

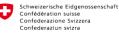
OUTCOME MONITORING SYSTEM

PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (PS-ARD)

Country: Vietnam



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wiss Agency for Devel nd Cooperation SDC



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List of Abbreviations

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ARD	Agriculture and Rural Development
OM	Outcome Measurement
PS-ARD	Public Service Provision Improvement Programme in Agriculture and Rural
	Development
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

1. Key Features and Learnings

- Example of an application of an end-beneficiaries' satisfaction survey on the quality of public services and on inclusion in local planning.
- The case of PS-ARD shows the usefulness of satisfaction surveys for including endbeneficiaries in the assessment of the results a project/programme and for outcome monitoring.
- "Attribution" remains an issue in the use of opinion surveys. The qualitative information extracted through the surveys needs to be complemented with factual information to help analyzing the project/programme contribution to "changing" levels of satisfaction.
- The organization of satisfaction surveys needs know-how for the design of the methodology and considerable time for collecting and analyzing the information.
- The PS-ARD case showed that the potential for alignment and for replication of a project/programme tool by national authorities needs to be analyzed at the start. It needs to be supported by a clear commitment of the partners and reflected in the design of the tool (the partner needs to have the capacities and interest to replicate it). In this respect, a trade-off between alignment and the reliability of the collected data needs to be considered.

2. Fact Sheet

	PS-ARD – End-Beneficiaires' satisfaction surveys
Developed by	 Public Service Provision Improvement Programme in Agriculture and Rural Development (PS-ARD) funded by the SDC, 2008 and 2011
Applied in	 Two provinces of Vietnam – 400 households (200 per province)
Purpose	 Include citizens' feedbacks/perspectives as a way to measure project outcomes Identify needs for planning purposes Trigger a dialogue with partners
	 4) Develop and test a methodology to be replicated by national/local authorities as a way to promote results-based management
Methodology	 End-beneficiaries satisfaction survey on quality of public service delivery in the ARD sector and inclusion in local planning Data collected by provincial statistical offices in 400 randomly selected households identified as using one or more of the targeted public services (200 per province, in 6 communes pre-selected based on socio-economic factors)
	 Scoring indicators on satisfaction (four grades from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied") OM system complemented by other sources (factual information, other reports)
Products	 End of the phase report
	 Results published as a project report
	 Key facts and learning published as a discussion paper
Dimensions / aspects	 Focus on concrete improvements for citizens resulting from programme intervention and changes in attitudes of partners as perceived by end-beneficiaries
addressed	 Focus on improved effectiveness and efficiency in public services delivery and on inclusion in local planning. Other dimensions of good governance could easily be included
	 Allows for data to be disaggregated and to obtain information on specific categories of the population (gender, vulnerable groups, etc.)
	 Not designed to measure power relations and/or cost-benefit elements
Indicators	 Qualitative information expressed in quantitative terms (→ percentage of interviewed population "satisfied" with public services and local planning)
	 Collected data need to be combined with quantitative indicators and other sources of information for analysis
Attribution	 Problematic – other sources of information necessary to analyse qualitative data extracted through the surveys
	 Focus on a specific category of the population ensures citizens have an "informed opinion"
	 Useful to use a control group (i.e. conduct the survey in an area not affected by project)
Conditions	 Need for in-house or external expertise when developing the methodology (formulation of questions, size of the samples, etc.)
	 Importance of ex-ante analysis of end-beneficiaries' expectations in order to define the scoring system, "capture" change over time and obtain reliable data
	 Need to rely on an "impartial" third party to collect the data Interviewees need to feel confident to speak freely
	 Opinion/satisfaction surveys need to be combined with other sources of information in order to analyse results and programme/project contribution
Remarks	 The organization of citizens/beneficiaries' opinion surveys requires important human and financial resources
	 Conditions for harmonization and alignment should be analysed at the very start. Strong interest and commitment of national/local authorities and political leadership as preconditions
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3. Introduction and Background

The project and its main outcomes

The Public Service Provision Improvement Programme in Agriculture and Rural Development (PS-ARD) (Phase 1) was implemented between January 2008 and April 2011. PS-ARD was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by the Government of Vietnam and relevant departments of the provinces of Hoa Binh and Cao Bang with technical assistance provided by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The total budget of the programme was 5.3 mio CHF.

Through the building up of efficient and effective decentralised public services delivery systems in agriculture and rural development (ARD), the overall goal of the programme was to contribute to improved livelihoods in the upland and ethnic minority populated provinces of Hoa Binh and Cao Bang in terms of food security, income and environmental sustainability. In particular, PS-ARD supported government organizations in the fields of agricultural extension, veterinary, plant protection and irrigation services in providing better services according to the demand of farmers. In order to ensure the demand oriented approach of service providers, PS-ARD further supported the inclusion of participatory procedures for local/communal development planning. Support was provided at different levels and comprised several stages such as organizational reforms, capacity building measures and the introduction of new methodologies and tools. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation provided technical assistance and played a facilitation role in the programme.

The programme formulated outcomes both for the national and provincial level. <u>At the national level</u>, outcomes to be achieved focused on analysing the reform needs of the ARD sector (OC 1.1), the introduction of new structures in the sector (OC 1.2) and the provision of capacity development systems (OC 1.3). <u>At the provincial level</u>, intended outcomes focused on improved quality of services delivery in the ARD sector (OC 2.1), improved inclusion of the population in socio-economic local planning (OC 2.2), improved capacities for financial management at the commune level (OC.2.3) and improved capacity-building systems (OC.2.4).

The Outcome Measurement methodology

The PS-ARD programme used a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor its results at the outcome level. In particular, the programme organized satisfaction surveys with the target beneficiaries in order to measure improved quality in public services' provision and inclusion in local planning processes.

In order to understand whether the programme interventions changed services' provision from a farmer's perspective and whether they have become more accessible, effective and demand oriented, the PS-ARD programme conducted interviews with a representative sample of 400 households (200 households per province) in the partner districts. The survey was repeated two years after in order to assess changes in clients' satisfaction with four key services – extension, veterinary, plant protection and irrigation management. These beneficiaries' opinion surveys allowed obtaining a feedback on the quality of services provided as well as concerning inclusion in and transparency of communal planning.

The qualitative information extracted through these surveys was then analysed in the light of the mainly factual information gathered through other sources (other performance assessment studies organized by PS-ARD, government and provincial reports, etc.).

OM Methodology	Sources of information
Qualitative indicators:	End-beneficiaries surveys on quality of public services and inclusion in local planning
Quantitative indicators:	Reports from the central and provincial level and performance assessments conducted by PS-ARD.

4. Application of the Outcome Measurement methodology

Main purpose and link to baseline

This end-beneficiaries' satisfaction survey was designed by the project staff of PS-ARD and in particular by the technical adviser of the team, who was already familiar with the methodological requirements for organizing citizens based satisfaction surveys. The learning toolkit on "Improving local governance and service delivery – citizens' report card¹" developed by the Asian Development Bank was used as a basis for developing the survey methodology (defining the samples, formulating the questions, etc.). The programme also held consultations with the service providers on the types and scopes of services provided. This helped formulate precise questions.

The main purpose of conducting these satisfaction surveys was first to create a feedback mechanism on the quality of services and to use (changes in) the level of satisfaction of service users as a criterion to evaluate the results of PS-ARD and report to the donor. The idea was also to use this tool to identify gaps in terms of ARD services provision and thus to use it for planning purposes. Gathering end-beneficiaries' opinions on the programme contribution was also meant as a way to promote dialogue with the partners for programme steering and planning reforms of public services.

An additional key objective of PS-ARD was to develop and test a monitoring mechanism that could then be used by the government of Vietnam. The idea was to provide the central level and service providing agencies with an example and ready-made methodology to conduct clients' satisfaction surveys and thereby to support the inclusion of citizens' feedbacks in planning reforms in public administration and public services delivery.

The survey was first conducted in 2008 in order to construct a baseline. The same methodology and questions were asked at the end of 2010 in order to evaluate the results.

The process and actors involved

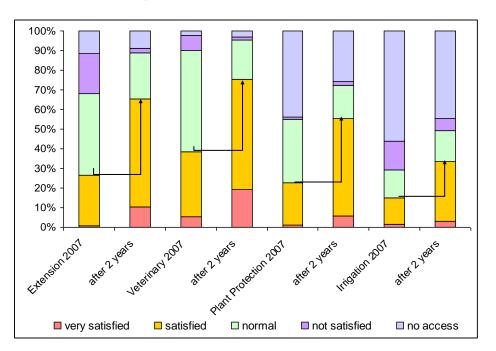
In practice, the collection of data and the organisation of the interviews were outsourced to the provincial statistical offices. This offered important advantages as the provincial statistical offices were familiar with the local conditions, population features and could count on qualified enumerators that knew the local languages.

The basic unit of the survey were households that were identified as direct users of one or more of the four services on which PS-ARD interventions focused. The survey was conducted in 200 households per province. In order for the samples to be representative and for the survey to include the perspective of all categories of the population covered by the programme, six communes reflecting specific sociological features (poverty rate, ethnicity, agro-ecological conditions, uplands

¹ Improving Local Governance in Service Delivery – Citizens' Report Card, Asian Development Bank, 2007: available at: <u>http://www.citizenreportcard.com/crc/pdf/manual.pdf</u>

vs. lowland) were selected for each province. The households to be interviewed were then randomly selected across these pre-selected communes. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews (with an average length of 2 hours, 3 to 4 hours were necessary for interviews conducted with ethnic minorities as a result of translation). In order to identify the contribution of the programme to changes in levels of satisfaction, the 2010 survey was also conducted in communes that were not affected by the programme.

The provincial statistical offices were in charge of compiling the information gathered, which was then analysed by a project officer of PS-ARD.



Satisfaction with key services in agriculture and rural development

Indicators

The client-based opinion survey was a central source of information to monitor the overall success of the PS-ARD programme and specific outcomes. The tool provided qualitative information (expressed in quantitative terms) to measure outcomes relating to improved service delivery in the ARD sector and inclusive local planning². Information extracted from opinion surveys however only addressed end-beneficiaries' perspectives. In order to be able to contrast and understand these qualitative data, PS-ARD also relied on quantitative indicators³ for which information was extracted from government and provincial reports and PS-ARD reports and observations from the field.

Resources required

The design of the survey methodology required about 20 days of work from the project team bearing in mind that the technical adviser was already familiar with the methodology for organising surveys. The preparation of the survey and the analysis of the results then required about 30 days of work for one member of the project team. As explained in the above, the collection of data and the organisation of the interviews were outsourced to provincial statistical offices. For every survey, this

² For instance: percentage of farmers (m/f) satisfied with extension services at village level, percentage of men and women who state that they are satisfied with the new participatory planning procedures and that related public services are more demand oriented, etc.

³ For instance: new regulations for participatory local planning at commune and district level are deepened and approved, effective monitoring systems (on local planning) are in place, etc.

required the work of about 3 to 4 persons for a month and the work of several teams of enumerators for the collection of data in the field. The overall costs of sub-contracting the organisation of the surveys amount to 12 000 US\$ per survey.

Products

The results of the survey were primarily used for the programme end of phase report. The results were also presented to the partners as a way to initiate a dialogue on the objectives of the next phase of the programme. Finally, the results have been published as a separate report⁴ and as a discussion paper on "supporting grassroots democracy"⁵.

5. Analysis and Main Lessons Learnt

a. The OM methodology

Organising beneficiaries based satisfaction surveys allows to obtain a feedback from end-users of the services to be improved through programme interventions and thus to include their perspective in the evaluation of results. The use of randomly selected samples is further meant to reduce/avoid possible bias in the assessment. The organisation of two surveys (one at the beginning of the programme and one at the end) allows to compare change over time and to see how beneficiaries assess it. The methodology also displays a high potential for identifying needs of the targeted populations and for planning purposes.

The organization of public opinion surveys however remains a challenging task and requires important investment and know-how for the results to be reliable and for the contribution of the programme to be analysed. This applies in particular to the definition of the methodology and to its adaptation to the local conditions.

As concerns **reliability**, the focus of the PS-ARD survey on a specific category of the population allowed to formulate specific questions on which the target beneficiaries would have "an informed opinion". However, the high scores obtained on the occasion of the baseline survey of 2009 - reflecting already high levels of satisfaction before the start of the programme - underline the need to devote time in understanding the expectations of the target beneficiaries in order to design a questionnaire that will allow capturing change and needs. Furthermore, the experience of PS-ARD shows that the need for reliable data may enter in conflict with the objective of alignment. The choice of PS-ARD to rely on provincial statistical offices and enumerators to conduct the survey displayed significant advantages in terms of expertise and in order to support future replication of the tool by national institutions and promote sustainability. However, the fact that government institutions interviewed citizens about the quality of work of their own administration had negative consequences on the sincerity of answers and thus on the reliability of the collected data.

Finally, a main challenge for using opinion polls for project monitoring refers to "**attribution**". While the tool allows including end-beneficiaries' perspectives into project evaluation and steering, the tool is less suitable to understand the exact contribution of a project to changing levels of satisfaction

⁴ Satisfaction with Public Services Delivery in the Agriculture and Rural Development, Local Planning and Financial Management at the Commune Level 2007&2009, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, 2010, available at:

http://www3.helvetas.ch/Vietnam/wEnglish/Documents/Satisfaction_Survey_Report_PSARD_2010.PDF ⁵ See: Supporting grassroots democracy in improving public services: available at: <u>http://www.swiss-</u> <u>cooperation.admin.ch/mekong//ressources/resource_en_213636.pdf</u>

(this difficulty of analysing a project contribution increases with the number of other projects present in the region and in the case of political instabilities). In this respect, the use of satisfaction surveys for OM requires additional mechanisms and analysis. Public opinion surveys cannot be used as the sole source of information. As in the case of the PS-ARD, the OM methodology needs to combine qualitative and quantitative indicators. Information on beneficiaries' perspectives about the quality of service delivery and their inclusion in local planning needs to be combined with factual information against which end-beneficiaries' perspectives can be analysed and understood. Conducting the surveys with populations that are not affected by the programme interventions (control groups) should also allow obtaining a clearer understanding of the programme contribution in changed perceptions.

b. Purpose(s) of the methodology

As implied in the above, the organization of public opinion surveys is a useful method to include endbeneficiaries perspectives in the assessment. The collection of a baseline at the start of the programme allows comparing change over time. The application of the same methodologies in different communes and provinces further allows comparing performance between partners and benchmarking. PS-ARD primarily used this information for reporting purposes.

Conducting face-to-face interviews with target beneficiaries of a programme also has a high potential for planning purposes as it may help identify additional needs and possible (future) fields of intervention. This was however not the case in Vietnam given the quality of the information extracted. As surveys displayed a very high level of farmers' satisfaction across all main public services, it was not possible to clearly identify intervention gaps and new priorities.

The tool also has a high potential to promote learning among the partners and dialogue between stakeholders on results achieved. The results of the surveys were presented to the partners who received them without further discussion. Practice showed however that additional external mechanisms or support might be necessary to use the results as a way to better involve partners into programme steering.

c. Which aspects can be measured with the methodology?

The opinion/satisfaction surveys as conducted by PS-ARD could measure different aspects. A key contribution of the tool is to assess changes in the attitudes of services providers / partners as perceived by the users of services. It concentrated on measuring perceptions and perceived changes of satisfaction as concerns effectiveness and efficiency in public services delivery and regarding improved inclusion in local planning. End-beneficiaries' perspectives on other dimensions of governance could easily be added in the questionnaire.

As long as the methodology used for conducting the surveys remains the same, the tool allows for easy comparison of the performance of partners (and possibly with non-partners).

The tool is also particularly useful to provide information and data about particular categories of the populations, vulnerable groups or gender. As samples are to be representatives of the local population, data can easily be disaggregated to have information about a particular group. In this respect, this can be a useful instrument to monitor social dynamics and changes.

In the case of Vietnam, there was no attempt to use this tool to measure power relations, but a broad public opinion survey could be considered as a useful instrument to gain an understanding about power relations in a certain context and on their development over time. Particular questions would need to be integrated, adjusted to the local context.

d. Harmonization and integration

The development and implementation of these public opinion surveys was meant to test a tool that could then be replicated by the government of Vietnam in order to monitor performance in public services provision. The government and service providers were consulted and included in the development of the tool. The involvement of provincial statistical offices in the collection of the data was also meant as a way to favour replication of the tool. The government of Vietnam has however shown limited interest in replicating this tool so far and public institutions are wary of using citizens/users' feedback for evaluating their performance in public services. Furthermore, the application of the tool remains time-consuming.

The above remarks show that it remains difficult to promote alignment and to work "on-system" in the field of monitoring. It is difficult for single projects to develop/promote methodologies to be transferred to national/local institutions. A strong demand from national authorities and political leadership should be a minimum pre-condition. Furthermore, the PS-ARD example shows that alignment may enter in conflict with the requirement of obtaining reliable data.

e. Conditions required and relevance of context

Organising citizens/clients' satisfaction survey is a useful method to include end-beneficiaries in the assessment of the results of a project/programme. Interviewing randomly selected intended beneficiaries of an intervention further allows for a more "objective" assessment of its contribution. Choosing such a methodology logically implies that the programme/project will have concrete implications for citizens/end-beneficiaries before the end of the programme/project. It however remains a difficult and time-consuming exercise and the following elements need to be kept in mind when designing and implementing it:

- In-house or external expertise is necessary to design the tool at the start in order to ensure that information gathered will be reliable and allow for comparison over time.
- Citizens / End-beneficiaries perspectives need to be analysed and understood at the time of the design of the survey and its questions. The notion of change as perceived by intended beneficiaries needs to be analysed in order to design a tool that will "capture" change. In this respect, the usefulness of the tool should be re-examined in the light of the results of the baseline.
- In case of "outsourcing" of parts of the survey, it is important to rely on a "neutral" third party. In this respect, the possible trade-off between "alignment" and "reliability of data" needs to be considered.
- Opinion surveys cannot be used as the unique source of information for monitoring project/programme results. The OM methodology needs to combine qualitative indicators with quantitative ones.
- Even if sources of information are varied, "attribution" remains problematic in the case of satisfaction surveys. This increases when the project interviews "randomly" chosen beneficiaries.
- The organization of opinion surveys is generally costly and it needs important time for designing the methodology and analysing the information collected.

In addition, the following contextual elements are important:

- Citizens interviewed need to feel confident they can express freely their opinion. The project/programme organising the survey needs to ensure that it places the interviewees in the best conditions.
- As there are many elements that can influence citizens' perceptions, reliability of collected data will be negatively influenced by political instabilities.

- Problems relating to "attribution" increase with the number of project/programmes and other initiatives present in the intervention area.
- Conditions for harmonizing a monitoring tool with the one of a partner or for alignment need to be analysed at the very start. A strong interest and commitment of national/local authorities is a must for possible replication. The more costly a system, the more difficult its replication

6. Concluding Remarks

The organisation of satisfaction surveys is a useful mechanism to include intended beneficiaries of a programme into the assessment of its results. It appeared especially relevant in the context of PS-ARD which supported the implementation of demand-driven reforms of public services and that aimed at strengthening the inclusion of citizens in local planning. Interviewing randomly selected households was furthermore a way used by PS-ARD to minimise "bias". The tool should further allow the identification of possible gaps and additional needs for programme steering and planning.

While the case has shown the usefulness of satisfaction surveys for monitoring outcomes, the PS-ARD case has furthermore shown that it remains a complex task which needs important time investment for obtaining reliable data. It needs expertise for the design of the methodology and for its implementation in order to ensure the quality of the collected information.

The case has furthermore shown that "attribution" remains an issue and underlined the importance of balancing qualitative indicators with quantitative ones. The additional collection of factual information through other sources allows complementary analysis of the opinion surveys.

Finally, the conditions and potential for "alignment" need to be analysed at the very start. Efforts to work "on system" and to integrate national/local institutions in the application of the tool may (temporarily) affect the reliability of collected data.

7. References/Additional Information

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HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Vietnam: <u>http://www3.helvetas.ch/Vietnam/wEnglish/index.asp</u>

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – Mekong Region: <u>http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/mekong/</u>

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8. Annex: PS-ARD: Programme Outcomes

PS-ARD Logical Framework: Outcome Level

PS-ARD Logical Framework 1: Component 1: ODP/MARD

- Outcome 1.1: The organisational system of the ARD sector is analysed and reform needs are identified
- Outcome 1.2: New structure in the ARD sector is piloted and mainstreamed
- Outcome 1.3: Capacity development systems in the ARD sector are improved

PS-ARD Logical Framework 2: Component 2 (Hoa Binh) and 3 (Cao Bang)

- Outcome 2.1: Service delivery in agriculture and rural development is improved
- Outcome 2.2: New, participatory SEDP procedures at the local level are established
- Outcome 2.3: Systems and capacities for financial management at commune level are built up
- Outcome 2.4: Provincial capacity building systems are strengthened

PS-ARD Logical Framework 3: Component 4: PMSU

- Outcome 3.1: Programme implementation is coached and technically supported, and Component 1 is properly managed
- Outcome 3.2: Programme is monitored, controlled and results are centrally disseminated