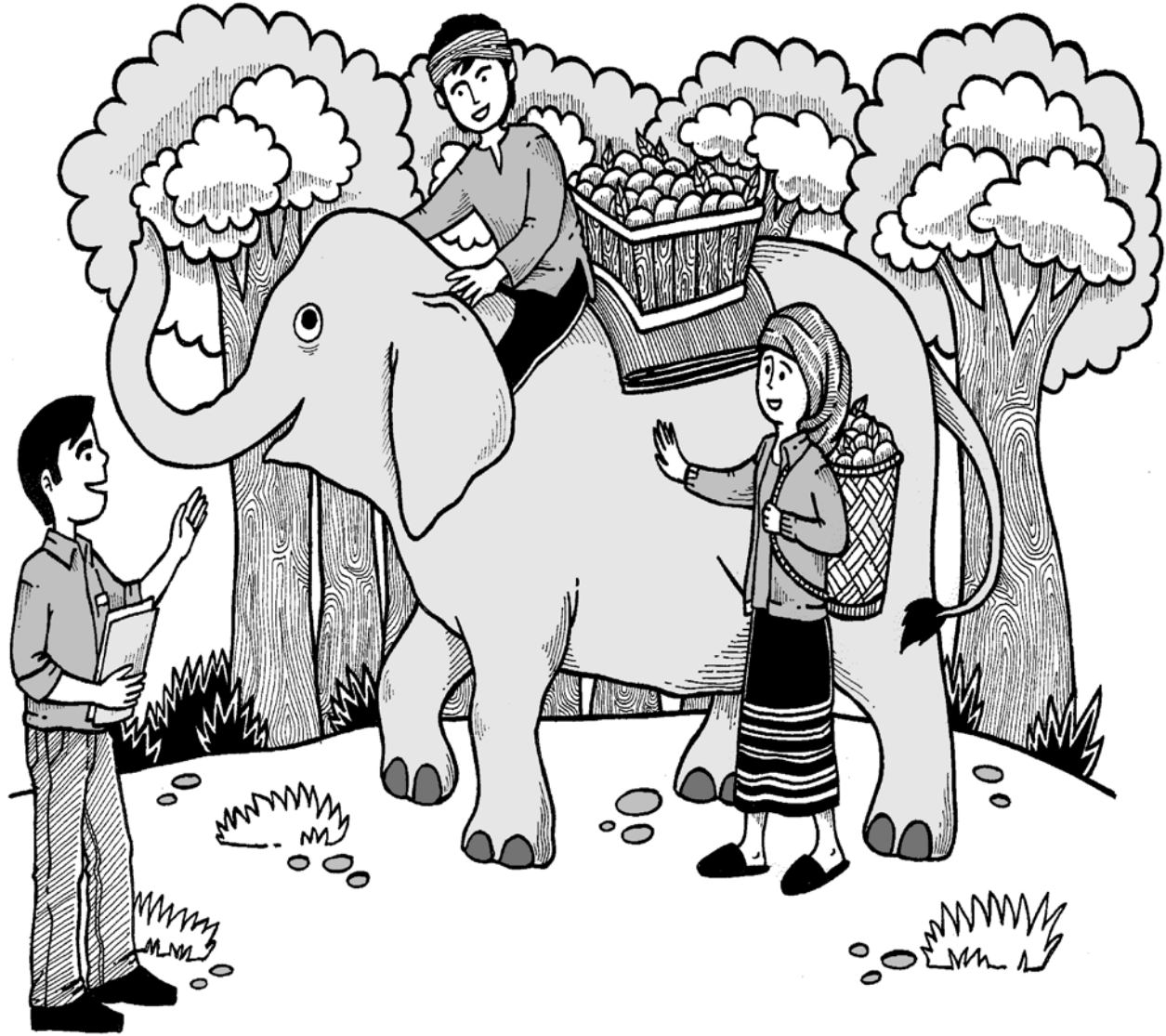


# Engendering Annual Outcome Surveys



**T**he Rural Livelihood Improvement Project (RULIP) Cambodia is an IFAD-funded livelihood security project. RULIP is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) under the supervision of the RULIP Project Support Unit (PSU) in Phnom Penh. Facilitating Learning and Capacity Development (VBNC) provided support to the RULIP project staff in planning and implementing the annual outcome survey (AOS), and the introduction of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators in the survey.

# The annual outcome survey—what and why

IFAD has developed a standard methodology – the Results and Impact Management System or RIMS for measuring *end-of-project* impact. However, RIMS does not provide regular or timely information that can be used to take corrective action *during* project implementation.

The annual outcome survey (AOS) is a tool for monitoring the performance of a project. More specifically, the AOS sets out to identify positive and negative changes at the household level to highlight evidence of where the project is achieving results and where it is lagging behind and to draw on the findings for designing corrective actions when required.

## The need to reflect gender dimensions in the AOS

The project recognized the need to increase awareness and strengthen understanding of gender elements when assessing impact. The importance of collecting data on the situation of women who participated or indirectly benefited from project activities was noted. This involved, for example, understanding how decisions were made at the household level (related to such aspects as distribution of resources, how profits from sale of crops and livestock were used, participation of men and women in decision-making, etc.

Though data previously collected by project staff tended to provide information on activities and outputs, they did not adequately emphasize or probe gender-specific information. There were several reasons for this:

- The village extension workers who conducted the HH surveys did not have the adequate experience required to fully understand the survey questions. They also lacked the skills needed to ask open-ended questions or to probe for deeper information.
- Data were mainly collected from men as 'heads of households.' Their views were, thus, not always representative of the situation of women.
- The survey did not contain especially designed questions and subquestions to assess the impact on women.

In RULIP, the AOS is conducted beginning in Year 2 of implementation. It uses a simple household (HH) survey that project staff and extension workers conduct to obtain data from a small but representative sample of beneficiaries. It is conducted during the first quarter of the year. This period (January–March) coincides with the off-season when farmers have more time to participate in the surveys.

The HH survey focuses on quantitative data (e.g., the number of women participating in training, the percentage of HH that have adopted new farming techniques, the percentage of female-headed HHs that have increased profit, or the number of HHs that took out a loan to improve their farming practices). The findings from the HH survey are complemented by qualitative data that provide more in-depth explanations about “meanings” –i.e., why and how some outcomes were or were not achieved.

In response, it was decided that the following had to be done:

- 1. Review and revise the project logframe and add gender-sensitive indicators.
- 2. Ensure that gender indicators are adequately reflected in the M&E plan.
- 3. Update the HH survey tool to align it with the revised logframe.
- 4. Provide capacity building to project staff on quantitative and qualitative data collection methodologies (especially on the gender-sensitive approach to M&E).

# The processes

## 1. Review of logframe

An early step involved working with the PSU staff to review and update the logframe by adding more gender-specific indicators. MAFF and PSU staff were also interested in adding new indicators and disaggregating data according to sex. As the team worked on the logframe, they also began to adjust the HH survey form. It was soon realised, however, that the logframe was becoming more complex and the HH survey form was becoming very long. Adding new indicators and expanding the HH survey seemed to make the tool complicated and more difficult to use.

Fortunately, IFAD project staff and a visiting consultant were able to provide help by stripping down the details in the logframe (fewer items) without losing the programme logic. It was accomplished by developing four separate results chains, outlining the reasoning behind each of the four components (see <http://asia.ifad.org/web/rulip/resources>).

VBNK had been using results chains in its work to evaluate its learning services. The results chain included the 'use of outputs', an idea that was also introduced to RULIP. The focus on 'use of outputs' helped staff see the relationship between what they do in their job and the influence it has on the desired results. Focusing on how individuals, teams and organisations apply their learning has been of particular value in closing the gap of what is often a big jump between output and outcome, a grey area generally relying on assumptions and attribution.

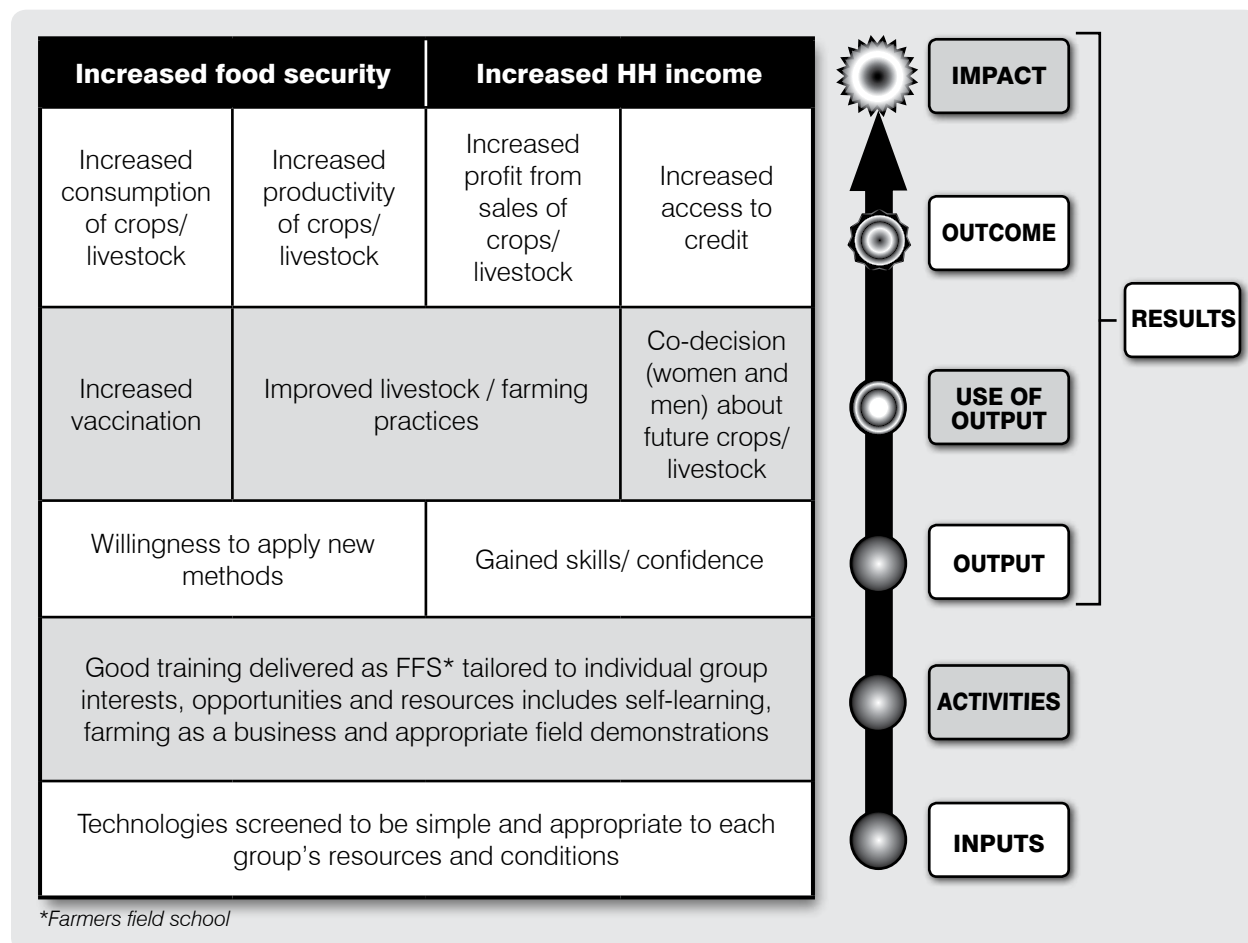
In summary, the RULIP project is built around four interconnected results chains. These relate to four outcome areas shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Four outcome areas.**



One of the RULIP results chains – improved farming practice – is shown here as an example to illustrate logic and causal relations (Fig. 2).

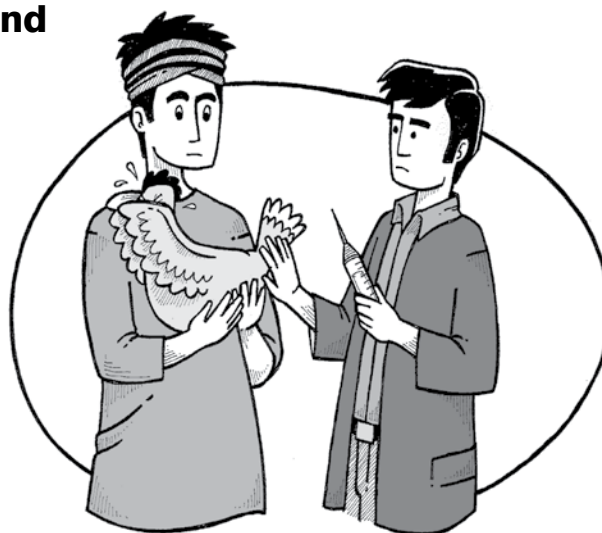
**Figure 2. A RULIP results chain.**



## 2. Finalising the HH survey form and qualitative interview guidelines

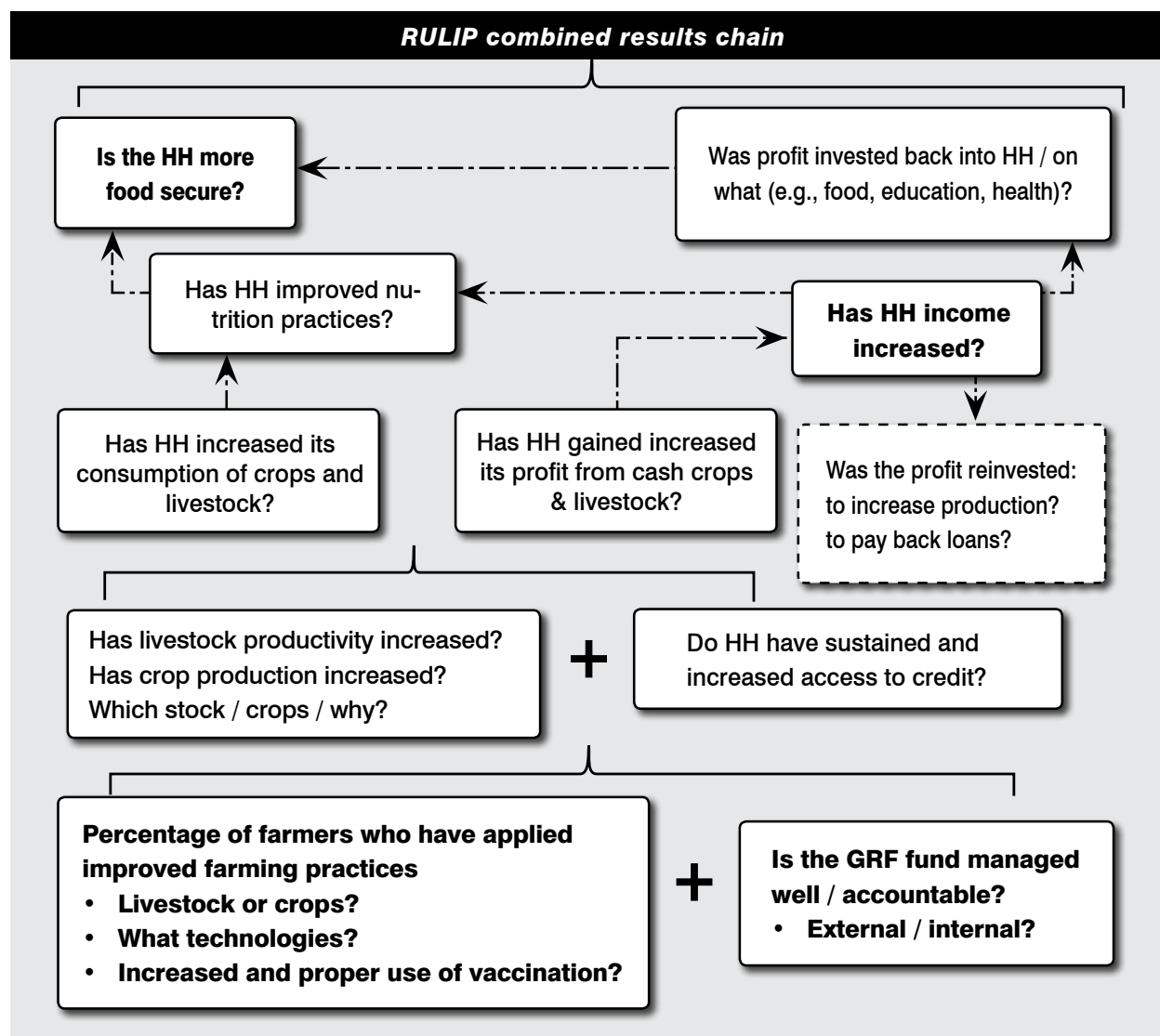
Once agreement was reached on the final results chain logic and the logframe was adjusted, the team was able to finalise the HH survey form. The results chain allowed the team to probe and ask the 'so what' question:

- What did you do after the training?
- Did you use the techniques introduced in the training? How?
- So what – Is there a noticeable increase in production? How much?



The team also decided to combine the four results chains into one visual to show how the different components linked with each other and contributed to HH income and food security (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3. RULIP combined and results chain**



In so doing, the team identified the expected outcomes and outputs as questions:

- Food security** : *Is the household more food secure?*
- Improvement in nutrition** : *Did the women and men adopt improved nutrition practices? How?*
- Increased income** : *Has household income increased compared with previous year?  
How was the increased income used (by women/men)?*

These questions laid the foundation for the AOS.



### 3. The M&E Plan

The team then developed an M&E plan that provided guidelines in organising the M&E activities. To ensure consistency and to reinforce learning, the results chain was used to illustrate what needed to occur.

The starting point for developing the M&E plan is to identify performance questions that are linked to project objectives in the revised logframe and the four results chains (Table 1). A gender-sensitive M&E plan took into consideration the differences between women and men: how the data will be collected from women and men, who will collect the data, how will gender-sensitive data be collected, how will the data be analysed, etc? A gender-sensitive questionnaire was designed. It was decided that female enumerators would interview women, and male enumerators would interview men. The enumerators' training included sessions on how to conduct surveys in a gender-sensitive way and how to ask certain culturally sensitive questions to women.

The M&E plan defines the data to be collected (and the methods and tools to be used), identifies the persons responsible for primary data collection and data analysis and determines the frequency of data collection. The plan also includes data-gathering tools, record templates and survey questionnaires.

**Table 1. Example of performance questions used to analyse the HH survey data in 2012.**

<b>Project level impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the HH more food secure?</li> <li>▪ Has there been profitable investment in HH livelihood (desegregate by gender) and/or reinvestment in production? Has the loan been repaid?</li> <li>▪ Has HH income increased?</li> </ul>	What data do you have to support your conclusions?
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have women and men adopted improved nutrition practices (change in volume of food and/or type of food, food supplements for children, etc.)? Why?</li> <li>▪ Has the HH increased its consumption of the crops and livestock produced?</li> <li>▪ Has the HH increased profitability from cash crops and livestock?</li> <li>▪ Has livestock or crop productivity increased? Which livestock / crops and why?</li> <li>▪ Do HH enjoy sustained and increased access to credit?</li> </ul>	<p>Are there any variations between direct + indirect beneficiaries?</p> <p>Are men and women getting equitable benefits?</p> <p>Are there any differences in responses from men and women? Why?</p>
<b>Use of outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have women and men farmers applied improved farming practices (which livestock or crops; which technologies; increased/proper use of vaccination)?</li> <li>▪ Are women and men farmers making use of extension services?</li> <li>▪ Is the GRF fund managed well (strong external accountability and strong internal management)? Does it provide benefits equally to women and men?</li> </ul>	Are there any variations between Khmer and ethnic minority households?
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What linkages are made between the services and training provided by the project and the results?</li> </ul>	
<b>Activities</b>		
<b>Inputs</b>		

In addition, there is a second set of performance objectives that ask the following questions:

- Has the project reached the target group? And have they benefited?
- Are the benefits being distributed in an equitable manner?
  - ♦ Have women and men both participated and benefited (e.g., equitable distribution of food and/or income). Are women participating in decisionmaking?
  - ♦ Have ethnic minorities participated and benefited? Are there sociocultural barriers that are limiting access to benefits?

- Would benefits have occurred even without the project? (attribution)
- Will the benefits be sustained beyond the life of the project?
- Are there environmental consequences? (positive or negative)



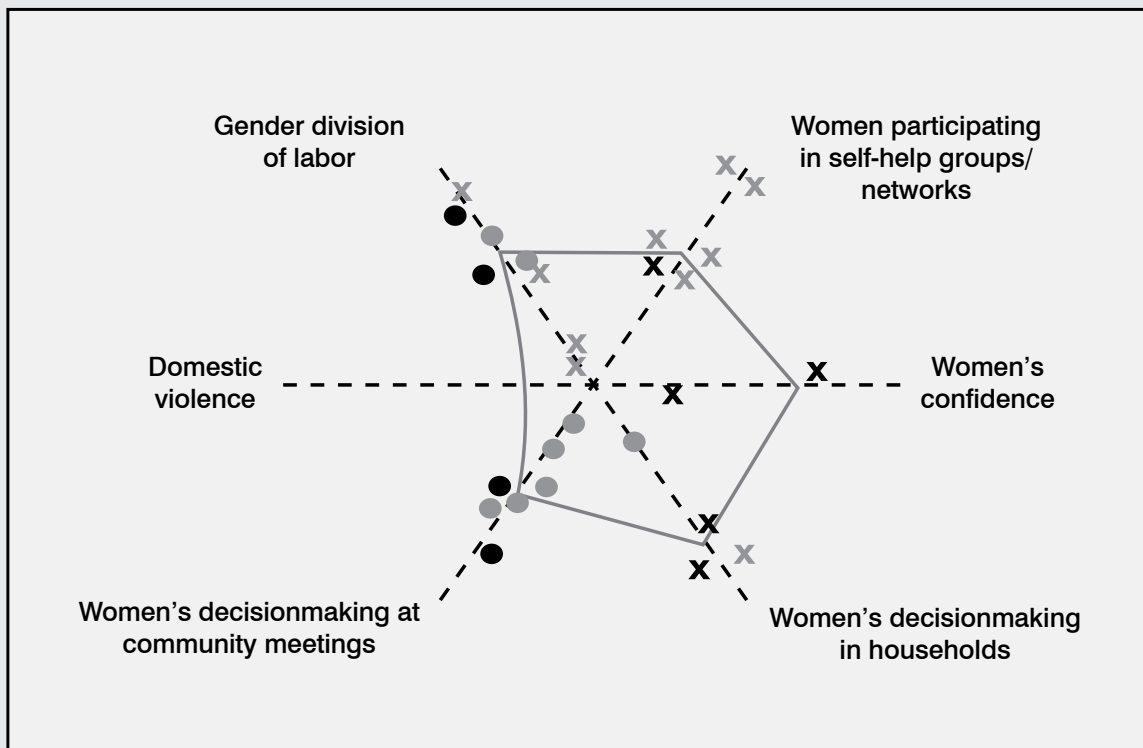
- Has the project had a wider policy or institutional impact?
- Are the logframe assumptions valid (risks avoided)?

#### 4. Qualitative research tools (spider web methodology)

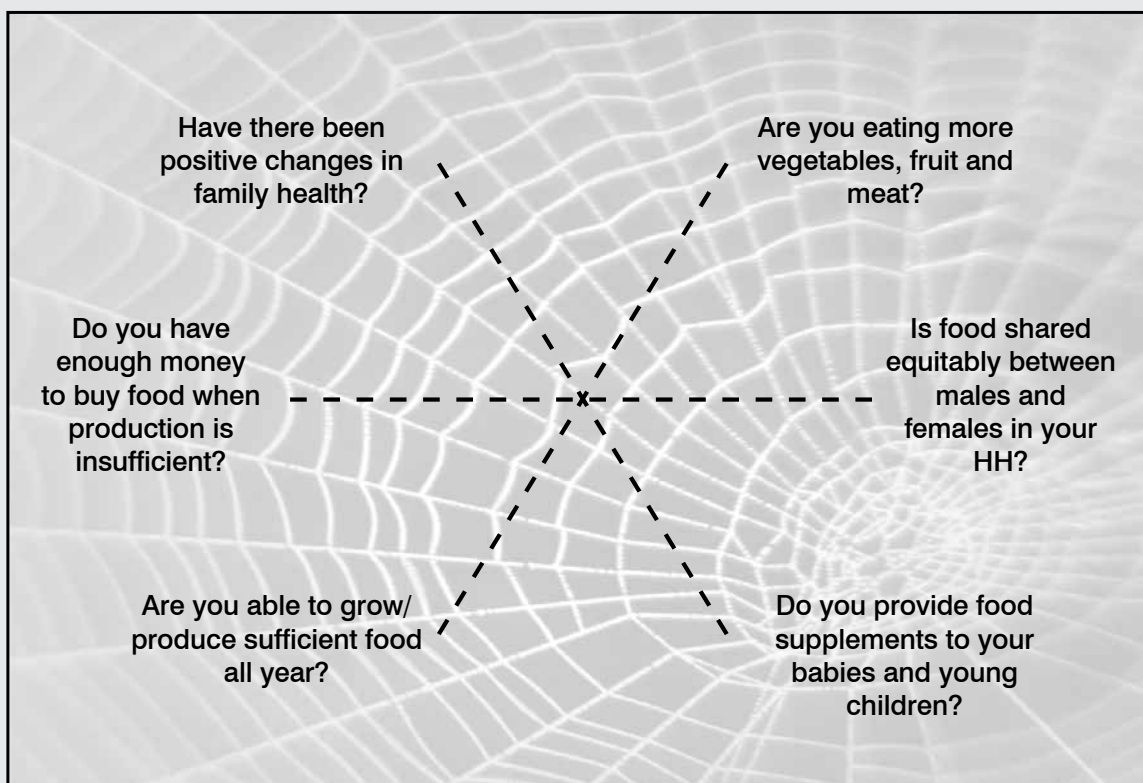
The research questions (in Table 1) were used to develop qualitative research tools to augment the household survey. The 'spider web' method was used to collect qualitative data. This is a simple, participatory approach that can be used with small groups of people with similar interests (e.g., a farmers' vegetable cooperative, female-headed HHs in a minority community). The spider web allows a project team to evaluate participant perceptions about what is working and what is not working, and why. It also allows the team to distinguish between differing perceptions (where people agree and where they do not agree, and why).

The first example (Fig. 4) shows how the spider web can be used to map how well the project is performing in different areas (domains of change). In this case, the question is 'How well do you believe the project is doing in terms of these domains related to gender?' The second example (Fig. 5) shows how performance questions are used to learn more about gender and nutrition.





**Figure 4. Spider web on project performance.**



**Figure 5. Performance questions on nutrition.**

## Lessons learned

- Rich gender-desegregated data can be obtained through qualitative interviews.
- The 2012 AOS has shown the project being able to demonstrate outcome-level results, but that linkages across the different levels of the results chains are not always explicit, particularly at the higher levels. This is due in part to the limitations of the HH survey methodology and the lack of precision in the HH survey questionnaires.
- To improve data validity, cultural factors should be given adequate consideration. For example, respondents may give answers they believe the interviewer wants to hear or may not want to report on something that frames them in a negative way ('saving face'). More qualitative data are needed to offset these shortcomings.

## Conclusion

Using a results chain approach throughout the whole process—from design of the HH survey form to developing change domains for use with qualitative tools like the 'spider web'—helped the project staff understand and evaluate the interconnectedness of the various components of RULIP in Cambodia. This, in turn, increased their understanding of the questions in the quantitative HH survey and qualitative research formats, and how to properly use them. The introduction of gender-sensitive M&E indicators and gender-specific questions helped the project to explore and better understand the gender-differentiated impacts of RULIP. The results chain approach also guided the analysis of the data and the integration of findings into the AOS report.

## References

The RULIP project in Cambodia: <http://asia.ifad.org/web/rulip/about>

The IFAD's RIMS impact survey: <http://www.ifad.org/operations/rims/index.htm> for further information about the RIMS impact surveys.

Rising to the challenge: monitoring and evaluating capacity development. INTRAC 7th Evaluation Conference, Monitoring and evaluation: new developments and challenges, The Netherlands 14-16 June 2011. Intrac ME conference papers 2011 VBNK

Guidelines for RULIP for conducting annual outcome surveys by Dr. Graeme Storer and Mr. Mour Menghong from VBNK (September 2012)

For descriptions of how spider webs (sometimes called spider grams) are used, please see:

- ◆ Save the children Norway. 2008. A kit of tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults. A compilation of tools used during a Thematic Evaluation and Documentation on Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building 2006-2008): <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/kit-of-tools.pdf>
- ◆ Kristen E, Wil de Jong et al. 2006. Guide to participatory tools for forest communities. Jakarta: Center for International Forestry Research (ISBN 979-24-4656-7), available at: [http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/Books/BKKristen0601.pdf](http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/BKKristen0601.pdf)
- ◆ A simplified Spider Web tool at APMAS website at <http://apmasnetwork.org/tools/spiderweb>

## Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AOS</b>	annual outcome survey
<b>HH</b>	household
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>M&amp;E</b>	monitoring and evaluation
<b>MAFF</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
<b>PSU</b>	Project Support Unit
<b>RIMS</b>	Results and Impact Management System
<b>RULIP</b>	Rural Livelihood Improvement Project
<b>VBNK</b>	Facilitating Learning and Capacity Development

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Virya has eighteen years experience in the social development sector in Cambodia. He has an MBA degree and is an accredited member (for professionalism and integrity in brokering multi-sector partnership for sustainable development) of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme, UK. He has also been involved in a UNDP/CDC Government-Donor partnership initiative. Virya provided oversight and management support on the design and delivery of the recently completed Implementation of Consultancy and Coaching Programme on Gender Process Monitoring & Annual Outcome Survey for the RULIP Project. He has worked with international consultants conducting evaluations of the Paris Declaration (PD) and the Victim support unit of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. He has been a key person leading the VBNK annual impact assessment study.