



KENYA

RAPID ASSESSTMENT

Development and Expansion
of Digital Agricultural Advisory
Services for Smallholder Farmers
in the Context of COVID

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: Development and Expansion of Digital Agricultural Advisory Services for Smallholder Farmers in the Context of COVID (Kenya)¹

Launched in April 2020, the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility 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 Development and Expansion of Digital Agricultural Advisory Services for Smallholder Farmers in the Context of COVID-19 in Kenya is part of the 20% of the projects of the Facility chosen to undergo a rapid assessment to report against Tier 1 "Development Results" indicators in the RPSF Results Measurement Framework.

Project activities

This is a multi-country project covering Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan, implemented through Precision Development, a US-based NGO. Through RPSF financing for US\$3.2 million, the project supported the delivery of personalized agricultural advice to farmers through their mobile phones, establishing a two-way information channel by which farmers can receive low-cost, customized advice to improve on-farm practices, input utilization, pest and disease management, environmental sustainability, and access to markets.

The RPSF project IFAD supported PxD in the expansion of the MoA-INFO platform. This is an advisory service launched in 2018 between the Ministry of Agriculture and PxD, to provide maize, potato, legume, and banana farmers with SMS advisory messages every week throughout the growing seasons. During grant implementation 282,000 new users were added, increasing the number of active users to the SMS based digital advisory platform, including beneficiaries of two IFAD projects in the country. Moreover, new advisory content for cabbage based on IFAD project needs was designed. In the fourth and final quarter of the grant, digital agricultural advisory was provided approximately to 650,000 farmers.

Rapid assessment methodology

Self-reported information on Tier I "Development Results" indicators was collected from a representative sample of 365 beneficiary households, of which 35 percent are headed by women and 13 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 mid-August and early September 2021 using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey.

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

Key results ²

Contribution effect of COVID-19

- COVID-19 has led to a sharp reduction in various Tier I indicators of welfare, prior to the start of project activities. Women and youth headed beneficiary households were more adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to households headed by men and adults respectively.

Contribution effect of RPSF

- A large share of households were able to maintain or improve on indicators of interest. The strongest benefits were observed for production and food security (number of meals) in line with the objective of the project. Sales and asset ownership also showed improvements after the project was implemented.
- At the same time, a lower share of beneficiary households headed by women and youth reported having maintained or improved welfare in Kenya after the program was introduced. This reflects the larger impacts of the pandemic experienced by these groups, making it harder for them to recover even with project support, although it may also imply that additional interventions may be required for these households to obtain the same results as other beneficiaries.
- Further benefits may have been hindered by severe drought experienced in 2021 during the “long rains” season (from late-April, May and early June), which may have hindered the adoption and/or success of the advice provided through the project.

Lessons learned

- Based on the findings, in the future, such advisory service support should also include information on upcoming extreme weather events, and strategies to mitigate their impacts, as well as additional support to increase adoption of advice, and to overcome the specific barriers faced by women- and youth-headed households.

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

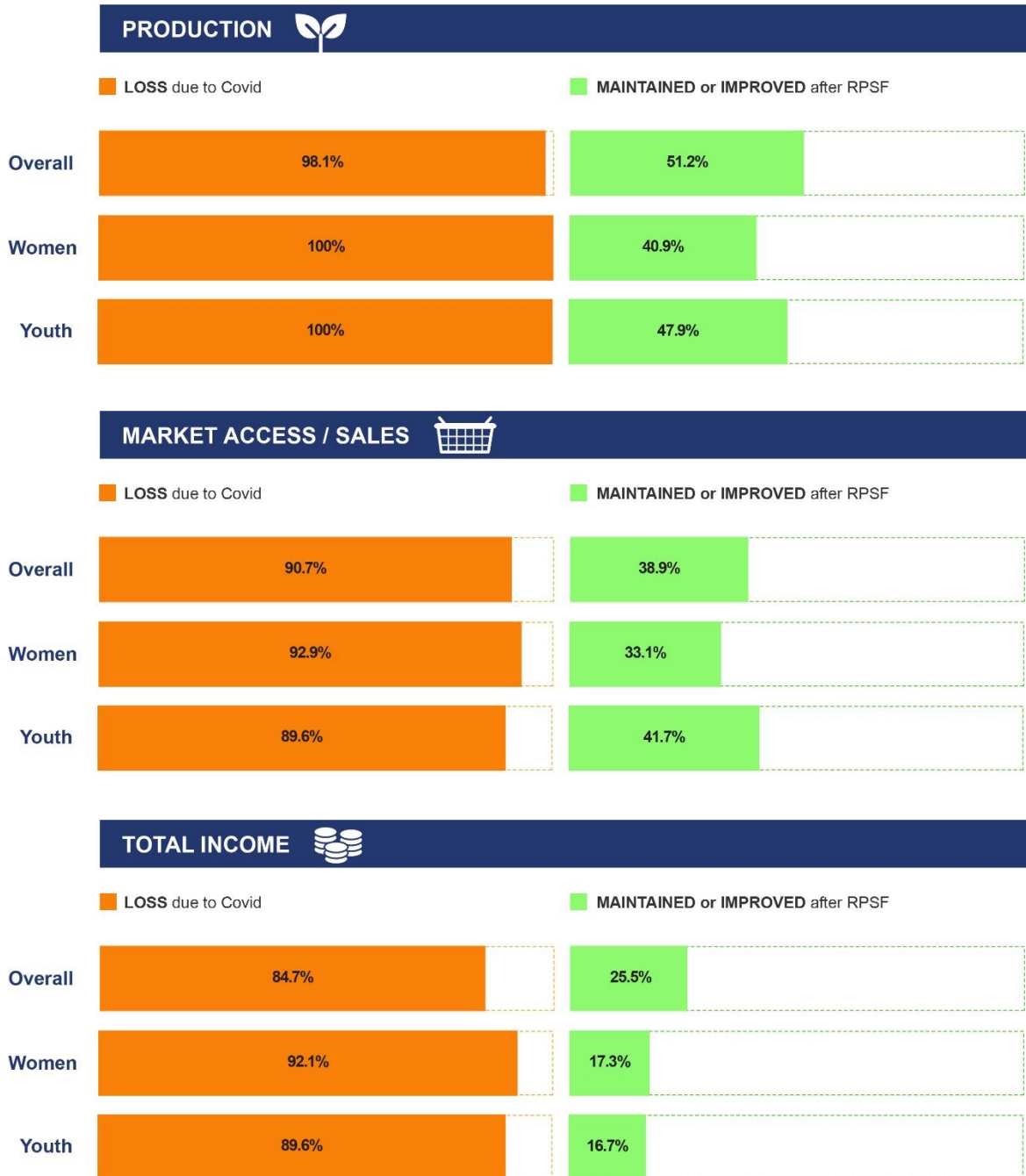
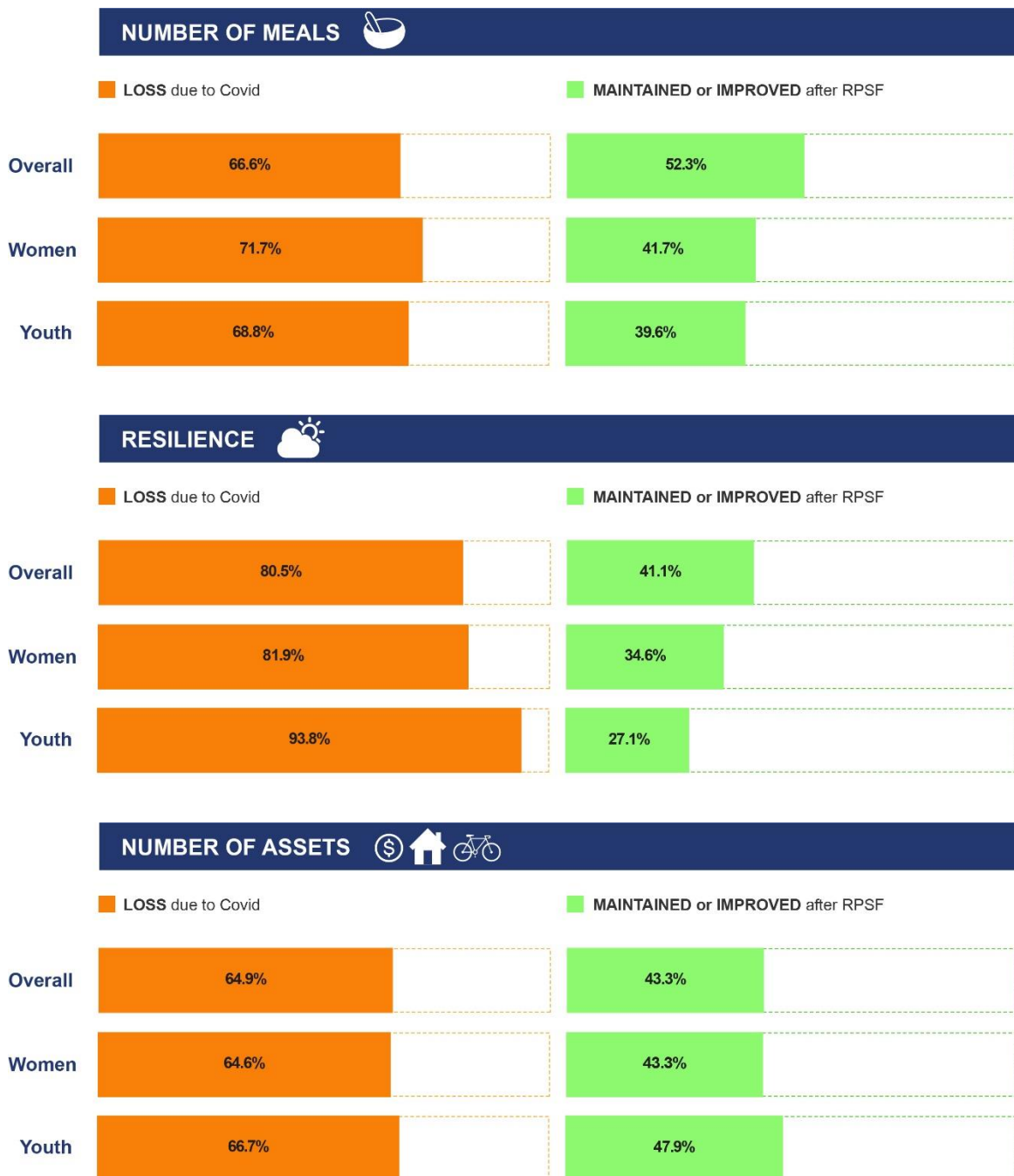


Figure 1: Percentage of households that experienced a loss in each Tier I indicator due to COVID

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 April 2021.

Two separate questions were asked for each indicator. The first question asked what happened to each Tier 1 indicator between April 2020- April 2021 relative to April 2019- April 2020: 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 April 2021: i) reduced further; ii) stayed the same; iii) returned to level before COVID-19; or iv) increased above the level before COVID-19. The **green bar** shows the percentage of households that responded ii), iii) or iv) to this question, that is, those which maintained or improved each indicator relative to pre-RPSF levels.

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Investing in rural people

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