



# Laos

## RAPID ASSESSTMENT

Assuring Resiliency of Family  
Farmers (ARISE-Farmers)  
amidst COVID-19

## IFAD'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

RURAL POOR STIMULUS FACILITY (RPSF)

### FACILITY'S PILLARS



Inputs  
& basic assets



Targeted  
funds



Access  
to markets



Digital  
services

## **RPSF project: Assuring Resiliency of Family Farmers (ARISE-Farmers) amidst COVID-19 (Laos) <sup>1</sup>**

Launched in April 2020, the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) is IFAD's multi-donor response to COVID-19. With the overall objective of providing agile support to poor rural producers affected by key immediate challenges posed due to COVID-19, it seeks to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the context of the crisis by ensuring timely access to inputs, information, markets and liquidity. The Assuring Resiliency of Family Farmers (ARISE-Farmers) project in the context of COVID-19 in Laos is part of the 20% of the projects chosen to undergo a rapid assessment to report against Tier 1 'development result' indicators in the RPSF Results Measurement Framework.

### **Project activities**

The regional project leveraged national-level farmer organization (FO) platforms and IFAD's Asia-Pacific Farmers Program (APFP). It considered an RPSF allocation of US\$ 2.0 million.

The objective of the project was to strengthen capacities of FOs to manage production support to members by expanding 4Ps partnership to address the market access challenges brought about by the pandemic. The project was implemented by AFA as the Regional Implementing Agency (RIA), which coordinated and worked through national farmers networks. Specifically, the project provided financial support through revolving funds.

RPSF funds supported FOs and their members through the provision of loan assistance at a maximum rate of 3 per cent. The loan amount was used to support the production activities of the farmers such as feeds, biologics, seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs. Meanwhile, some beneficiaries also used the fund to support the working capital of the farmers' organization to increase their capacity to purchase the raw materials produced by their farmer members.

The amount disbursed from the RIA to the national implementing agencies was utilized 156.39 per cent or 1.56 times, which indicates that the majority of the fund was revolved for two cycles. In Southeast Asia, the fund was revolved 162.83 per cent or 1.62 times the total disbursed amount. In this region, Cambodia has the highest utilization rate at 201.54 per cent followed by Laos at 174.24 per cent. Meanwhile, in East, Central and South Asia, the fund was revolved 149.88 per cent or 1.49 times. Mongolia has the highest fund utilization at 288.35 per cent followed by Pakistan at 135.02 per cent. This signifies that the funds disbursed in Mongolia is being revolved on the 3rd cycle.

Through a total of 231 FOs, more than 20,000 farmers directly received funds, more than a third of which were young, and with just under half across Southeast Asia and just over half in East, Central, and South Asia. This impacted more than 100,000 household members.

### **Rapid assessment methodology**

Self-reported information on Tier 1 'development results' indicators was collected from a representative sample of 400 beneficiary households, of which 16 percent are headed by women and 12 percent are headed by youth (aged less than 35 years). Details of each indicator were asked with the aim of capturing the potential contribution effect from i) COVID-19 and ii) the RPSF project. Interviews were conducted between the last two weeks of June 2022 and the first weeks of July

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<sup>1</sup> This note is prepared by Vibhuti Mendiratta, Gonzalo Nunez-Chaim and Piero Massotti from the Research and Impact Assessment (RIA) division of IFAD.

2022 using a combination of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey.

## Key results <sup>2</sup>

### Contribution effect of COVID-19

- More than 80 percent of beneficiary households experienced a sharp decline in production, market sales and resilience due to COVID-19, prior to the start of project activities. Households were less affected on total income and the number of meals consumed.
- Overall, women and youth headed beneficiary households seem to have been more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to those headed by men and adults, respectively. The former group was more likely to report production and income were reduced or lost, although they were less often affected in terms of the number of meals consumed. Moreover, a larger share of youth headed households, compared to adults, experienced a negative effect on the number of meals consumed.

### Contribution effect of RPSF

- The majority of households were able to maintain or improve on indicators of interest. The strongest benefits were observed on production, sales and asset ownership. However, total income and resilience did not fully recover, since only between 50 and 60 percent of households reported having maintained or improved on these indicators.
- Women headed households benefitted more on production and total income, and less in terms of resilience, compared to households headed by men. The group of youth headed households was less likely to maintain or improve on production, compared to the group headed by adults. Despite this, they more often reported maintaining or improving on total income.

### Lessons learned

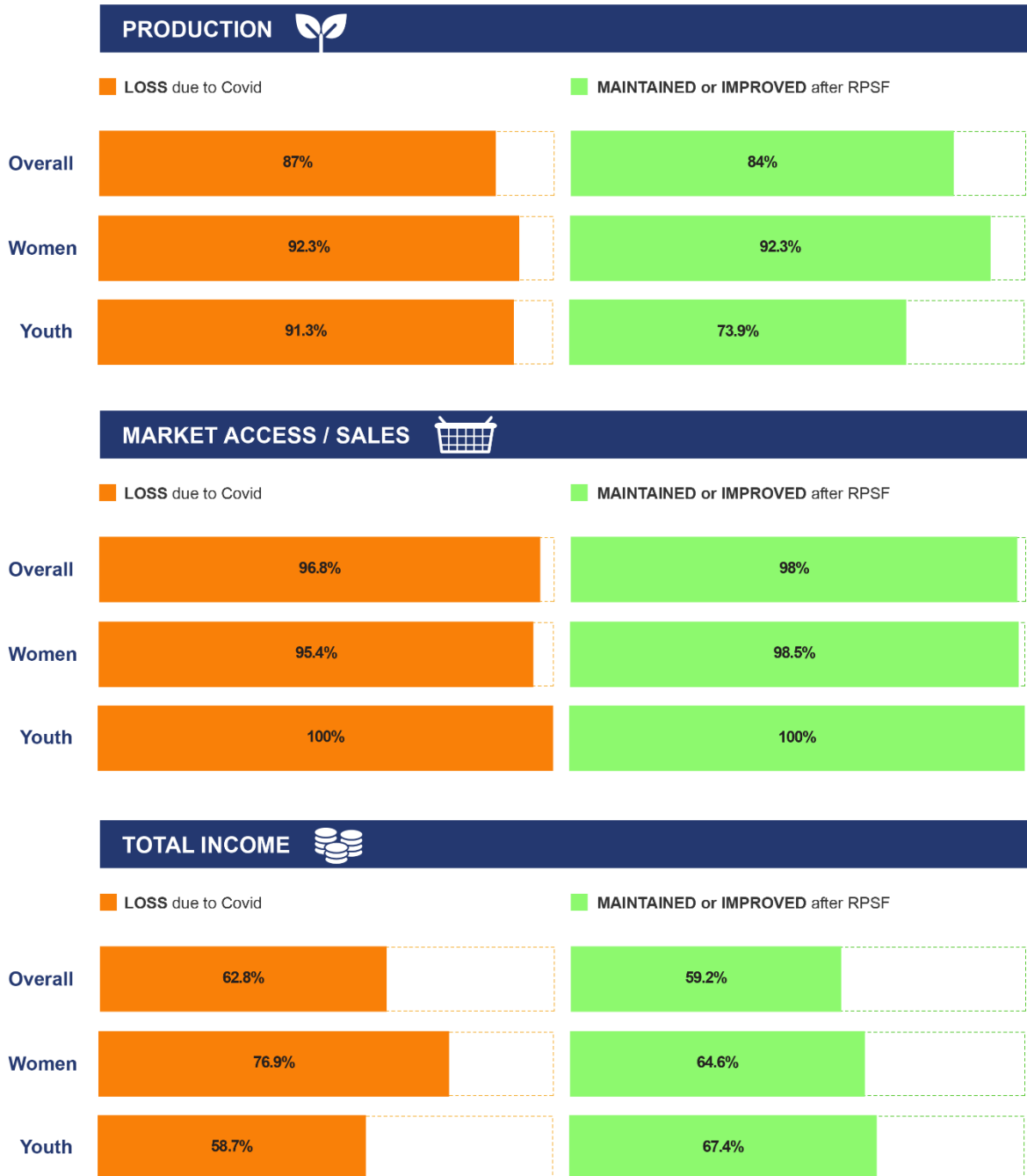
- The project helped improving some indicators of interest. Yet, total income and resilience did not fully recover after the implementation of the project. In particular, households headed by women remain vulnerable given they improved less in terms of resilience. In addition, youth headed households reported benefits on total income even though they did not improve on production as much as adult headed household.
- Based on these findings, future program design should consider i) mechanisms for improving longer term outcomes such as resilience; ii) additional support for women-headed households; and iii) the overall income generation structure of households.

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<sup>2</sup> The rapid assessment does not consider a control group; thus, results are only indicative of potential contribution effects.

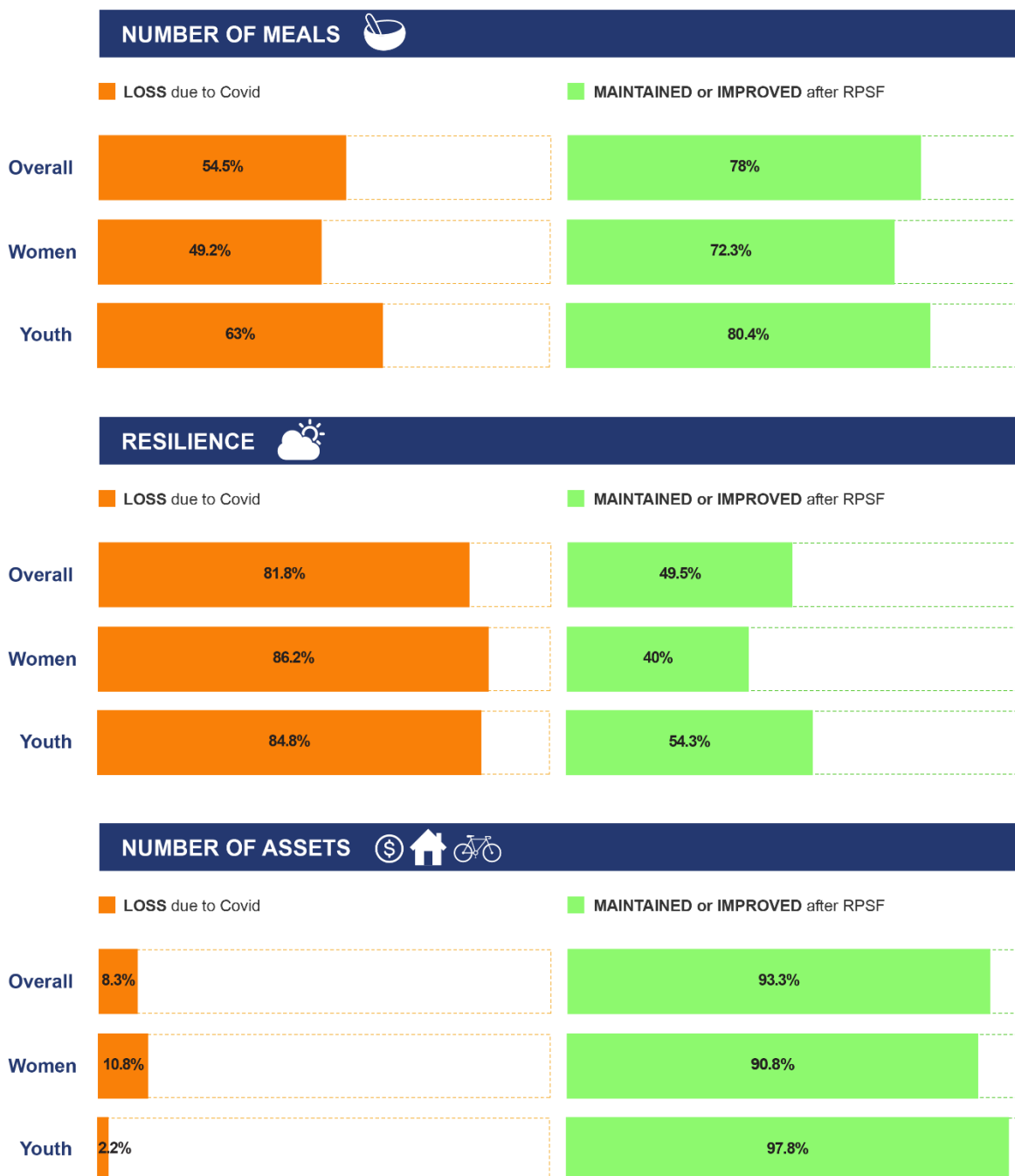
**Figure 1:** Percentage of households that experienced a loss in each Tier I indicator due to COVID

**Figure 2:** Percentage of households that were able to maintain or improve each Tier I indicator after RPSF



**Figure 1:** Percentage of households that experienced a loss in each Tier I indicator due to COVID

**Figure 2:** Percentage of households that were able to maintain or improve each Tier I indicator after RPSF



**NOTE:** RPSF activities were rolled out starting in February 2021.

Two separate questions were asked for each indicator. The first question asked what happened to each Tier 1 indicator between March 2020 and February 2021: i) a total loss; ii) reduced; iii) stayed the same; or iv) increased. The **orange bar** shows the percentage of households that responded i) or ii) to this question, that is, those which experienced a total loss or reduction in the indicator. The second question asked what happened to each Tier 1 indicator since February 2021: i) reduced further; ii) stayed the same; iii) increased but still below the level before COVID-19; iv) returned to level before COVID-19; or v) increased above the level before COVID-19. The **green bar** shows the percentage of households that responded ii), iii) iv) or v) to this question, that is, those which maintained or improved each indicator relative to pre-RPSF levels.

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