

# Use of Annual Functionality Surveys for Assessing Performance of Irrigator Associations



**T**he establishment of infrastructure for agriculture is a major part of the Philippine government investment portfolio. It is intended to help the rural sector not just to overcome poverty but also to involve people and enhance their engagement in the process of rural development.

For government and funding institutions, sustainability is an important thing to consider to get maximum benefits out of these interventions. In this regard, such interventions are coupled with capacity-building activities to enable the people to have a bigger stake in the process.

In agriculture, irrigation systems and facilities are among the public goods targeted for delivery to farmers nationwide. Trainings are conducted to help farmers increase their production and, at the same time, make them better stewards of the interventions given to them.

This led to the development of tools for assessing plans and programmes and for looking at implementation and sustainability concerns. In the case of the rehabilitation of communal irrigation systems (CIS), farmers, organised into irrigator associations (IAs), serve as the development partners in the operation and maintenance of the CIS.

## The Annual Functionality Survey

The annual functionality survey (AFS) is used as a tool to assess the progress of IA development and empowerment of farmer-beneficiaries in implementing plans and programmes. It is a tool developed by the NIA and adopted by the RaFPEP-IRPEP in implementing the IA strengthening component.

The AFS gives an overview of an IA's current status, helps identify the areas that need improvement and helps assess the capability and readiness of the IAs to operate and maintain irrigation facilities.

This tool was formulated with the following objectives:

1. Assess the functionality status and performance of IAs;
2. Identify areas where IAs are functional or non-functional;
3. Provide the basis for determining appropriate development programmes for IAs; and
4. List activities and fund requirement for inclusion in the annual work plan and budget (AWPB).

## Rationale

The IAs' capability to manage their organisation and undertake O&M responsibilities are developed through trainings, which is mostly funded by the government and donor agencies for a certain period of time.

### The Rapid Food Production Enhancement Programme

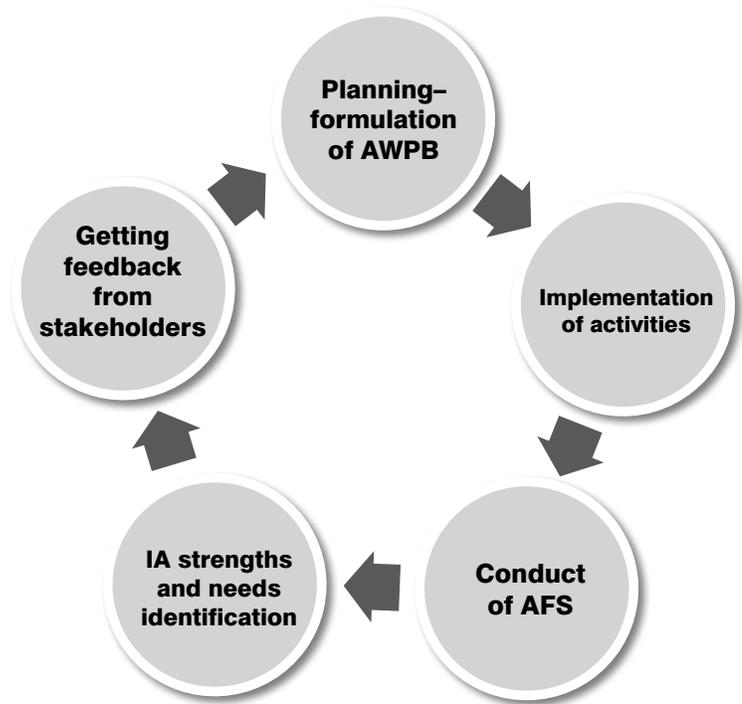
The Rapid Food Production Enhancement Programme (RaFPEP) has been implemented since 2009 by the Department of Agriculture and its line agencies: the National Irrigation Administration, the National Food Authority and the Agricultural Training Institute. Jointly funded by the European Union (EU), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and Government of the Philippines (GOP), RaFPEP aims to contribute poverty reduction by uplifting the situation of rural farming households. It has two projects – the Rapid Seed Supply Financing Project (RaSSFIP) and the Irrigated Rice Production Enhancement Project (IRPEP). RaSSFIP provided high-quality seeds to marginal farmers nationwide; it was completed in 2011. IRPEP is for implementation until 2015 in three regions and six provinces to increase production and productivity of irrigated lands not just by improving rural infrastructure and facilities and providing inputs but also by empowering the beneficiaries—the farmers—as would-be stewards of the interventions.

One of the components of IRPEP is the strengthening of IAs. Farmer-members are given training on the operation and maintenance (O&M) activities of their irrigation system and the affairs of their association. The aim is to make IAs become active partners of the government in rural development.

AFS is not just used in the post-implementation phase. It is an essential part of the IA strengthening cycle and is also used in the mapping out of activities for farmers' organisations.

The AFS provides project implementers information on which aspects of IA development are weak and which ones need interventions through capability building in the form of workshops, field trips and visitations and technology enhancement trainings.

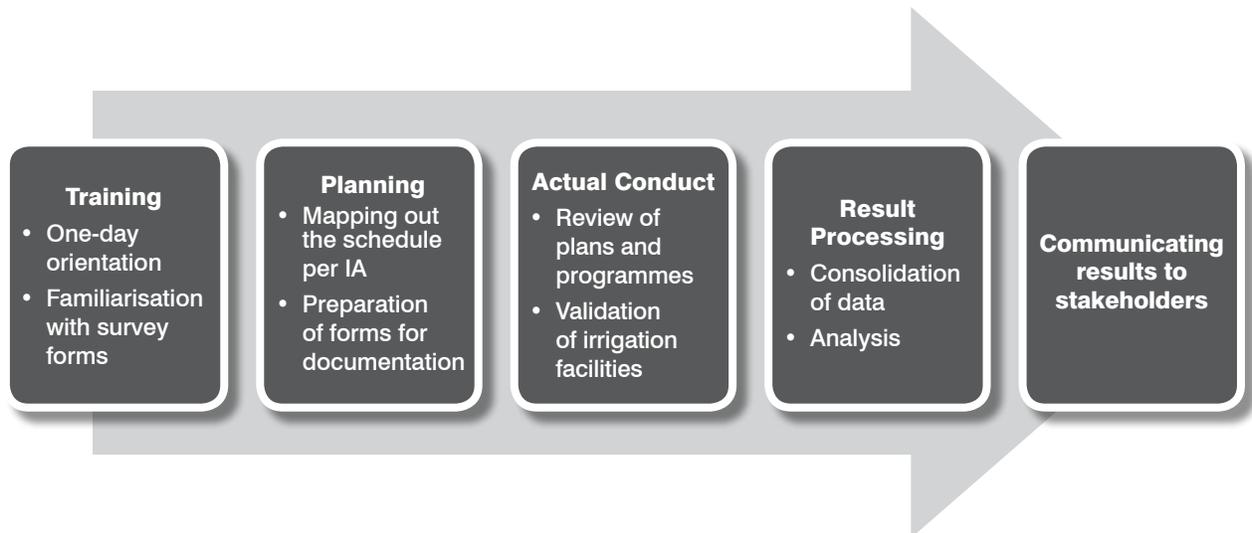
Results indicate the empowerment of beneficiaries in terms of managing their IA affairs—i.e., planning the management of irrigation-related agricultural production. Likewise, collaboration between line agencies implementing different components of the project and local authorities is improved. The result is a strengthened NIA-IA partnership in irrigation development in support of the agricultural production programme of the government.



## Coverage and schedule

The AFS covers all IAs with irrigation systems that are at in the operation and maintenance (O&M) stage of development. As one of the M&E activities of the NIA-Irrigation Management Office (IMO), the AFS is conducted yearly to evaluate the previous year's accomplishments and performance.

## Procedures



### **Step 1: Training of IMO staff**

A one-day orientation is conducted for irrigation staff involved in the AFS. Activities include familiarisation with the forms to be used and the IA documents to be reviewed during the survey. Another day is allocated for the trained staff to further familiarise themselves the process of conducting AFS to IAs.

### **Step 2: AFS schedule planning**

The Institutional Development Unit (IDU) of provincial irrigation offices prepares the schedule and plans the conduct of the AFS. The institutional development officers (IDOs) and/or senior water resources facilities technician (SWRFT), in turn, relay the schedule to the IAs so that the necessary documents for evaluation will be prepared. Likewise, the IDU prepares AFS Form 1 to be distributed to AFS evaluators.

### **Step 3: Conducting the AFS**

The AFS involves a one-day session conducted per IA. Activities in the morning include a review of plans, programmes, implementation and accomplishments in the IA office in the presence of the Board of Trustees (BOTs), IA officers and sector leaders. The evaluators and IA BOT, officers and leaders discuss the evaluation process making use of AFS Form 1. Field validation is conducted in the afternoon with the team visiting the irrigation system to check on its status and address issues that may have been raised.

### **Step 4: Processing of AFS results**

Based on the data gathered, the evaluators rate the functionality of the IA as stated in AFS Form 1. Accomplished forms are submitted to the IDU of the provincial IMO for the preparation of AFS Form 2. Form 2 is then submitted to the IDU of the regional office for consolidation and submission to the NIA central office.

### **Step 5: Communicating results to stakeholders**

The results of the regional AFS are sent back to the IMO IDU to for revision of the AWPB of specific IAs, which may need additional capability building to improve performance in the succeeding years. Likewise, the IDU of the IMO feeds back the results to the IAs concerned. Their ratings in the AFS are presented and discussed; possible changes in their plans and programmes for the year may be proposed. Capability-building activities are scheduled accordingly.

## Indicators

To determine whether the IAs have incorporated what they have learned from their trainings, criteria are set to standardise the conduct of functionality surveys and make it easier for evaluators to use indicators.

The major groups of indicators/criteria for evaluating the functionality of an IA are the following:

1. **Irrigation and IA management-related indicators.** These cover the responsibilities/activities that an IA performs in relation to irrigation and IA management.
  - a. **Operation and maintenance**—covers O&M planning, O&M implementation and O&M performance.
  - b. **Organisation**—includes IA membership, conduct of meetings and maintenance/safekeeping of IA records/files.
  - c. **Financial performance**—covers financial planning and budgeting, financial accomplishment, financial control, current (financial) and viability index.
  - d. **Organisational discipline**—includes holding of elections, conflict resolution, imposition of membership disciplinary actions/sanctions, attendance in meetings and participation in group work.
2. **Additional indicators.** These are indicators for activities and functions beyond the usual irrigation-related responsibilities of an IA—e.g., cooperative activities, tie-up with GOs/NGOs, etc. These provide the basis for granting bonus points to IAs in recognition of their extra efforts to make the IAs viable and functional.

## The AFS tool

The AFS tool is basically a list of items that need to be taken into account during performance evaluation with corresponding rating scales and percentage weights. The scores given (per criterion) are based on the results of interviews with IA officers, visits to the IA, inspection of IA records and reports and random interviews with IA members.

The list of indicators is presented in a matrix below. The detailed AFS form is available at IFAD Asia portal 'Resources' page.

Indicators	% Weight	Remarks
<b>I. Irrigation and IA management-related</b>		
<b>A. Operation and maintenance</b>	40	
1. O&M Planning		Evaluates whether the IA prepares plans (written or unwritten) with respect to cropping calendar, schedule of water delivery, CIS maintenance and repair and amortisation/ISF
2. O&M Implementation		Evaluates IA's adherence to and timeliness in implementing the IA plans
3. O&M Performance		Looks into IA's performance in terms of operating and maintaining CIS
<b>B. Organisation</b>	15	Looks into the regularity of the conduct of IA assemblies and meetings, membership of farmer beneficiaries in IA and efficiency in maintaining pertinent IA records
1. Membership		
2. Sectoral meeting		
3. BOD meeting		
4. General assembly/members' meeting		
5. Records/files		
<b>C. Financial performance</b>	30	Evaluates the IA's efficiency in managing their finances, specifically in the areas of planning and budgeting, accomplishment, control, current ratio and viability index
1. Financial plan		
2. Financial accomplishment		
3. Financial control		
4. Current ratio		
5. Viability index		
<b>D. Organisational discipline</b>	15	Evaluates the capacity to maintain order and control in the association, especially in motivating members to participate in activities in the IA (i.e., holding of elections, meetings and group work), conflict resolution and imposition of discipline/sanctions
1. Elections		
2. Conflict resolution		
3. Discipline/sanctions to members		
4. Attendance in BOD meetings		
5. Attendance in GA/members' meetings		
6. Attendance in sectoral meetings		
7. Involvement in group work		
<b>Total</b>	100	
<b>II. Additional indicators</b>	12	Ensures that the IA engages in activities or functions beyond the usual irrigation-related responsibilities to enhance viability and functionality (cooperative activities, tie-up with GOs/NGOs)
<b>Highest possible ia rating</b>	112	

Based on the final IA rating, which was agreed upon between NIA and IAs during consultation workshops, the descriptive ratings are set, as follows:

<b>Descriptive rating</b>	<b>Range of ratings</b>	<b>IA Status/Remarks</b>
Outstanding (O)	95% and above	The IA has effectively and efficiently managed their affairs. It can stand alone with minimal supervision from government. It has business ventures other than irrigation.
Very satisfactory (VS)	85 to 94%	The IA can manage their affairs with moderate supervision from government. Some of these IAs have small entrepreneurial activity.
Satisfactory (S)	75 to 84%	The IA implements plans and programmes with close supervision from the government. All IA activities are focused only on irrigation operation and maintenance.
Fair (F)	65 to 74%	The IA has written plans and programmes on irrigation-related activities, but some are yet to be implemented. It needs close monitoring and supervision from the government on capacity-building activities.
Poor (P)	Below 65%	The IA has no written plans and programmes on irrigation-related activities and on the affairs of their association. Close monitoring and supervision from the government are required in its capacity-building programme.

## Lessons learned

To improve the accuracy and relevance of assessment results, the following recommendations should be considered:

- The timeline of the survey must be set in such a way that results could be fed back to the IAs in time for their preparation of their yearly plans and programmes.
- Adequate training on the use of and familiarisation with the AFS forms are essential. A dry run on how to conduct the AFS should be done.
- The sequence of items in the AFS Form 1 should be closely followed in administering the AFS to IAs. This will ensure that the all criteria are properly rated.
- Conduct the activity in an environment where farmer-respondents will neither be overwhelmed by the process nor intimidated by the presence of evaluators.



## Conclusion

The AFS serves as a tool for project field implementers to decide what capacity-building interventions in managing irrigation-related activities are needed. AFS has proven to be effective in evaluating the impact of project interventions on irrigation beneficiaries.

## References

National Irrigation Administration (NIA) 1992. Memorandum Circular No. 27, Series of 1992. Cost Recovery schemes and other pertinent guidelines for CIS. Quezon City, Philippines.

National Irrigation Administration (NIA). Memorandum Circular No. 49, Series of 2012. Revised cost recovery schemes and other pertinent guidelines for CIS. Quezon City, Philippines.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

AFS	annual functionality survey
AWPB	annual work plan and budget
BOT	Board of Trustees
CIS	communal irrigation system
DA	Department of Agriculture
IDP	institutional development programme
IDU	institutional development unit
IA	irrigator association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IDO	irrigators development officer
IMO	Irrigation Management Office
IRPEP	Irrigated Rice Production Enhancement Project
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NIA	National Irrigation Administration
NPCU	National Project Coordinating Unit
OM	operation and maintenance
SWRFT	Senior Water Resources Facilities Technician

# Acknowledgement

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## Bio-sketches and contact details

### **Dr. Leo Lopez Gallego, DPA**

*Community Development Officer IV*

*Institutional Development Division, Operations Department*

*IRPEP IA Strengthening Coordinator, National Project Coordinating Unit*

*National Irrigation Administration*

*Mobile: +639189137210*

*Email: leogalleo55@yahoo.com*

Dr. Leo Lopez Gallego, DPA, started working at the NIA as an assistant water management technologist (April 1979–June 1982). He has been an IDO for 6 years (July 1982 – November 1988), organising farmer beneficiaries into IAs. He has more than 24 years' experience (December 1988 to present) in monitoring the performance and progress of IA development as NIA's institutional development program supervisor. Presently, he is the section chief of the Irrigators Organisation and Training Section of the Institutional Development Division, Operations Department and the concurrent IA Strengthening Coordinator of the IRPEP-NPCU of the National Irrigation Administration.

### **Sharleene Kay Plasuelo Alayan**

*Knowledge Management Officer*

*Rapid Food Production Enhancement Programme*

*Department of Agriculture*

*Mobile: +639173165467*

*Email: sharleene.kay.alayan@gmail.com*

Sharleene Kay Alayan has worked at the Department of Agriculture since 2010 as knowledge management officer of the RaFPEP-Project Coordinating Office. She has experience in writing, editing, and laying out articles for government agency newsletters and private company's magazine publications. In RaFPEP, she is in charge of knowledge management and documentation and handles the marketing and project management components of IRPEP. She manages the RaFPEP official website and the project's portal in IFAD Asia.

**Marilyn Rosal Platero**

*Monitoring and Evaluation Officer*

*Rapid Food Production Enhancement Programme*

*Department of Agriculture*

*Mobile: +639355510289*

*Email: marilynplatero@yahoo.com*

Marilyn Platero has worked as the monitoring and evaluation officer of the RafPEP at the Department of Agriculture since 2010. She is in charge of monitoring overall progress and conduct of evaluation/assessment on RafPEP implementation. She has experience in data mining and analysis of agriculture performance and economic and social accounts.