



MALAWI

RAPID ASSESSTMENT

Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme

IFAD'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

RURAL POOR STIMULUS FACILITY (RPSF)

FACILITY'S PILLARS



Inputs
& basic assets



Targeted
funds



Access
to markets



Digital
services

Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (Malawi) ¹

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 Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) project in the context of COVID-19 in Malawi 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 project built upon the already existing Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP). The RPSF project was implemented from March to December 2021 with a total financing of US\$ 1,521,407. The goal of SAPP's RPSF was to improve food security and resilience of poor rural people by supporting production and market access.

Specifically, the project produced and distributed early generation seed of biofortified varieties of maize, beans and biofortified sweet potato, including for seed multiplication. To ensure quality production, the project also facilitated seed inspection by Malawi's Seed Services Unit. In addition, the project distributed (including for multiplication) legume seeds, maize seeds, vegetable seeds, agro-forestry seedlings and fertilizers; bundles of sweet potatoes; bio-fortified legume and cereal crop varieties, and livestock (including chicks, rabbits and ducks). There were also 48 demonstrations on fertilizers and 84 demonstrations promoting indigenous phosphate, solubilising microbes and rhizobia. The project worked with 47 farmer groups to facilitate their linkage to markets.

In order to promote the use of electronic and digital services, the project promoted 112 radio and TV broadcasting programmes; 43 SMS, WhatsApp, and Facebook based agricultural, nutritional and COVID19 messages. To provide extension support services 8,446 households out of a target of 12,000 households received training to promote integrated homestead farming (IHF) and household approach; 102 ESMPs were implemented.

The project directly supported 43,600 people, with more than half of them being women, and reaching 218,000 household members. Implementation took place in three districts, namely: Nkhosokota, Lilongwe and Balaka.

Rapid assessment methodology

Self-reported information on Tier 1 'development results' indicators was collected from a representative sample of 501 beneficiary households, of which 30 percent are headed by women and 21 percent are headed by youth (aged less than 35 years). Details of each

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

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 week of July 2022 and mid-August 2022 using a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) survey.

Key results ²

Contribution effect of COVID-19

- Losses due to COVID-19 were affecting around 9 out of 10 households in all dimensions considered in the analysis.
- Specifically for the number of assets owned, all the households experienced a decline this indicator due to COVID-19, regardless of gender and youth status of the head of the household.

Contribution effect of RPSF

- More than 7 out of 10 households were able to maintain or improve on all indicators of interest, namely production, sales, total income, resilience, number of meals and asset ownership. Households seem to have benefitted more in terms of production and number of assets owned, compared to other dimensions of welfare.
- Youth headed households experienced a greater progress on production, market sales, total income, resilience and number of meals consumed.

Lessons learned

- The project was successful at helping maintain or increase the majority of households after the RPSF was implemented.
- Exploring the mechanisms that brought larger benefits among youth headed households could help improving the effectiveness of similar interventions.

² 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

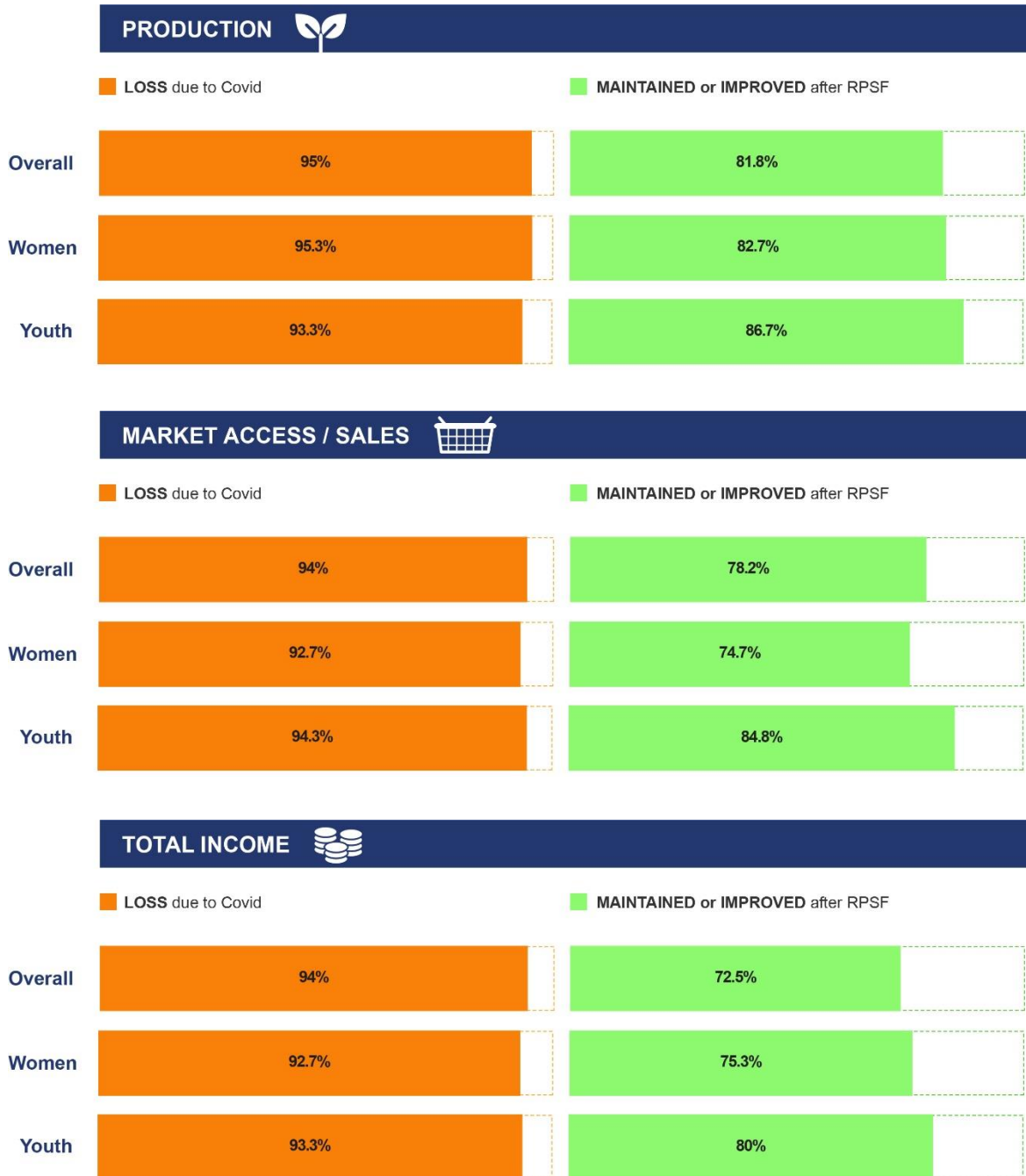
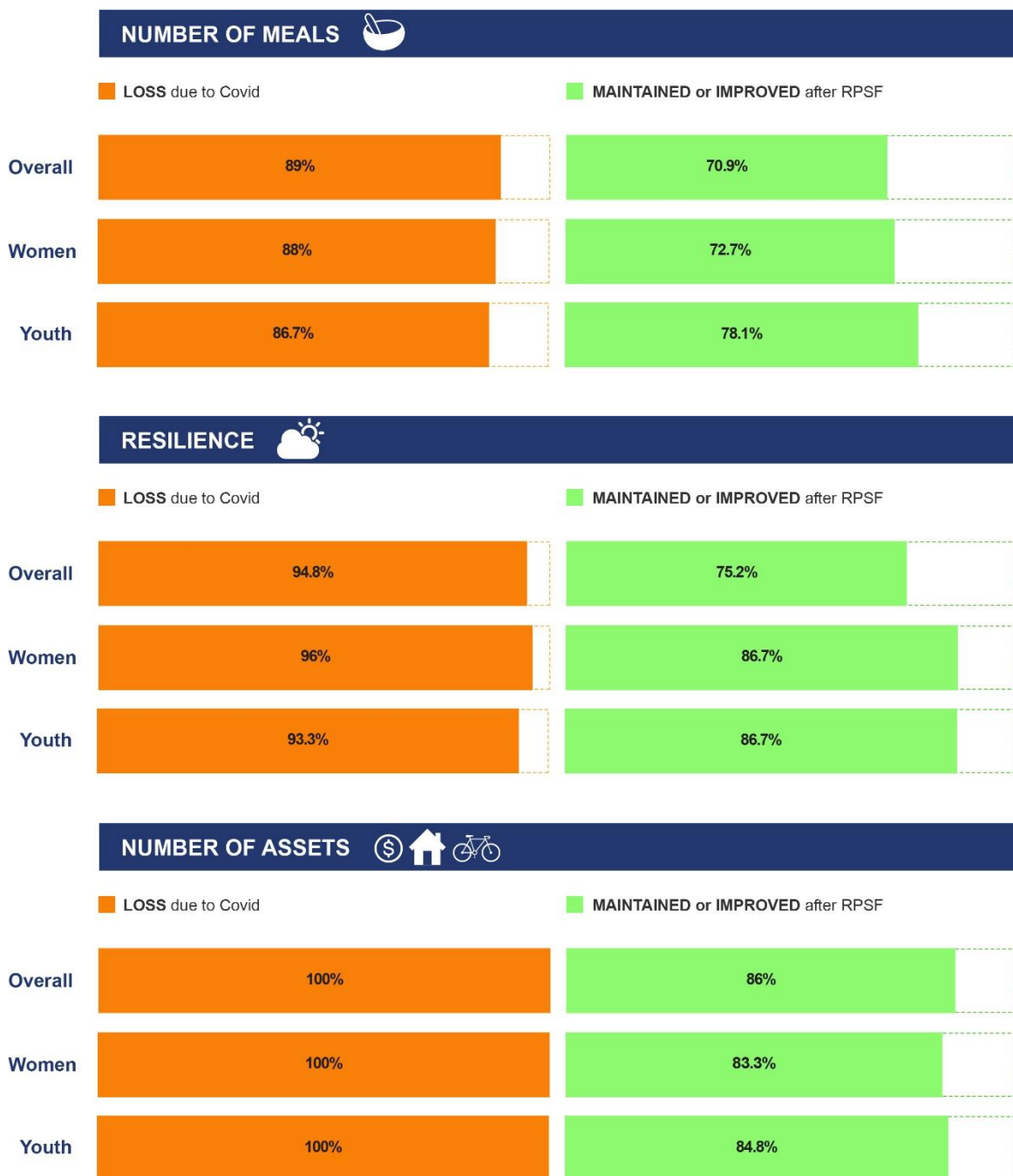


Figure 1: Percentage of households that experienced a loss in each Tier I indicator due to COVID

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 March 2021.

Two separate questions were asked for each indicator. The first question asked what happened to each Tier 1 indicator between March 2020 and March 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 March 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 since the start of RPSF.

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International Fund for Agricultural Development

Via Paolo di Dono, 44 – 00142 Rome, Italy

Tel: +39 06 54591 – Fax: +39 06 5043463

Email: ifad@ifad.org

www.ifad.org