Mobile Phone & Remote Tool Considerations for M&E in a COVID-19 Environment

Wednesday, June 10, 2020
Today’s Agenda:

• **Arno Bratz, Mercy Corps** – COVID Context Monitoring, FIAT Style: Lessons Learned from the Mercy Corps DRC DFSA

• **Mehari Belachew, Kimetrica** – Transitioning to Mobile Data Collection: Lessons from L4R RMS Ethiopia

• **Amina Ferati, i-APS** – Monitoring Evaluation During COVID-19: What are M&E teams doing where there are no networks?

Before we begin....

- The webinar will last approximately 90 minutes

- Use the Q&A box throughout the webinar to ask questions to the speakers. Use the Chat box to share your experiences and resources.

- A recording of today’s webinar will be shared with participants
COVID CONTEXT MONITORING, FIAT STYLE

Lessons learned from the Mercy Corps DRC DFSA

ARNO BRATZ
MEL Manager, Mercy Corps, DRC DFSA
Overview

1. FIAT approach for enhancing context monitoring
2. Framing anticipated changes
3. Identifying information gaps
4. Adapting monitoring strategies
5. Tooling and retooling
6. Initial results
The FIAT approach for adapting monitoring systems

01 Frame Anticipated Changes
Frame the ways in which COVID is expected to affect TOC pathways and outcomes.

02 Identify Information Gaps
Identify and prioritize information gaps where monitoring data could help boost resilience capacities or responses to COVID.

03 Adapt monitoring strategies
Adapt monitoring approaches to enable data collection despite changes in the operating context.

04 Tool and Retool
Building on the existing monitoring ecosystem, create or change data collection flows to fill information gaps.

05 Analyze, Learn, Adapt
Analyze, learn, adapt implementation and context monitoring.
01 Frame Anticipated Changes

COVID-19 Array of Shocks
What primary (illness) and secondary (economic, financial, conflict etc.) shocks occur due to COVID?

Resilience Capacities
What capacities do we think will help participants bounce back against COVID to improve wellbeing?

Participant Group Adaptation Strategies
What responses do participant groups use to continue functioning despite COVID?

Improved food security and economic well-being
What food security, economic and other wellbeing outcomes are targeted by the project?

Contextual Changes and Community Responses
What changes occur in the operating context?
E.g. government restrictions, supply chain disruptions, health campaigns, etc.
02 Identify and Prioritize Information Gaps

1. What is: How does the COVID Array of Shocks affect markets, communities, participants and select participant groups?

2. What works: What resilience “responses” against COVID are key participant groups using?

3. What matters: What capacities are linked to reduced shock exposure, improved recovery and improved outcomes?

Objective

Respond

Reinforce and share knowledge

Redesign
Identifying remote monitoring methods:

1. **About who** do we need information?
2. **From whom** can we get it?
3. **How** can we reach them?

Selecting right-fit methods:

1. **Fast**: Is a given method fast to set up, collect, analyze and act upon?
2. **Feasible**: Is it feasible to implement given cost and safety limitations?
3. **Precise**: Does it produce data precise enough to be actionable for decision-making?
03 Adapting Right-Fit Methods for Context Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Phone Surveys</th>
<th>Phone KIls</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Self-selection through phone ownership</td>
<td>Phone distribution to representative sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>Fast to set up</td>
<td>Fast to collect</td>
<td>Fast to analyze</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appropriate cost for required precision level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliant with safety protocols</td>
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<tr>
<td>Precise</td>
<td>Appropriate sampling (varies by data demand)</td>
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<td>Triangulation</td>
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04 Tool and Retool

**Platform considerations**
Build on existing platform environment. CommCare has a leg up for panel data, web forms and SMS functionalities.

**Retool where possible**
It is easier to adjust existing tools and talk to existing stakeholders, rather than creating new data flows.

**Keep interviews short**
Do not exceed 30 minutes. Factor in a 0.5 time lag due to connection issues. Split questionnaires, conduct more calls.

**Protect the equipment**
Provide powerbanks to extension agents if needed so that their Android batteries won’t be exposed to overvoltage.
04 Tool and Retool

Field quality control  Create specific phone interview guidance to reduce respondent interaction bias

https://tinyurl.com/fsp-phoneint-en
https://tinyurl.com/fsp-phoneint-fr
Initial Results #1

Panier minimum alimentaire & NF1

Pratiques hygiéniques

https://tinyurl.com/fsp-covid
Initial Results #2

https://tinyurl.com/fsp-covid
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Transitioning to Mobile Data Collection: Lessons from L4R RMS Ethiopia

Mehari Belachew, Head of Surveys
June 10, 2020
AGENDA

• Objective
• Background
• Key Successes
• Essential Preparatory Activities
• Lessons Learned
OBJECTIVES

- Share lessons from Kimetrica’s experience transitioning to phone-based interviews
- **Integrate learning** into other Kimetrica surveys in Ethiopia and elsewhere
BACKGROUND

• Kimetrica recently conducted a telephone data collection in Ethiopia (May 2020).
• This survey is part of a Recurrent Monitoring System (RMS) that follows **900 panel households** every quarter since August 2019
• The first three rounds were conducted via **face-to-face interviews**
• The **Telephone-based data collection** was implemented for the 4th RMS round as a COVID-19 adaptation strategy.
We obtained a 98.1 percent response rate, which is higher than the previous three RMS rounds done via face to face interviews.
REASONS FOR SUCCESS

• Persistence and ability of interviewers to phone back multiple times (as opposed to few call backs on face to face interviews).
• Use of local village guides to facilitate on-ground coordination
• We had local administrators (Kebele managers) on standby for any challenges on the ground
• The RMS panel households had already been visited face-to-face several times in previous rounds, giving our interviewers a solid acquaintance with the households.
• We had allotted sufficient time and money to make all the necessary logistical and technical preparations in line with telephone data collection.
ESSENTIAL PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

- Exploring **availability of telephone network** in planned survey areas
- Establishing a **complete telephone directory** for sample households (from available data or other sources, like local government structures)
- Exploring if households have a **functional telephone apparatus**
- Exploring the **availability of electricity** or other options to charge phones, like solar means
- **Assigning focal persons** from within the sample clusters (community leaders, elders, chiefs, etc.) that can help in filling potential gaps.
ESSENTIAL PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

• Liaising with focal persons on the ground:
  • To identify the **best spots** in the clusters for **telephone network**
  • To **fix interview appointments**, when direct call doesn’t work

• **Securing ethical approvals** from relevant authorities

• **Informing respective government structures** about the survey and the modality of data collection, through email, voice calls and text messages and documenting communications

• Ensuring that **interviewers have smartphones or tablets** to conduct the data collection.

• Availing sufficient **airtime**
Mobile data collection is a viable alternative with the correct preparation.
LESSONS LEARNED: PREPARATION

• Prearranging to **use the local guide’s phone** for those households that do not have a phone

• Prearranging **interview date and time** with households:
  • To sufficiently charge their batteries.
  • To be in a ready mode for the interview (like, position themselves in the best network spot, arranging a convenient interview environment/privacy and confidentiality)
  • The call should not be a surprising one, while the respondents are in the middle of an important business.

• Interviewers must be **experienced, well-trained**, should **speak the local languages and know local contexts**

• Providing interviewers with **unlimited voice call subscription** to make multiple calls, as needed, and to take the necessary **time to complete their interviews**
LESSONS LEARNED: DURING THE INTERVIEW

• Given the attention span of households and the inconveniences of phone data collection, interview should not take over 45 minutes.

• Providing respondents with an incentive, in the form of airtime, was found to help for a smooth interview. It also motivates households to remain in the panel for subsequent rounds.

• Securing consent from respondents and establishing good rapport at the beginning contributed to the smooth flow of interviews.

• Since calls might drop off at any time in the middle of an interview (for battery, network or other reasons), informing respondents at the beginning to call back when they can was found to be helpful.
**LESSONS LEARNED: POST-INTERVIEW & COSTS**

- **Daily review of data** entered by enumerators prior to uploading to server
- **Data quality checks at home office** for consistency, completeness and validity; and provision of **real-time feedback** on suspicious values
- **Never underestimate the costs** of phone interviews, are **not that much lower** than face-to-face due to:
  - **Takes longer to complete** survey – enumerator must often call multiple times/days
  - **More preparation work needed** – arranging for support on the ground (local guides, local administrators, etc.), building phone directories, verifying phone numbers, scheduling interviews, etc.
  - **Unlimited airtime and incentives** add to the costs
Thank You

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MONITORING EVALUATION DURING COVID-19

What are M&E teams doing where there are no networks?

International Advisory, Products and Systems Ltd. (i-APS)

Amina Ferati, President
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International Advisory, Products and Systems Ltd. (i-APS) is a woman-owned and managed consulting firm that leverages global expertise with local presence to transform organizations and communities into partners for change. We turn data into actionable knowledge and strengthen the capacity of organizations and communities through innovative solutions that enhance program impact and accountability.


Results of i-APS Global Survey:
#1 Do No Harm

**Key Considerations**

1. **Do No Harm:** Care must be taken by actors at all levels (donors and organizations, third-party monitoring organizations, field staff and respondents) to minimize risk of transmission to themselves and others.
   - Add monitoring, evaluation and research activities to already planned program activities to minimize risk.

2. **Conduct a Risk Analysis:** Conduct a risk analysis of what monitoring activities are being planned, what data is needed, what activities can be postponed, for what purpose will data be used, and what data might be available to assess the impact of program activities.
   - Reduce data collection to the minimum necessary to answer monitoring, evaluation and research questions. E.g. avoid asking extra questions “just because you are doing a survey.”
   - Select a minimum set of indicators or rotate data collection with different indicator sets to minimize physical contact with persons.

3. **Understand the Local Context:** Recognize that urban, rural and remote settings may be limited resource. Just because an area is urban does not mean that movement is unrestricted. COVID-19 compounds challenges already present in urban and rural and limited resource settings.
#2 Consider Your Context

**ACCESS**
- Can you physically access the location?
  - Urban vs Rural vs Remote
  - Accessible roads (year-round, seasonal)
  - Conflict or civil unrest (front lines or political boundaries)
  - High-risk movement (violence, checkpoints, limited movement within/between neighborhoods)

**PEOPLE**
- What are key demographics of the population?
  - Literacy rate
  - Skills and experience of potential monitors and data collectors (field)
    - Survey fatigue
    - Willingness to be surveyed

**COMMUNICATION**
- Is the population connected?
  - Mobile phone ownership and service and differences by sex
  - Cellular/Internet service (2G vs 3/4G – 2G does not allow uploading of data)
  - Controls over technology (blocking internet or websites)
  - Safety and security of devices and data
  - Context of data collection (human rights questions may have to be coded)
#3 Options When there is Limited/No Connection

## In-Person Data Collection

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Pre-COVID-19</th>
<th>COVID-19 Adaptations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identified Community Liaison/Focal Point utilizes existing phone with a modem (providing a data input network) or uses data input via smartphone/tablet (prepaid SIM card).</td>
<td>If Community Liaison/Focal Point do not have phone/tablet prior to COVID-19, consider using non-cellular technology (e.g., satellite) to transfer data to the operational hub.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone/tablet has mobile-based survey tool (e.g., Kobo ToolBox) that allows for offline data entry.</td>
<td>Follow social distancing guidelines while conducting survey. Per protocol, maintain safe distance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acts as a data collector to conduct survey via target audience using mobile device or paper with target audience</td>
<td>Conduct survey outside or indoors (if necessary) or in enclosed areas. Ensure privacy of respondents, and ensure survey instrument does not result in aggregated, unrepresentative information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>At agreed points, travels to site with cellular and/or internet service for data upload.</td>
<td>Paper surveys: COVID-19 requires adaptations to minimize risk of transmission given potential physical contact with survey data (paper)</td>
<td>Consider limiting the number of focal points to minimize the number of people having contact with paper to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission.</td>
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<td>Paper option of survey available in case of technology failure or used as primary method of data collection.</td>
<td>Instead of distributing printed surveys to the target population (which has implications for literacy and requires addressability in completing them), have Community Liaisons/Focal Point conduct the survey on paper.</td>
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<td>Transport of paper surveys via local transport to headquarters/regional office at routine intervals.</td>
<td>Community Liaisons/Focal Point can take photos of paper surveys or use mobile-based scanner apps to transfer paper survey to electronic format to minimize number of persons in physical contact with paper.</td>
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What Works – Adapting to COVID-19 in Yemen

ACCESS
- Protracted conflict
- 63% population is rural
- North-South divide

PEOPLE
- 51.1% literate

COMMUNICATION
- 54% have phone with cellular service
- Authorities control internet access

YEMEN
- 17m in need of urgent food assistance
- 17.8m in need of WASH

CONTEXT
- First case April 10
- 486 cases
- Stigma, fear of seeking care, destruction of health facilities
What Works – Adapting to COVID-19 in Yemen

- Data collectors provided phones with Kobo ToolBox installed.
- Data collectors trained on COVID-19 precautions.
- Surveys conducted in-person with COVID-19 precautions (distance + PPE + sanitation) using Kobo ToolBox and storing data offline.
- Data collectors provide phones with data to field leads for transport to urban area with service and/or travel to service points for uploading.
Thank you!

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Thank you!

Questions?
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