

Results and Impact Management System (RIMS+)

Additional Features for Impact Evaluation



The RIMS (Results and Impact Management System) is a comprehensive system for measuring, analysing, and reporting on the results and impact of IFAD-supported country programmes and projects. All projects need to conduct a RIMS survey at the beginning and at the end of the project cycle. While conducting the RIMS surveys in Vietnam, it became obvious that the scope of the standard RIMS survey with its focus on measuring high-level impact at the household level was too focused to capture the variety of impacts. In response, the RIMS Plus Survey was developed (hereinafter referred to as RIMS+) to capture more detailed data than normally obtained from conventional RIMS surveys.

RIMS+ is built on IFAD's existing RIMS, and was elaborated in collaboration between IFAD-Vietnam, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Development and Policies Research Centre (DEPOCEN). It was first used for the 2011 baseline survey of the IFAD Tam Nong Support Programme in Tuyen Quang. Already to date, four RIMS+ baseline surveys in four project provinces, two RIMS+ completion surveys in two project provinces, and two RIMS+ annual outcome surveys (AOS) in two project provinces have been completed. The RIMS+ will be applied for the AOS in two additional provinces.



From RIMS to RIMS+

The standard RIMS

The RIMS survey, a standardised questionnaire to be applied for all projects in all countries, should be conducted at the beginning and upon completion of every project. It has two mandatory impact indicators:

- **Household asset ownership index:** This section is the basis for determining the household asset index, which captures the relative wealth of survey respondents.
- **Child nutrition:** This section measures three main variables: chronic malnutrition (stunting relative to height-for-age); acute malnutrition (wasting or weight-for-height); and proportion of children underweight (weight-for-age).

While conducting the RIMS survey in Vietnam, it was found that the questionnaire did not provide enough flexibility in design and analysis (for example, projects whose purpose encompasses assisting ethnic minorities would require information on each household's ethnic group, and this is not included in RIMS standard impact surveys). The scope of the standard RIMS impact surveys was considered to be too narrow to reflect the variety of impacts of the interventions. Furthermore, the absence of a control group limited the consideration of the impacts due to external factors. It was decided to expand the RIMS survey into a RIMS+, with additional questions tailored to reflect specific aspects of each project intervention. (For more details on the RIMS survey, please see www.ifad.org/operation/rims.)

RIMS+

The RIMS+ is a set of additional questions integrated into the standard RIMS questionnaire, which can be tailored to the specific needs of particular project interventions. It allows for the collection of more coherent and comprehensive sets of data (e.g., on gender) to document the diverse impacts of projects. For ongoing IFAD-funded projects in Vietnam, there are two options for conducting a RIMS+ survey:

- Projects that have already conducted a standard RIMS baseline survey will conduct a RIMS+ completion survey.
- Projects that have not yet conducted a baseline survey will conduct both a baseline and a completion RIMS+ survey.

Table 1. Changes and advantages of RIMS+.

Changes	Advantages
Expanded questionnaire	More information can be collected to diagnose problems Project-specific indicators can be measured Information for improving the design of interventions is collected
Use of control group	Improved measurement of project impact by taking into account broader trends in rural areas
Additional training and supervision	Improved data quality Capacity building for local M&E officers
GPS to geo-reference households	Better supervision of enumerators Easier administration of follow-up surveys by revisiting the same respondents in follow-up survey
Flexible questionnaire and analysis	Information needs of the IFAD project and IFAD planning are addressed Analysis to meet project needs Analysis is fast, reliable and comparable

The quasi-experimental method

Quasi-experimental methods are designed typically to assess the causal impact of a project by mimicking the benefits of random selection. Two groups are selected for a study—a treatment group (households in the project areas) and a control group (households outside the project areas).

Many studies have found that project M&E systems, which assess project indicators before and after project implementation, are not adequate for understanding project impacts. Many factors change throughout the project, and new external factors can also influence the indicators (e.g., general economic growth/recession, educational interventions, world prices of commodities, natural disasters, etc.). The solution is to measure

the differences between households that participated in project interventions (subsidies, technical support, information, etc.) and those that did not.

Use of control groups enables us to analyse what would have happened in the targeted group if the intervention had not happened. Therefore, it is important to select a good control group, with similar characteristics to the treatment group (both observed and unobserved). In the IFAD-funded projects in Vietnam, control communes are usually selected to reflect the equivalent poverty rate and ethnic minority rate.

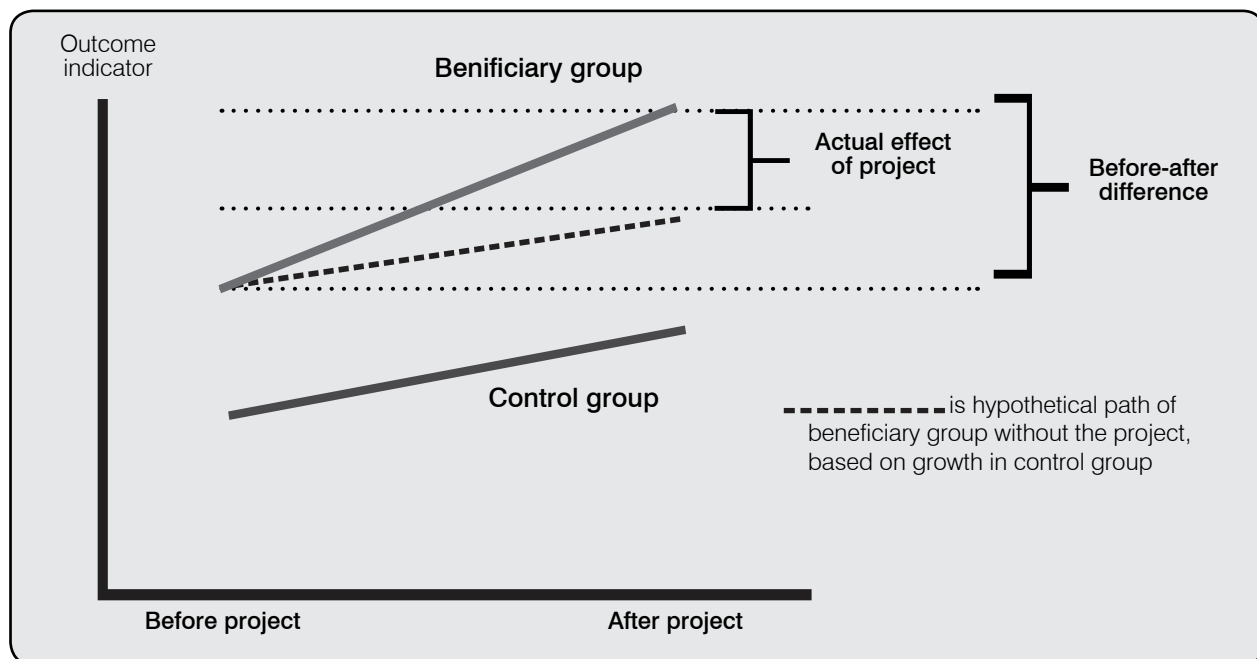


Figure 1. Use of control group.

Not participating in project activities does not automatically make a household in the same commune eligible to be considered as the control group. In general, there are three cases to consider when selecting a control group:

- Case 1 - Household-level intervention only. If the project only targets individual households (e.g., micro-finance programmes that lend to eligible individual households), then the non-beneficiary households in the same district may be considered eligible for the control group. In this case, the intervention on the targeted household will not have a spillover effect on the control household.
- Case 2 - District-level intervention. If the project has district-wide interventions (such as providing a bridge, a market place or a training program) then the non-beneficiary households in the project district are not eligible to be on the control group. In this case, the intervention on the target (treatment) households will also affect the non-target (control) households. For example, in a demonstration programme for mushroom farming, although non-beneficiary households may not participate in the project programme, they can still learn a lot from observing the programme. In such cases, the control group should be selected from non-project areas/districts.
- Case 3 - Both district- and household-level intervention. The selection process is similar to Case 2 above. We need to select the control group households from other 'similar' non-project districts.

The RIMS+ questionnaire

The RIMS+ questionnaire contains the standard RIMS questions, supplemented with additional project-specific inquiries. It covers a broad scope of areas, including agriculture, irrigation, raising livestock, supporting micro-finance and community development. The structure of the questionnaire follows RIMS standards. The following table provides a sample of the structure and content of the RIMS+ questionnaire.

Table 2. Additional RIMS+ questions in IFAD-funded projects in Vietnam.

	Category	Standard RIMS	RIMS+
Cover Page	N / A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the province, commune, village, and households interviewed Name of enumerator, supervisor, and survey date
A.	General information about household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household members: age, sex, literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnicity of household head and members Access to school of children (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>) Participation in common groups/ unions
B.	Household characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floor material Number of bedrooms Sources of drinking water Toilet type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roof material House ownership certificate and license (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
C.	Asset ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assets Fuel for cooking Tools for tilling the land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other tools for agriculture farming
D.	Land	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmland size; land use certificate (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)

	Category	Standard RIMS	RIMS+
E.	Food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duration of hungry season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food shortage solutions (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>) Daily nutrition (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
F.	Crop production	Little information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm size Yield and volume of sales Selling price Income from each crop Input costs Division of labour (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
G.	Livestock	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of livestock Volume of sales Input costs Income from each livestock Division of labour (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
H.	Market access	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest income product Selling location and time of travel to this location Seller and buyer Sources of market information Distance from house to selling places

	Category	Standard RIMS	RIMS+
I.	Extension training Vocational training	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension training: participation, attendance times, applicability (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>) Vocational training: participation, types of vocational training, income changes before and after participation (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
J.	Non-farming activities	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-farm Income Identifying the main income earner in the household Primary source and secondary source of income Financial management (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
K.	Credit access	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General loans: borrower, the person responsible for paying, source of loan, use of loan (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>) Loan supported by project: borrower, the person responsible for paying, purpose and use of loan, the effectiveness of loans (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>)
L.	Socioeconomic development plan and infrastructure building plan	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in developing socio-economic development plan and infrastructure plan (<i>gender-disaggregated</i>); Disseminating community information Satisfaction with local infrastructure
M.	Disasters and vulnerability	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of disasters Risks and vulnerability Resilience (capacity to withstand or recover from disasters)

	Category	Standard RIMS	RIMS+
N.	Gender equality	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing awareness of family violence • Role of women in decision-making process in the family and community
O.	Anthropometry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age (in months) • Height and weight of children under 5 	No new information

A unique addition in the RIMS+ questionnaire is the inclusion of gender in question design. This will make it possible to take into consideration the effects of gender during the analysis. For example, the outcomes in the project action areas can be aggregated and compared across households headed by a man and those headed by a woman. The gender-sensitive approach is integrated in the RIMS+ questionnaire on the following aspects:

- Gender division of labour
- Gender differences in access and control over resources (e.g., income, employment, land, social services)
- Gender differences in information and knowledge
- Decision-making patterns in the household and community
- Women's and men's attitude and self-confidence
- Gender differences in vulnerability and coping strategies

In addition to the quantitative data collected through the survey questionnaire, qualitative data are also collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to provide more detailed information on the respondents' lives, experiences and perception on particular issues.

Lessons learned

After the initial RIMS+ 2011 baseline survey for Tam Nong Support Programme in Tuyen Quang, the supervisors and consultancy team from DEPOCEN and IFPRI highlighted the challenges and discussed with the staff the issues that came up during the implementation. Discussing these lessons learned was very important for the capacity building of IFAD M&E officers, so that they will be able to administer the survey in their own projects.

First, by adding more questions and information, the questionnaire also became more complicated. The interview time doubled, and it required improved skills by the enumerators. In other words, enumerators must be carefully trained in the administration of the questionnaire and interviewing skills so that they can understand and administer questions correctly. Also, supervisors must work harder to minimise errors in data gathering.

Second, the complexity and time requirements for data entry, processing, analysis and reporting have increased. RIMS+ requires a new data entry software, called CSPro. Now, M&E officers have to enter data using both RIMS software and new data entry software.

Third, the use of a control group increases the workload, with financial implications. The logistics and the cooperation with the local community are particularly challenging to organise in non-project areas. Furthermore, in remote mountainous areas, local people are still too shy to communicate with outsiders and openly share their views and conditions.



Finally, the GPS units add to the physical burden of the enumerators, considering that they have to carry a weight scale on the survey. Also, the operating system of the GPS units has not been translated into Vietnamese, so local enumerators and officers who do not feel comfortable in English may find them difficult to use.

Conclusion

RIMS+ has demonstrated improvements of M&E with different groups of beneficiaries. Based on these assessments of project impacts, decisionmakers can obtain a clearer picture of what is happening on the ground and can draft intervention activities that answer the needs of the local population.

To overcome the implementation challenges of the RIMS+ impact survey, it is recommended to focus closely on the preparation phase and frequently organise training and re-training courses to maintain the capacity of project officers to conduct a RIMS+ survey. In addition to training courses, IFAD Vietnam also organised workshops and seminars, which proved to be a good chance for inter-organisational knowledge exchange. All M&E officers from IFAD-funded projects, from across 11 provinces, met and shared their experiences, providing additional learning opportunities and improving the overall effectiveness of the M&E function.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AOS	Annual Outcome Survey
DEPOCEN	Development and Policies Research Centre
GPS	Global Positioning System
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
RIMS	Results and Impacts Management System

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Bio-sketch and contact details

Nguyen Thu Ha

Researcher / Project Officer

Development and Policies Research Centre (DEPOCEN)

Email: thuha@depocen.org

Cell: +84-0904679233

Tel: +84-4-39351419

Ms. Ha Nguyen Thu is a researcher working at the Development and Policies Research Center (Viet Nam), one of the leading survey and research centers in Ha Noi. She participated in conducting the RIMS+ impact evaluation baseline survey and RIMS+ impact evaluation completion survey for the Tam Nong Support Programme in which the quasi-experimental approach is introduced to conduct impact evaluation. In addition, she worked on several other IFAD projects in Vietnam.