Strengthening Knowledge Management for Greater Development Effectiveness in the Near East, North Africa, Central Asia and Europe

Capacity Needs Assessment

The SKIM Project

Strengthening Knowledge Management for Greater Development Effectiveness in the Near East, North Africa, Central Asia and Europe – SKIM (https://mel.cgiar.org/projects/skim) – is a grant project led by the **International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)** and the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**. The project also works with international partners **CIHEAM-Bari, PROCASUR, Virginia Tech** as well as National Agricultural Research Systems, governments, and agricultural extension services in Moldova, Morocco and Sudan. Initiated in June 2018, SKIM facilitates and supports **knowledge management (KM)** and **capacity development** activities, providing practical examples of KM best practices to be analysed and adopted by participating institutions.

Starting SKIM and the Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA)

The **first step** of the project, in October 2018, was to carry out an institutional KM mapping exercise to identify key players to be targeted in the rural development sector, among four types of organizations representing research, education and extension, both government and non-government.

The **second step** involved an inception workshop – held in October 2018 at the ICARDA office in Rabat, Morocco – to formally launch the project and build partnerships for implementation, as well as to start the CNA. The major purpose of the activity was to undertake an assessment and **determine baselines for the current state of KM, knowledge sharing, and learning needs in target organizations in Moldova, Morocco and Sudan.** The needs assessment allowed for a diagnosis of present KM-related practices for improvement.

Target institutions from Moldova, Morocco and Sudan

Moldova:
- Consolidated IFAD Program Implementation Unit
- Research Institute of Field Crops "Selectia"
- State Agrarian University
- Institute for Development and Social Initiatives "Viitorul"

Morocco:
- Agronomic and Veterinary Institute "IAV Hassan II"
- National Agricultural Research Institute
- National Office for Agricultural Extension
- National School of Agriculture

Sudan:
- Agricultural Research Corporation – Sudan
- Knowledge Access to Inter-connected Rural Areas Network
- University of Khartoum
- Sudanese Knowledge Society

CNA timeline

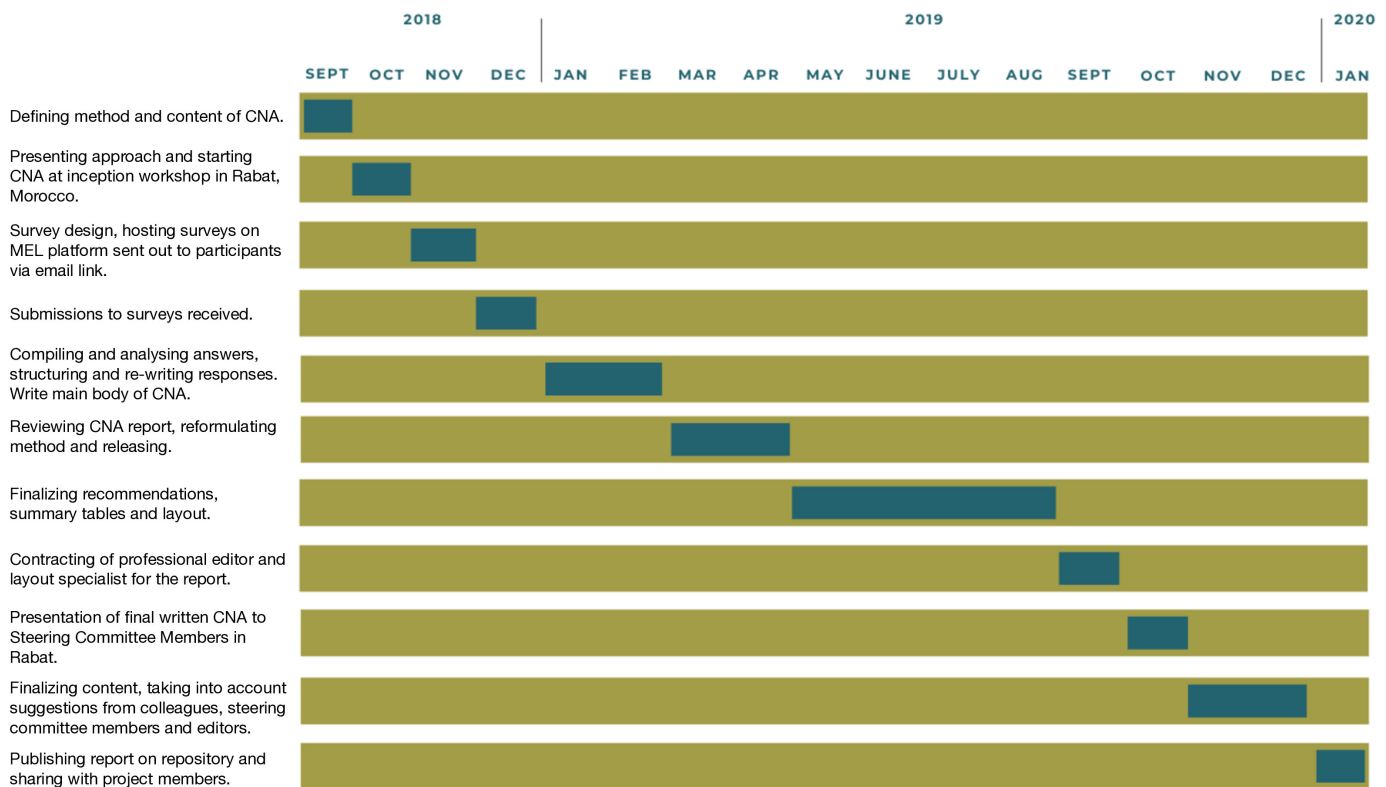

Figure 1. Gantt chart showing the milestones of the CNA and related progression over the course of the project implementation.
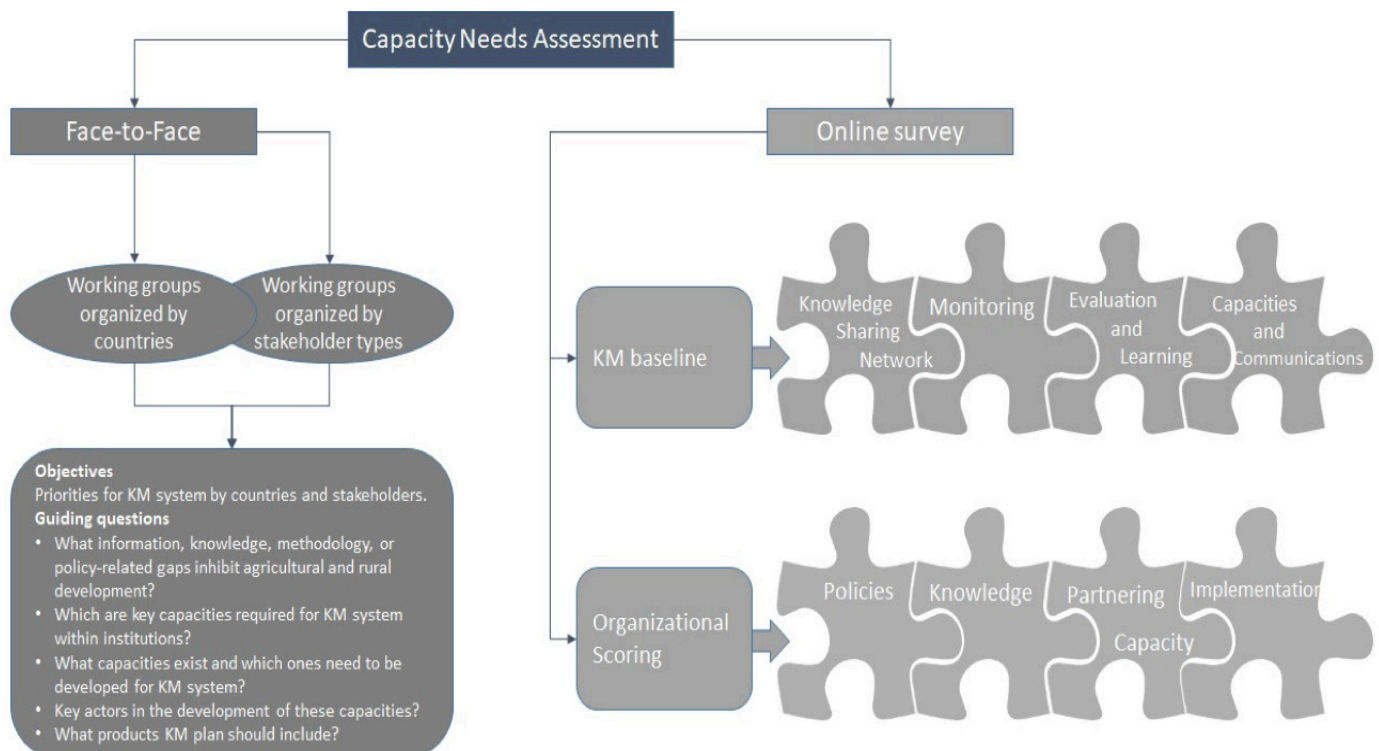
Methods and tools

Figure 2. Flow chart showing the two-phase approach and the face-to-face plus online interactions with institution representatives.

Stakeholder analysis and power interest matrix in a focus group

During the face-to-face meetings at the inception workshop, a stakeholder analysis was filled out by partners to list the key KM stakeholders of their institutions and place them on a power interest matrix. The matrix is a simple tool that helps to categorize project stakeholders with increasing power and interest in the project and enables stakeholder prioritization.

Organizational scoring with key partner representatives

Organizational scoring was conducted as semi-structured interviews with key informants of the respective partners to get in depth insight into the capacity development needs of the organizations. The scoring system covered four areas of ability relating to: **policy** (drafting, implementing and monitoring), **knowledge** (generation and sharing), **partnership** (creating and maintaining) and **implementation** (of development / research projects). The goal was to identify gaps within these areas of work from the point of view of key representatives.

Online surveys

To carry out the CNA activities across three different countries, two of the interventions – the organizational scoring as well as the KM baseline – were completed through online surveys. KM baseline was determined using an '**Infrastructure Readiness Tool**', which analyses the technical status of an organization through questions about a company's IT infrastructure (computer software and internet accessibility). The surveys ensured that all target institutions could be consulted at the same time with results collected in a timely manner. ICARDA's **Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning** (MEL) platform (https://mel.cgiar.org) was used to create and disseminate the surveys among project partners, who received an e-mail from the system and separate invitation to complete the survey.

The findings

The information gathered from the CNA provided a KM baseline for the project, and from the baseline, **recommendations** have been drawn to develop concrete capacity development activities for each organization. Recurring recommendations of the CNA are summarized for each country below and three key themes are illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3. For the extensive list of recommendations for each country, please see the full report here: https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11766/10436

- Establish a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) platform and clear M&E processes. There is a desire for training for existing and new staff; KM strategies, plans and processes are lacking and need to be developed;
- Put in place or better implement standardized KM glossaries and vocabulary;
- Develop and strengthen partnerships and networking capabilities;
- Identify solutions to make the organizations attractive for young researchers;
- Become the local KM and KS champion.
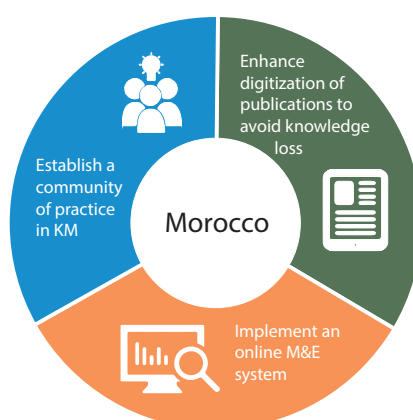
- Analyse the failings of previous KM systems to set up an effective, nation-wide KM system;
- Implement an online M&E system and receive training in KM setup processes, as well as in how to develop KM and KS plans;
- Establish a community of practice (CoP) in KM to enable greater knowledge and experience exchange and learning between the Moroccan partners;
- Enhance the digitization of publications and documents to avoid knowledge loss due to staff turnover.
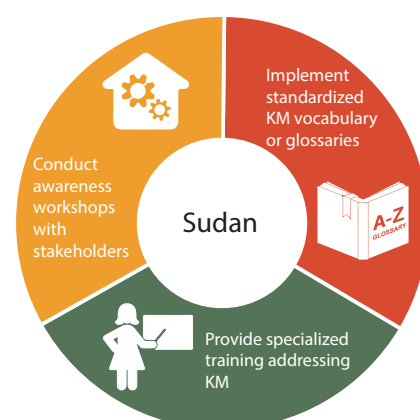
- Create a KM plan and establish a KM system and defined KM processes;
- Provide specialized training addressing KM;
- Implement standardized KM vocabularly or glossaries;
- Conduct awareness workshops with stakeholders;
- Setup an M&E platform that considers the e-Agriculture Strategy and SUDNAIP;
- Engage in more partnerships to learn from other institutions / countries and setup a CoP.

Next Step

As the first major study to identify the needs of the institutions in terms of their KM development, the CNA provided SKIM with information regarding the general direction, and broad overall recommendations, for future **KM trainings**. The CNA has also been **an important step towards building a KM CoP** among the international institutions, which is very important aspect of the project.

Following the CNA, the second step in the KM analysis process was to host national write-shops in the target countries. The write-shops provided participants with inductions on KM principles and processes in four key areas as identified by the project framework: knowledge **discovery and detection, acquisition and creation, storage and curation, sharing and transfer**. Specific assessments on the status, needs and gaps in these areas were also identified with the national partners at the write-shops. The results are being condensed into detailed reports with updated recommendations – based upon those of the CNA. The results will also inform the upcoming SKIM Innovation Plan, which is the major document that closes the analysis part of this project.

In the second quarter of **2020**, SKIM partners will host further trainings to participants on KM and KM best practices, implementing the CNA and write-shop recommendations **addressing their specific needs**:

Policy	Skills	Tools