant.

The main areas with some weaknesses were in:

1. **the relevance of the project design to the different intermediate actors and the context,**
2. **the level and effectiveness of the adaptive management put in place to adjust for deficiencies in design or a changing context** so as to keep the project relevant throughout its lifetime.

# Relevance - design

A total of **17 (34% of the) project designs were found to be only partly relevant and three (6%) of poor relevance.** The main reasons for this were:

- **Project designs too complex and too ambitious** for some of the intermediate actors, or beneficiaries, or even the implementing partner (IP).
- **Lack of a viable technology, clear logic or “business model”** that can reliably generate the benefits needed to engage and motivate the intermediate actors and ultimate beneficiaries.
- **No identification of which technologies/approaches should be piloted and refined before roll out**, and an appropriate approach and methods to do this.
- **Insufficient understanding of the context** leading to the project logic being based on incorrect assumptions.

# Relevance - adaptive management

A total of **fourteen (28%** of the) projects were found to have been only partly effective in their **adaptive management** and one project performed poorly.

**This depended mostly on the ability of the project to set up effective M&E systems, and management systems that can interpret the data, understand what is happening in the field, and make and implement sensible decisions to adjust implementation.**

This depends on a number of factors.

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

# Sustainability - overall

Only half of the reviewed projects were found to be mostly sustainable (42%) or highly sustainable (8%)

24 projects (48%) were found to be only partly sustainable and one project (2%) mostly unsustainable.

The degree of sustainability achieved in projects was found to depend significantly on:

1. **The inherent challenges for sustainability from a combination of factors relating mostly to the sector and the geographical location and current context for the project, and**
2. **The way the projects had been designed and implemented.**

# Sustainability - key factors

Key factors were:

1. **The level of complicatedness of the project** (e.g. the number of different components and real-world entities, systems, behaviour changes etc addressed),
2. **The extent to which the project provided direct support compared to more collaborative “facilitation”,** and simply
3. **The extent to which projects had thought about and integrated sustainability into their project design and (adaptive) management.**

**Many projects did not consider sustainability sufficiently in design or at an early enough stage during implementation.**

**Sustainability was often not addressed until issues were raised by the mid-term reviews.** Sustainability should be built into the design and not through separate “exit strategies”.

**A number of projects more or less ignored sustainability through some kind of fuzzy thinking of the IP that what they want to achieve cannot be sustainable in the three year project and they had some idea to continue.**

# Resilience

Highly linked to both relevance and sustainability.

**21 of the 50 projects made little or no specific consideration of resilience.**

**23 other projects made specific mention of resilience and aimed to make a general and limited contribution to it.**

**Only 6 projects made some kind of specific analysis of resilience and had a specific focus on resilience.**

# Recommendations

# Design for resilience

**Design for resilience** (with shocks and stresses in mind) and **identify measures to prevent households falling into poverty?**

Analyse **drivers of malnutrition** and their link with shocks and stresses and design accordingly.

Design to leverage **synergies** between interventions to leverage complementary services and effects.

Expand the **coverage and intensity** of LIFT interventions, particularly those related to non-farm income.

# Design for gender and women's empower- ment

Conduct gender analysis and identify barriers to participation of excluded individuals/households to make project design responsive and inclusive (across all thematic areas).

Ensure that men and other non-traditional target groups are included in interventions to address gender relations and women's empowerment.

Address **Unpaid Care Work** and triple roles of women (productive, reproductive and community) to Recognise, Reduce and Redistribute work across all programming.

Develop women's leadership by creating specific opportunities for emerging women leaders to take on roles across various levels and platforms.

# Design for sustainability

Design for **sustainability from the outset** and embed in TOC, MEAL Plans/Frameworks, budgeting and reporting structures.

**Define the sustainability of key systems/actors and the benefits they should continue to provide after the project.**

Develop **adaptive management systems** and build them into project design and monitoring.

Consider **longer term projects broken into meaningful standalone conditional phases**, with prior agreement in principle from LIFT.

IPs and FMO should support projects, MFIs and other intermediate service provider organisations to **institute simple basic environmental screening and risk mitigation.**

# Delivery & adaptive management

The combination of rural transformation and precarity demand adaptive management.

**Improve monitoring and evaluation** since rigorous adaptive management relies on the availability of timely, useful and good quality evidence;

**Dedicate time and resources to utilisation of evidence** to inform decision-making

**Use sex-disaggregated data** to address issues of targeting/inclusion in project delivery.

**Strengthen organisational/managerial policies, processes and systems** that enable and incentivise evidence-based learning and enable mid-course corrections.

# Capacity

Strengthen the ToC and MEAL planning support available for IPs so as to make truly “Actor-Centred” ToCs that support a focus on sustainability.

Strengthen capacity for ongoing (evidence-based) adaptive management at LIFT and IP levels to support responsiveness to emerging issues and opportunities that determine relevance, sustainability and effectiveness.

Training to all staff and IP on key gender concepts/tools, with time-bounded action plan to mainstream gender in their organization (internal goals) and work (project goals), monitored by designated mentors.

Create sharing platform between IPs on gender and a gender expert pool (e.g. to provide consultancy to other IPs on a needs basis).

# Incentives

(mostly based on gender ELQ but these apply to other areas as well)

Cultivate a performance culture which rewards efforts to promote gender equality.

Performance is not only linked to gender-neutral output (e.g. loan repayment) but also link to empowerment indicators.

Consider additional incentives for IPs which out-perform on selected gender indicators.

Motivate IPs to innovate, e.g. through small-scale innovation grant on women's empowerment to test new ideas with potential to scale.

Consider using preconditions (e.g. for eligibility) to motivate women's (and men's) participation, and more equitable distribution of resources in the household and community (e.g. linking the distributing of certain fund to women's ownership of assets and/or women's representation in committees).

# Budget

Financing for gender mainstreaming to ensure adequate budgets for gender expertise and capacity-building, as well as for the sustained and consistent implementation of gender equality programming, including research and analysis.

Financing for MEAL to ensure required expertise and costs associated with data collection and analysis are covered to support evidence-based decision-making, accountability and adaptive management.

# Research & Evaluation

Continue gathering comprehensive longitudinal survey data that can generate quantitative insights on how households move in and out of poverty/are affected by shocks and stresses.

Develop rigorous research and learning agenda on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Evaluate project impact on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Collect indicator data at the appropriate frequencies and achieve greater depth of analysis through thematic surveys.



Thank You!

