

RTIM 2023: Sector Working Group on Agriculture and Rural Development (SWG ARD) Annual Report

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1. Main objectives and targets of Sector Working Group in 2023 (1/2 page)

2023 marks a COVID recovery phase for Lao PDR which translate into a great need to have a proactive protection of agriculture, forestry sector, and rural development sectors.

Therefore, the main aim and target of the sector is to boost the confidence of farmers and supply chain operators that they can continue to operate both profitably and safely in their efforts to feed the nation. Some segments of the population (e.g. daily wage earners in the informal sector, recently returned workers from neighbouring and other countries and homeless) need to be assured of continuity of the critical food supply as well as stable income.

At the same time, the sector needs greater investment and support to build the capacity among a large range of stakeholders from individual farmers to civil servants, traders and processors. The livelihoods of rural populations also depend on access to public and private infrastructure and services as well as forest resources, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, education. A holistic approach reflecting these various dimensions (technical, economic, social, environmental and political) will be essential to poverty reduction and economic growth in rural areas. Increasing climate resilience with respect to agriculture and forest protection is also a high priority especially for food security and disaster management.

The prevailing challenges has been addressed through a specific strategic document developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which focuses on a people-centered three faceted Vision of people: (1) having food security and good nutrition, (2) earning increasing income from commercial agriculture, and (3) living and working in diversified, green and sustainable Lao Agro-ecosystems.”

Selected Key Targets achievement/progressive rate in 2023 toward 2025:

Food security and good nutrition and commercialize of agriculture products which are diversified, clean and safe. People are living and working in diversified green and sustainable Lao ecosystems. Toward mid-point of the ADS (2021-2025), Agriculture growth on average 2.7% a year and contribution to GDG (17.1%)

- Crop production growth rate 1.9 % a year;
- Growth of animal fertilizer 3.6 % a year,
- Fishery growth 4.6 %
- Forestry growth 4.2%
- Agriculture crops – value USD 1,2 billion a year;
- Meat consumption progressive toward the target of 73 kilos/a person/by 2025
- Cattle export 200,000 cattles.
- Forestry coverage – progressive toward the target of 70% by 2025
- Out of poor districts = 69 districts across national (increase from 53 to 122 districts);

2. What are the key results and impacts achieved within your sector in 2023 against the [2022 RTIM policy recommendations](#), and [9th NSEDP](#), SDGs and sector strategies? (1-2 pages)

<p>9th NSEDP outcomes</p>	<p>Contribution of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Rural Development Sectors contributing to the national outcomes and progress made in recent years</p>
<p>Outcome 1 - Continuous, quality, stable, and sustainable economic growth achieved</p>	<p><u>Key area 1 - Food systems, food security and nutrition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure nutrition and food security – expand rice farming areas; provide water for irrigation; produce other crops, livestock, fisheries and NTFP for a diversified diet. <p><u>Progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>In recent years, the Government of Lao PDR made significant progress in various areas of agriculture and food systems. This includes the publication of a Food Systems Assessment, the development of a national strategy for agroforestry, and the establishment of a certification system for organic farming. The government has also focused on irrigation management, crop diversification, and seed conservation, with initiatives such as the National Irrigation Development Strategy and the establishment of seed banks and community seed banks. Additionally, support for farmers, market access improvement, and capacity building for seed conservation have been key priorities, showcasing the government's commitment to sustainable agriculture and food security.</p> <p><u>Key area 2 - Commercial production/Agribusiness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce more and higher commodities for sale in domestic export markets for fresh and processed items. <p><u>Key Progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>The government attracted foreign investment in commercial crop production and completed the Second National Survey on Farmer Organizations. Laos expanded its rice export markets, reducing reliance on neighboring countries. The country also promoted the cultivation and export of other crops like coffee, rubber, and cassava to diversify agricultural exports. Additionally, investments were made in irrigation systems, roads, and storage facilities to support commercial production and agribusiness. The adoption of modern farming technologies, such as hybrid seeds and mechanization, aimed to improve productivity. Public-private partnerships were established to promote commercial production, and studies were conducted on the relationships between Chinese agricultural investors and local communities. Efforts to scale up Climate Resilient Extension Development (CRED) to other provinces and assess climate risks in agricultural value chains were also undertaken through the Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector Project (CFAVC).</p>

	<p><u>Key area 3 - Domestic and foreign investment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating environment to attract investment • inspection, assessment of agricultural and other projects in agricultural/rural areas <p><u>Key progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>Stakeholders from the private sector, government agencies, development partners, and neighboring countries convened at the first national investment forum on sustainable agriculture in 2023 to prioritize key agricultural focuses. Studies were conducted on the relationships between Chinese agricultural investors and local communities in Northern Laos, and measures such as a Cooperative Law and Contract Farming Decree were drafted to promote partnerships. Incentives to promote investment in agriculture, including tax incentives, streamlined permit procedures, and investment protection, were implemented. Domestic investors, including small-scale farmers and agribusinesses, have expanded operations, and the government has encouraged large-scale commercial agriculture through land concessions. Foreign investment, particularly from China, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia, has also been increasing. Additionally, the government has collaborated with private companies to promote commercial production and agribusiness, conducting studies on approaches to Agribusiness Development for Small Farmers and drafting laws to support partnerships.</p>
<p>Outcome 2 - Improved quality of human resources</p>	<p><u>Key area 4 - Investment, innovation, and technology in agriculture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity for officials in enterprise registration in industry and commerce sector; • Application of modern technology and innovation in the agriculture • Youth and agriculture • Farmers and small holders <p><u>Progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>The government has supported the development of new rice varieties and promoted the use of organic fertilizers and integrated pest management to improve crop productivity. Additionally, they have encouraged the adoption of modern technologies in agriculture, such as precision agriculture, smart irrigation systems, and drone technology. The "Agripreneurs for Green Rural Enterprises and Economy" (AGREE) initiative has been an example of promoting agricultural entrepreneurship among young people, with measures being discussed to create income-generating opportunities, facilitate business ownership, provide coaching, and open up networking opportunities for rural youth.</p>
<p>Outcome 3 - Enhanced well-being of the people</p>	<p><u>Repetitive area - Food systems, food security and nutrition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure nutrition and food security – expand rice farming areas; provide water for irrigation; produce other crops, livestock, fisheries and NTFP for a diversified diet.

	<p><u>Progress made in recent years</u> Same as highlighted in outcome 1</p> <p><u>Key area 5 - Rural development, industries, services and livelihoods</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote value-addition goods production and services in agriculture. Livestock, fisheries and rural areas. • Irrigation <p><u>Key progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>In recent years, the Lao government has focused on public investments in rural development and poverty eradication, establishing the Inter-ministerial committee on rural development and poverty reduction to ensure coordination. Milestones include defining focal areas on rural development and resettlement, with ongoing work on a master plan, habitation allocation strategy, and implementation guidance. There has been an update of poverty data, and the expansion of social protection schemes as part of the COVID recovery plan. Efforts are being made to achieve sustainable management of village funds and strengthen irrigation management through rehabilitation, expansion, and modernization of infrastructure. Additionally, policies and strategies for future irrigation development are being tailored to support the specific needs of upland and lowland systems.</p>
<p>Outcome 4 - Environmental protection enhanced and disaster risks reduced</p>	<p><u>Key area 6 – Forestry, forest resources management, disaster risk management and disease control</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support restoration of forestry resources for richness natural resources base and ecosystems. • Natural Resource and Disaster Risk Management • Disease control <p><u>Key progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR has reinforced the Forest and Forest Resource Management Action Plan and the Forestry Strategy 2023, which focuses on improving forestry legislation and strategies, increasing forest coverage to 70%, promoting village level forest allocation and management, and strengthening management mechanisms in the forestry sector. The data source for reporting on forest cover has changed, leading to a new coverage figure of 58% of the land area in Lao PDR. The National REDD+ Strategy has been finalized, and the National Forest Reference Emission Level/Forest Reference Level has been constructed. Lao PDR has submitted its Emission Reductions Program Document to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. The revision of the Forest Law has been finalized, and the management of all types of forests has come back to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Lao PDR has finalized its Second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity.</p> <p>The Early Warning Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed to enhance technical capacity and establish a systematic early warning system for major hazards. Dissemination of warning messages through</p>

	<p>mobile phones is being used to ensure wider and timely dissemination, with support from private companies Lao Telecom, ETL, and UNITEL. The new national level agrometeorological system called LaCSA “Laos Climate Services for Agriculture” has been producing two innovative products, in 2022, which are key for crop early warning such as a provincial seasonal bulletin covering the entire country updated on a monthly basis (end of every month) and a weekly bulletin (beginning of every week) with recommendations on rice productivity and pest and disease for six pilot locations. Greater efforts are made to promote the One Health approach to zoonotic diseases with national institutions and international partners in the country. As a follow up from the 10th National One Health Symposium in Vientiane Capital, the Government worked together on a plan to enhance multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration among relevant One Health sectors and Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR). Implementation of the COVID Recovery National Agenda on Agriculture: The Land Resources Information Management System (LRIMS) has been created. Livelihood maps have been produced and distributed across the country.</p>
<p>Outcome 5 - Regional and international cooperation and integration are enhanced</p>	<p><u>Key area 7 - Harmonized production chain among large enterprises and small and medium enterprises</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical assistance; cooperation and coordination with SME-supporting international organizations; research and development; finance; feasibility studies; etc. <p><u>Key Progress made in recent years</u></p> <p>The government of Laos has implemented various policies and initiatives to encourage collaboration between large enterprises and SMEs. This includes the establishment of the SME Promotion and Development Fund, investment incentives for large enterprises that partner with SMEs, and programs to promote SME development in key sectors. Business associations also play a role in facilitating linkages between large enterprises and SMEs, providing networking opportunities and advocacy for their members. Additionally, there is a focus on supply chain development, technology transfer, and joint research and development efforts. The government has also presented a business plan to create a Sustainable Green Growth Economic Corridor along the Laos-China Railway, with the aim of accessing regional and international markets at competitive costs. Lastly, Laos has engaged in joint research and development with other countries to promote the adoption of innovative practices and technologies for sustainable agriculture.</p>

<p>2021/2022 RTIM Policy Recommendations</p>	<p>Key progress made in 2023</p>
<p>Point 1 - Advancement of the integrated green and resilient growth model</p>	<p>Progresses made to promote green and resilient growth model in Laos include:</p> <p>The government of Lao PDR is working to establish environmental and social safeguards to ensure sustainable natural resource management. There is a need to build institutional and technical capacity to improve the quality of investment, particularly in the area of environmental management. The government is</p>

	<p>also developing a renewable energy policy and implementation plan to promote small scale renewable energy. Additionally, the government is looking to diversify funding sources for green growth, rather than relying solely on international funding and donor contributions.</p>
<p>Point 2 - Minimizing the impact of climate change and disasters on agriculture and rural development sector and further efforts on necessary conditions for rural development and employment for rural population, particularly for younger generation</p>	<p>Climate change and disaster risk management</p> <p>The government continues to support the implementation of the National Disaster Management Strategy by providing assistance to line ministries involved in disaster risk management and climate change. Despite the financial strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts are being made to maintain a 10-15% expenditure on disaster risk management for agriculture and rural development. Various ministries have initiated projects to incorporate risk considerations into public investments, blending disaster risk reduction into development projects, and promoting the collection and management of disaster and climate-related data. The focus is on enhancing local capacities to ensure that all disasters, even smaller and recurrent ones, are considered in risk assessments.</p> <p>The government has expanded the localization of disaster risk reduction and climate resilience efforts beyond just data collection and response to include preparedness and recovery. Efforts are being made to build the capacity of local operators to respond to disasters and develop disaster risk management plans at the sub-national level, with a focus on the agriculture sector. The government is also working on creating a platform for community-level early warning and resilience networks, aligned with national and provincial systems and strategies. Additionally, the government is exploring options for risk transfers, social protection mechanisms, and alternative livelihoods, recognizing the impact of climate change on household incomes reliant on the environment. Investments are being directed towards improving physical infrastructure, reducing poverty, and protecting vulnerable populations from external shocks through anticipatory actions and coping strategies. The government is focused on rural development and poverty eradication, with a strong emphasis on community-based approaches and participatory planning. Different strategies are being implemented for lowland and upland areas, with a priority on ensuring food security. Conservation of forests and revitalization of forestry policies are also important. The focus is on increasing livestock production and diversifying agricultural products, as well as promoting small and medium-sized enterprises and foreign investment. The development of small towns with links to rural areas is progressing, and resources are being transferred to districts to empower communities and address their needs. The Poverty Reduction Fund is being used to deliver resources to poor villages and enable sustainable economic development.</p> <p>Agricultural development programs are prioritizing rural job creation and enterprise development to encourage youth participation in agriculture. The "Agripreneurs for Green Rural Enterprises and Economy" (AGREE) initiative has been successful in promoting agricultural entrepreneurship among young people. Discussions are ongoing to create income-generating opportunities in rural areas, support rural youth in opening their own</p>

	<p>businesses after graduating from agricultural colleges, provide practical coaching and advice from private sector and other organizations, and establish a network for youth to learn and exchange ideas. These measures aim to prevent rural youth from migrating to cities or seeking work overseas.</p>
<p>Point 3 - Promotion of agriculture commercialization, diversified services and sustainable trade expansion and increased investments in research on agricultural innovation</p>	<p>Research and extension services for agricultural commercialization, diversified services, and trade need to be strengthened, particularly for high-value crops and livestock. Successful innovations in livestock production and disease prevention will be shared nationwide. Experiences in identifying factors enabling farmers to modify traditional practices, especially for upland shifting cultivators, will also be shared. Establishing a network of well-structured urban growth centers will significantly contribute to the commercialization of the agriculture sector and help build the country's development on a solid foundation. Additionally, recent efforts such as the Green and Sustainable Agriculture Framework and agriculture certification audit support green and sustainable agriculture in Lao PDR.</p> <p>The National Agricultural Innovation System Assessment in Lao PDR has identified several key areas for improvement in the agricultural innovation sector. These areas include the need for increased support and coordination among partnerships, a common understanding and documentation of innovation processes, the development of a database for innovations, improved capacity to facilitate innovation processes, and the development of policies and regulations to address sector constraints. Additionally, seven key functions have been identified as crucial for supporting innovation processes, which involve various actors from the public and private sectors, civil society organizations, academia, and research. These findings will guide follow-up actions to strengthen the agricultural innovation system in Lao PDR.</p>
<p>Point 4 - Investing in Lao PDR's agro-biodiversity and balancing commercial development and national food security with forest protection.</p>	<p>Efforts have been made to attract and sustain investment in agriculture and agro-biodiversity conservation, requiring strategic long-term planning and understanding of local needs, agronomic practices, and market potential. Dialogue with the private sector, development partners, and stakeholders has been established, driven by political will to transition from economic growth to sustainable livelihoods, as outlined in the Agriculture Development Strategy 2025, Vision 2030, and the National Agro-Biodiversity Programme and Action Plan II (2015-2025). Furthermore, recent focus has been on food system transformation. The Synthesis report on pathways to sustainable food systems (June 2021) highlights the Nature-Positive Food Production approach, emphasizing Organic agriculture, Agroforestry, Agroecology, Low-input, and Pesticide-free practices. This approach covers crops (irrigated and rainfed), livestock, fisheries, agroforestry, and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Agroforestry and NTFPs act as transitional links between commercialized agricultural crops, livestock rearing, fisheries, and forests and rangelands, making significant contributions to food and nutrition security as well as poverty eradication in Lao PDR.</p> <p>In line with global trends, Lao PDR is aiming to implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) as a minimum standard for all production systems, including small producers and private enterprises. The government sees</p>

	<p>GAP as the foundation for commercial production, with the potential to expand into more sustainable systems promoting reduced external inputs, recycling, and organic agriculture. They are seeking to implement GAP nationwide and are exploring pilot opportunities in specific areas. Additionally, they may promote other certification methods like Participatory Guarantee Systems and Geographical Indications. To create an enabling environment, there is a need to improve knowledge and understanding among all food production system stakeholders. This involves capacity building for producers and improving the policy environment, including access to credit and incentives. To accelerate the transformation of food production systems, partners should focus on green agricultural innovation, research, and technologies, green extension services, and green markets and value chains. This will require increased investment in research and development, extension services, and upskilling farmers in various aspects of agricultural production and marketing.</p> <p>The National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme in Lao PDR serves as a long-term framework for coordinated action to enhance the management of agricultural biodiversity. Recent key focuses include the promotion of improved agricultural technologies and extension packages to conserve agro-biodiversity, scaling up sustainable land management practices, maintaining socially important ecosystem services through enhanced agro-biodiversity values, developing and enforcing agriculture-related policies, and supporting sustainable management at different levels. Additionally, there is a focus on the commercialization of agro-biodiversity-based products by the private sector to contribute to economic development.</p>
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3.a Building on the recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 9th NSEDP, what are the SWG's key priorities for 2024? (1 page)

1. **Continue monitoring implementation of the Agricultural Development Strategy 2025** to meet the yearly targets for the sector as instructed by the National Assembly
2. Start preparation for consultations and **inputs for the formulation of the next ADS and action plan (2026-2030)**
3. **Creation of joint calendar of meetings of SWG ARD and sub-sector working groups**
4. **Database and support from partners** - It is important to revitalize and reactivate the current database of the sector. Data collection from Sub-SWGs is necessary. Therefore, it is recommended to have focal points from DPs to help with data inputs.
5. **Focal points and members of SWGs** - Focal points from departments concerned and DPs have been changed. Therefore, there is a need to update the list of focal points of core group. Once done, the list will be shared with all core group members and first meeting of members can be organised.
6. **Communication strategy** - To help ensure proper communication within the sector and sub-sectors and across sectors, communication strategy and action plan should be developed with clear timeline of actions and roles and responsibilities.
7. **Roles and responsibilities and capacity building** - Roles and responsibilities of SWG and Sub-SWGs are stated in the generic TOR of SWG by MPI. As such, there is a need to specify and tailor those roles and responsibilities for SWG ARD and SSWGs.
8. **Work plan - substantive issues need greater attention** - Work plan of the sector and SSWGs need to be finalised before the meeting of SWG ARD. It will cover not only list of meetings but also key substantive issues that both SWG ARD and SSWGs will need to address.
9. **Reactivate the work of SSWGs and how they best contribute to the SWG ARD.**
10. **Website and new slaters** - The Ministry website and the main MPI website for RTP will be used to highlight any update from SWG ARD and SSWGs. Therefore, information from SSWGs will be shared with SWG ARD and then the SWG ARD secretariat will work out on what needs to be fed into the Ministry's website and what needs to be sent to MPI. Materials for the website will be made in both Lao and English.
11. **Coordination within the sector and cross-sectors and common understanding across government focal points and DP co-chair at technical level** - Regular information from SWG ARD is needed to ensure common understanding across core members. Therefore, a quarterly meeting is recommended to brief each other on what is going on under each sub-sector and contributions to the overall main sector.

3.b Building on the recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 9th NSEDP, what are the SWG's key priorities for the conceptualization of the 10th NSEDP? (1/2 page)

The main focus of the sector for the 10th NSEDP should be on transitioning towards sustainable agriculture, forestry management, and rural development which is vital for achievement the last five years of the SDGs by 2030. This requires a multi-faceted approach that includes some key policy focuses and measures as follow:

Policy areas

1. **Operationalization of sustainable farming practices and adoption of innovation:** This includes practices such as crop rotation, cover cropping, reduced tillage, integrated pest management, and agroforestry. These practices help to improve soil quality, conserve water, and reduce the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.
2. **Greater effort for sustainable forestry management:** This includes practices such as selective logging, reforestation, and agroforestry. These practices help to protect the biodiversity of forests, prevent deforestation, and promote the sustainable use of forest resources.
3. **Greater investment in rural infrastructure:** This includes the development of rural roads, water supply systems, and energy infrastructure. These investments can help to improve the quality of life for rural communities, increase access to markets, and promote economic growth.
4. **Promotion of sustainable rural livelihoods:** This includes the development of alternative income-generating activities, such as eco-tourism, organic farming, and non-timber forest products. These activities can help to diversify rural economies, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable resource use.
5. **Strengthening of rural institutions:** This includes the strengthening of local governance structures, the development of community-based natural resource management systems, and the promotion of participatory decision-making processes. These actions can help to ensure that local communities have a voice in the management of their natural resources and can help to promote sustainable development.
6. **Sustainable food systems transformation** is essential for achieving sustainable development goals and ensuring a healthy and equitable future for all.
7. **Energy and sustainable agriculture** are interconnected, and promoting sustainable energy practices in agriculture can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote circular economy practices, and improve the overall sustainability of the agriculture sector.
8. **Digital infrastructure** can play a significant role in **promoting sustainable agriculture** by enabling farmers to optimize resource use, reduce waste, and adapt to climate change. By leveraging digital technologies, farmers can improve their productivity and profitability while reducing their environmental impact.
9. **Private sector and youth in agriculture, forestry and rural development** - the private sector and youth can contribute to sustainable development in agriculture, forestry, and rural development by investing in sustainable practices, promoting entrepreneurship, building capacity, promoting sustainable value chains, and driving innovation. By working together, the private sector and youth can help to create economic opportunities, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable development in rural areas.

10. **Climate change, disaster risk management and agriculture:** Disaster risk management is an important strategy for reducing the impacts of climate change on agriculture. By implementing early warning systems, disaster preparedness planning, climate-resilient infrastructure, insurance and financial support, and sustainable land management practices, we can help farmers to adapt to the changing climate and reduce the risks of disasters.

Measures (Note – this also contributes to the implementation of the 2023 RTIM key recommendation as per the PM’s instruction).

1. To ensure the effectiveness and measurable results of the two approved planning and breeding policy strategies, the government will coordinate and collaborate closely with all sectors at the national and provincial levels for their implementation.
2. Facilitate favorable conditions and environments for production by ensuring access to capital, market information, import policies related to crop production and livestock, vaccination and disease control measures for animals, as well as essential agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and other innovative technologies.
3. Enhance the technical service centers and stations by allocating increased budget and staff to focus on, seed supply, knowledge sharing with local farmers and networks, cooperation framework for agriculture production, crop production, livestock, industrial areas, agriculture areas, advanced packaging, and other relevant activities aligned with the economic corridor along the Lao-China railway.
4. Identify specific focus areas, production groups, associations, and networks to ensure high-quality production suitable for commercialization and joint ventures. It is essential to provide support to these groups, associations, and networks to access various policies and strategies related to SME credits, joint funds, network establishment, and cross-sectoral coordination.
5. Continuously enhance the regulatory framework and legislation to promote processing-related production and manage processing plants with measured production bases. This can be achieved by establishing production bases in rural areas to serve as a labor market and source of raw materials.
6. Promote and create favorable conditions to attract investments and entrepreneurs for increasing crop and plant production in areas with available markets through initiatives such as contract farming, agribusiness trust funds, and enhanced value chains across all sectors.
7. Increase efforts to mobilize domestic and international direct investment, engage the private sector, international financial institutions (IFIs), international organizations, and development partners to provide support for agriculture infrastructure development and other critical factors essential for the sector's growth.

4. What are the key lessons learned for the SWG, including from the MTR of the 9th NSEDP? (1/2 page)

The contribution of SWGs to the MTR of the 9th NSEDP is at a minimal level due to technical communication issues. There is a limited clarity regarding what is expected from them, and it is unclear how their contributions differ from those of line ministries' reports for NSEDP, SDGs, STS, Recovery Framework, Financial Strategy, and other related areas.

Therefore, the lessons highlighted here focus on improving the functionality of SWG, which will ultimately contribute to the national development agenda. As such, achievements of SWG ARD will be sustainable if they have been institutionalized and will be preserved going forward. This is an area that needs further attention and strategic thinking. In particular, SWG mechanism is created to create common understanding across/within ministries, development partners, private sector, civil society and others. Therefore, it is important that creating space for common understanding requires a diverse set of skills beyond just organizing meetings. Some key lessons learned include:

1. **Communication skills:** Effective communication is essential for creating a common understanding. Communication skills include active listening, clear and concise speaking, and the ability to convey complex ideas in simple terms.
2. **Conflict resolution skills:** Differences in perspectives and opinions can lead to conflicts. The ability to manage and resolve conflicts is critical for creating a common understanding.
3. **Facilitation skills:** A skilled facilitator can guide discussions, manage conflicts, and help reach a common understanding.

Therefore, technical officials (chairs and co-chairs) involve in this SWG mechanism need to have proper briefing and technical training to take on the job.

In term of SWG contribution to the 9th NSED, SDGs and Round Table Process, some key aspects could be improved such as

1. **Clearer instruction and guidance** are needed and they are well communicated in advance.
2. **Last minute planning can be a challenging issue to address, but there are some strategies that can help:**
 1. **Clear deadlines:** it is important to sure everyone involved in the planning process is aware of the final deadline for planning. This can help to ensure that everyone understands the importance of meeting the deadline and can work towards it.
 2. **Clear roles and responsibilities:** Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for each reporting components (line ministries, SWGs, DPs, private sector, civil society and others) can help to ensure that everyone knows what they need to do and when they need to do it.
 3. **Prioritization of tasks:** We need to ensure that the most important elements are in place, even if other parts of the plan are not yet complete. It will be good if this could be done and clearly communicated to SWGs.
 4. **Regular communication:** Regular communication with team members can help to keep everyone on track and ensure that progress is being made towards the final deadline. Therefore, a strong request is for periodic communication between variously secretariat members (planning, RTP, SDGs, SWG and others).
 5. **Be flexible:** Sometimes unexpected issues arise that can derail even the best-laid plans. Being flexible and adaptable can help to ensure that the plan can still be completed on time, even if changes need to be made along the way.