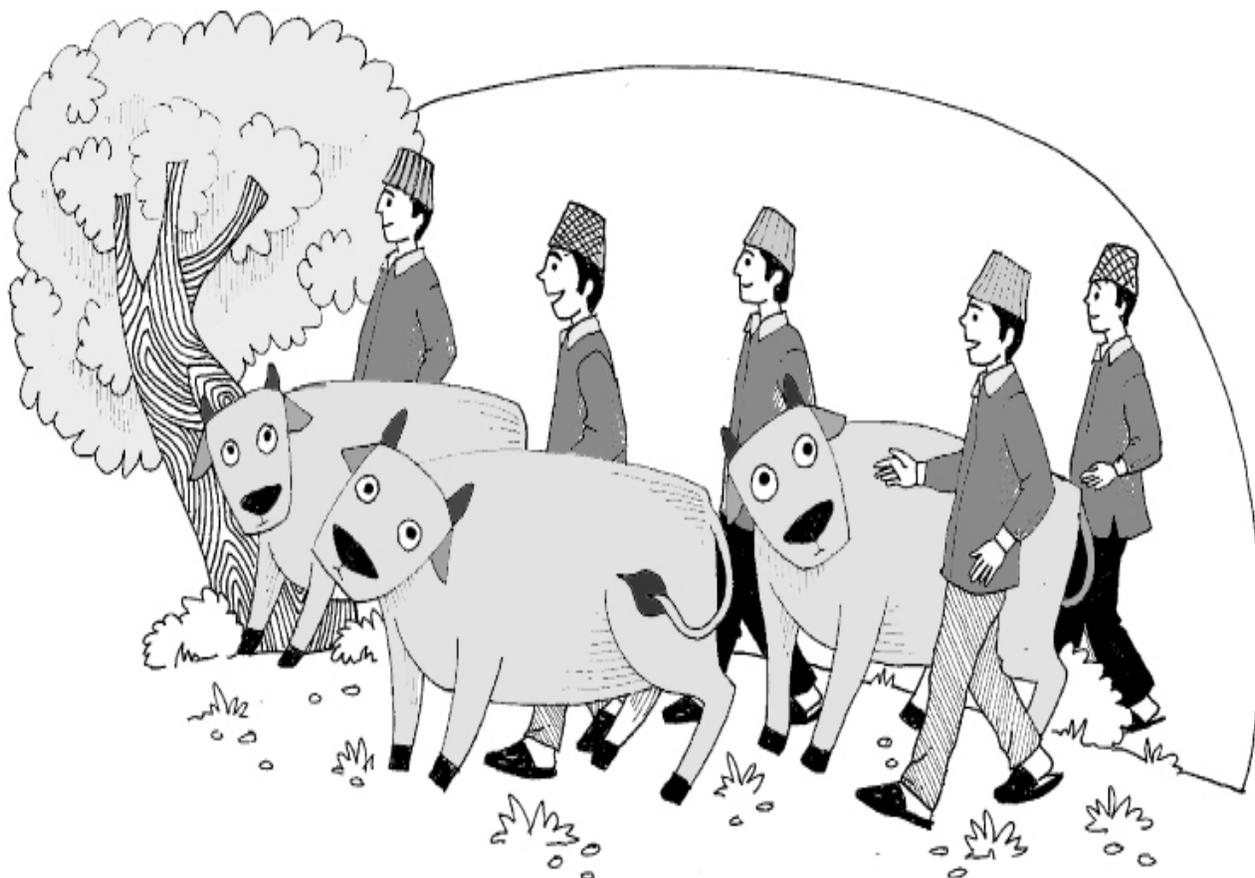


Annual Outcome Survey:

An Effective Tool for Project Management



The Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Programme (LFLP) has been implemented by the Government of Nepal under the Department of Forests (DoF) and the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), with financial support from the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) in 22 districts of Nepal since 2005. The 8-year programme has the overall goal of achieving 'a sustained reduction in poverty of 44,300 poor households' through increased production of forest products and livestock. The programme has four components:

- leasehold forestry and group formation,
- livestock development,
- rural financial services, and
- programme management and coordination.

Monitoring, as is well known, is an integral part of a project cycle. However, often, programme and project M&E systems focus more on tracking the annual plan of activities (i.e., output-focused) and are not capturing result-level data and information (looking at outcomes). Outcome-level monitoring is necessary for tracking project results and guiding further planning and decision-making efforts.

Based on the past recommendations of IFAD missions and various discussions, LFLP started using “outcome monitoring” as an annual activity in 2010. The outcome monitoring study was conducted in a participatory manner. The concept was customised based on the LFLP’s logical framework and local contexts. The methodology was reviewed with the LFLP team as well as with IFAD’s supervision mission team. A 10% sampling intensity was used in preparing a list of samples. A total of 352 leasehold forest user groups (LFUG) were taken as samples from a total of 3,439 LFUGs.

The results of the outcome study were shared at the central, regional and district levels. They were useful in assessing the project achievements at the outcome level against the objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) of the logical framework. In the rest of the article, three aspects will be covered: (i) the approach and process of administering the survey, (ii) the main findings and (iii) the approach to sharing the results of the outcome survey with a wide range of audiences.

Administering the AOS

The outcome survey was conducted by involving the concerned stakeholders and beneficiaries. The following steps highlight the process used for preparing and conducting the survey as well as for disseminating the survey findings.

Step 1. Initiating the process

LFLP adopted a participatory and consultative approach to prepare and conduct the outcome monitoring exercise. Project documents, recommendations of joint IFAD-FAO missions and feedback from the government were considered during the design of the outcome survey.

Step 2. Planning and designing the outcome survey

The M&E staff of LFLP and partner agencies jointly reviewed the relevant documents and drafted a concept note on outcome monitoring. It was subsequently finalised in consultation with the other project staff. The project logframe was referred to in developing the criteria and indicators (C&I) and in formulating the survey questionnaire. The logframe’s outcome monitoring indicators were emphasised with some adjusted modifications to fit the project context and specific needs. The guidelines developed by IFAD were customised for the specific and unique geographic context of the project. As the programme is being implemented in 22 districts across the country, it was decided that the samples would be selected to represent all districts and age groups. Accordingly, 352 sample LFUGs were chosen using stratified random sampling as shown in Table 1. The questionnaire was field-tested in two districts (Tanahun and Makawanpur), providing valuable observations that were used to modify and improve the questionnaire.

Table 1. Total groups and sample groups, by fiscal year.

Fiscal year (Group Formation)	Total LFUGs (no.)	Sample LFUGs (10% sampling intensity) (no.)	Remarks
Bridging phase	633	78	The groups established in each FY were represented, even if there were less than 10 for a particular year.
2005/06	259	24	
2006/07	531	47	
2007/08	609	62	
2008/09	724	73	
2009/10	683	68	
Total	3439	352	

Step 3. Conducting the survey

Local social mobilisation staff—e.g., group promoters (GPs) and district-based supervisors (DBSs)—were selected as enumerators because they were familiar with the target groups and the local context. To ensure data reliability, they were trained on how to administer the pre-tested questionnaires. One staff from each District Forest Office (DFO) and District Livestock Service Office

(DLSO) were also trained along with the enumerators to strengthen further the collection of quality data. Both primary and secondary data were gathered in consultation with the staff of DFO and DLSO at the district level. The collected data were checked by staff of DFO, DLSO and TA office jointly before they were sent the LFLP centre for analysis interpretation.



Step 4. Data analysis and interpretation

The data were entered using Microsoft Excel-based simple software for compilation, editing and analysis. These were analysed and interpreted by descriptive measures and supported by simple statistical tools (average, charts and graphs). During the data processing and result interpretation stages, programme staff and their government counterparts were also extensively consulted. The draft report was finalised after obtaining comments and feedback.

Step 5. Dissemination of survey results

The potential audiences and stakeholders with whom the survey findings would be shared were identified at the design stage. The findings were shared with policy-makers, donors and other development partners. The results of the survey were also shared with stakeholders at meetings, workshops and training events through presentations and distribution of leaflets and other printed publications.

Results and achievements

Key achievements at the outcome level

- ◆ Proportions of women, *Dalits* (untouchables), *Janajatis* (indigenous) and poorest in LFUGs were 39%, 16%, 53% and 29%, respectively.
- ◆ The proportions of female, *Dalits*, and *Janajatis* in key positions were 36%, 12%, and 54%, respectively.
- ◆ Greenery of leasehold areas increased; 38% of LFUGs reported an increase in forest cover up to 25%.
- ◆ Percentages of LFUGs that undertook weeding in 2007/08 and 2009/010 were 28% and 55% respectively; for plantations, in the same inclusive years, 23% and 36%, respectively.
- ◆ More than 75% of the LFUGs agreed that their leased forests provide for up to 50% their forage requirements and more than 80% agreed that their leased forest fulfilled one-half of their fuelwood requirements.
- ◆ The average goat herd size increased from 3 to 5. Most of the households reported cash incomes from selling their goats. 60% of LFUGs reported that livestock production had added to their annual household incomes.
- ◆ Almost 90% of the farmers participated in the monthly savings and credit scheme.
- ◆ About 76% of the LFUGs had mobilised savings for soft loans. About 60% of the reported loan amount was used for income-generating activities.

The AOS was helpful as it provided results and achievements beyond just the survey findings, most notably in the following three areas:

Participation of concerned stakeholders ensured

The survey was considered by concerned stakeholders as participatory and consultative. Project staff and government staff, from central to district levels, were involved during the process. Programme beneficiaries were consulted initially during the testing of the questionnaire and during the data collection. Enumerators were also selected from among the beneficiaries. Senior officials of the Department of Forests and the donor agency were regularly updated on the progress of the survey activity. A wide range of stakeholders was considered for dissemination of the results. The survey tried to address the concerns of IFAD as well as those of the government of Nepal by incorporating basic principles of M&E.

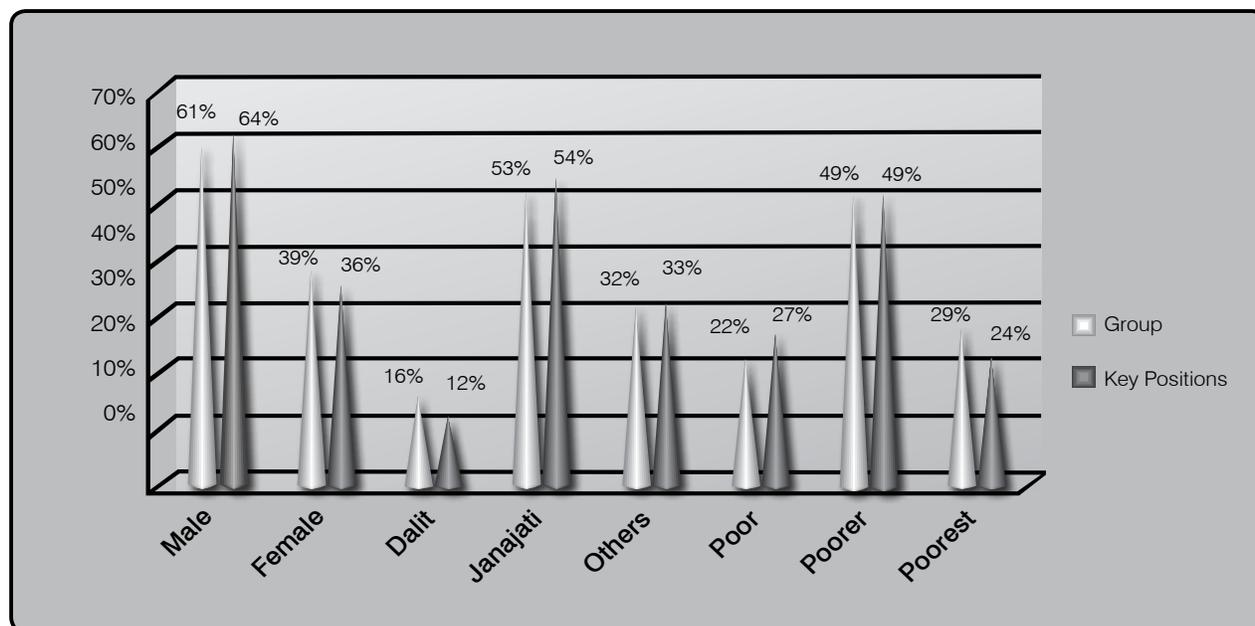


Figure 1. Group composition, by gender, ethnicity, and poverty.

Outcome-level results tracked

The outcome survey tracked the results of all four components of the project, namely leasehold forestry development, livestock development, rural finance promotion and coordination and management. The survey captured the progress and main achievements at the outcome level (against each of the indicators mentioned in the project's logical framework).

This survey also tracked the participation of women, indigenous people and Dalits (Untouchable - KDS), especially in the decisionmaking process. In this way, the survey provided the key information needed for improving facilitation and project planning.

Findings of AOS disseminated to stakeholders

The results of the outcome study were shared at different levels:

Sharing of preliminary findings. From the very beginning (i.e., initial data analysis), preliminary findings were shared with the LFLP team and the IFAD-FAO joint mission. Their comments and suggestions served as valuable inputs for interpreting the results and finalising the report.

Sharing of first draft report. Based on the feedback on the preliminary findings, the first draft report was prepared and then shared with the programme staff and the concerned government officials. This followed a presentation by the M&E team to gather final comments from staff members. The report was finalised by incorporating the comments during the presentation and discussions.

Producing various dissemination products. After completing the survey, the programme decided to prepare audience-specific materials for sharing or disseminating at the appropriate forum. Accordingly, the following were prepared:

- Leaflets in Nepali for sharing with community members
- PowerPoint presentations
- Summaries of results to be included in annual reports and other thematic reports
- Printed version of the outcome monitoring survey report

The outcome survey results were shared using PowerPoint presentations during regional annual planning workshops held in four of five development regions. Sharing of results in regional planning workshops helped inform senior officials from the Ministry about the project's achievements.

Leaflets prepared in Nepali language were distributed to DFOs and DLSOs of the 22 districts. The field-level implementing units of DFOs/DLSOs in turn disseminated the leaflets at beneficiary level as well. As the leaflets were in Nepali, staff as well as farmers were able to understand the results.

Printed copies of the outcome monitoring report were distributed to district, regional and central units of the government of Nepal, major donors and some NGOs/INGOs working in the forestry sector. In addition, students from colleges, independent researchers, freelancers and other people have also benefited from the circulation of the printed versions of the report.

Benefits of AOS to the programme and other stakeholders

LFLP management team: The outcome survey results have been useful for programme management. The Department of Forests and DLS have used the survey results in their own planning process. The areas shown to be lagging behind were prioritised by the programme for necessary input delivery and other requirements. The IFAD-FAO joint mission has also endorsed the need to use information to ensure improved planning and implementation.

District-level stakeholders: The results of the outcome survey have been useful to district-level implementing agencies, target beneficiaries as well as other stakeholders (like DDC, VDC and other development partners). The survey provided them with facts and figures to improve planning.

Donors and development partners: The results of the outcome survey have been shared with government agencies (like the DOF and the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation), donors, INGOs and NGOs that are supporting the development process in Nepal. They expressed interest in using the results for their own planning of future interventions. Thus, the AOS results will be useful to a wide range of stakeholders.

Lesson learned

1. Outcome surveys are an effective monitoring tool as it provides information about the results of a programme or project at a level higher than just project outputs.
2. As the outcome survey is carried out on an annual basis, it provides more reliable and updated information to the management team, partner government agencies, and other stakeholders. It should ideally be completed prior to the annual planning process to ensure that the findings can be used as inputs into project planning.
3. The involvement of beneficiaries, implementing agencies and other stakeholders is necessary to ensure that the survey is carried out in a participatory manner. It ensures the utilisation of survey results in programme planning and implementation, improving overall effectiveness.
4. Customising of the guidelines helps to address the local context and situations and to enhance the quality of the findings.
5. Wide sharing of the results of the outcome survey with a wide range of stakeholders is very important to ensure that results are used to inform the planning of other programmes and projects as well.

Conclusion

LFLP has taken up outcome monitoring as a useful management tool to ensure that project results and achievements are monitored and reflected in project documents and logical framework. The results of the outcome study were perceived by the stakeholders (including farmers) as reliable due to the standard methodology used and the participation of all concerned. The results were shared by producing audience-specific extension materials, including leaflets written in the local language. The AOS results were also used by the project management team during the planning process to ensure that weaknesses are addressed. Outcome monitoring can be a useful management tool for other projects and programmes used to support Nepal's development.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

DFO	District Forest Office, district forest officer
DLSO	District Livestock Service Office, district livestock service officer
DBS	district-based supervisor
DDC	District Development Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FY	fiscal year
GP	group promoter
HLFFDP	Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
KDS	Kami Damai Sarki
LF	leasehold forest
LFLP	Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Programme
LFUG	leasehold forest user group
LFUGC	Leasehold Forest User Group Committee
NGO	non-government organisation
OVT	objectively verifiable indicator
VDC	Village Development Committee
VFA	Village Finance Association

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