A Brief Note on "Alternative Data Collection If Field Visits Are Not Possible In Times of Covid-19"

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Challenge Description

How can we facilitate collection of information in low digital literacy areas which are typically collected in-person for researchers and evaluators in order to solve the challenge of not being able to conduct in-person fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic in a way that the data collected would remain reliable, valid, unbiased, representative, etc.

Approach

Pandemic may take some long duration, but evaluators should be continue their work in areas where they are unable to complete in-person data collection (either due to COVID-19 or other circumstances). If there is easy access of the modern technologies (like as; internet, mobile phones etc.) and if beneficiaries have good digital and data literacy it would be easy for data collection. Nevertheless, if they do not have easy access on internet and phone service and data literacy is relatively low among the general population. This will be problematic for data collection. In this context participatory statistics (PS) will be effective data collection approach.

What is Participatory Statistics?

Participatory statistics is a set of methods that enable local people to generate statistics for the planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning as well. Participatory statistics can be used in the project design, project monitoring, evaluation and impact evaluation. However, process of participatory statistics will be difference in planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. To generate the statistics for the evaluation process, beneficiaries sit together with baseline data,

discussed on what have been changed by project and they expose their conclusion with stakeholders. In this process, beneficiaries will fill up only one checklist and which represent the overall progress of project. Beneficiaries may also consider the outer impact factors of project as well.

Why it is difference from PRA

Participatory statistics is not advanced and scientific method than PRA but it is easy then PRA in the crisis situation. PRA is a methodology of learning rural life and their environment from the rural people and facilitators need to help to conduct their own analysis, plan and take action accordingly. However, PS is only focus on *to measure the changed in communities* by the project.

How it works

Evaluation or Study approach/design: An evaluator identifies an evaluation or study approach/design to be undertaken where they cannot travel in-person or hire a professional local enumerator and Covid-19 safety measures are to be observed.

Developed Checklist/Questionnaire: After identifies and evaluation or study approach/design evaluator develop the checklist and questionnaire. Questionnaire/checklist will develop against the set baseline indicators.

Find out capacity of beneficiaries: Understanding of beneficiaries on project, project targets, indicators and achievement is primary requirement for PS. If beneficiaries were involved in the project designing and planning process (like as; If project conducted PRA) it will easy for data collection. Otherwise, evaluators should move into next method of data collection. So, if beneficiaries were involved in the PRA or project planning process evaluator can adopt the *Type 1* method of data collection and if they were not involved in those process evaluator will move in *Type 2* method of data collection.

Type 1: Data Generate by beneficiaries themselves

To generate data, beneficiaries themselves call the meeting in their own community and sit together. Anyone beneficiaries can call the meeting but only 4/5 beneficiaries allow to a meeting. Beneficiaries either arrange a meeting from each thematic group or arrange a meeting with representation of each thematic group. When they sit together with physical distancing they will

discuss and fill up the checklist form. Average changed in communities will consider as achievement of the project. In addition, approximate, average change will fill up by beneficiaries (For example: average income of households, average annual saving of households, average number of schooling in each household etc.)

Qualitative data will be fill up in bullet points or in short paragraphs. After fill up, checklist will send to the evaluators. When evaluators get checklists from all communities then he/she will move for next step.

After getting checklists/questionnaire, evaluators should code and decoded all data. He/She will compare the finding from the communities with other micro narratives, case studies, news from news papers, research articles and project documents. When he/she assured on credibility of data, he/she will move into next step of evaluation. However, it is sure that, data will be credible because participatory statistics is one of the most scientific data collection method in research.

Type 2: Database of certified facilitators/Local enumerators

First step of this approach will development of data collection tools. Off line data collection tools will be developed. In addition data collection tools and method will be easy to use in the locality to conduct fieldwork and are appropriate for the design under pandemic circumstances.

The evaluator advertise for the facilitators/enumerators from each communities. Local community members sign up for facilitators, providing their name, age, contact information, experience, qualification etc. Based on information, facilitators will select. If evaluators get certified/trained facilitators, the evaluator can move forward to work immediately. Once when finalized the facilitators, training module will be specified, resources will developed and training will conducted on/off line mode.

Potential facilitators take the training module and are tested by the evaluator, either through the platform or via phone/video conference. The evaluator scores potential facilitators on a standard set of criteria.

Once a potential facilitator passes the training module and becomes certified, they become eligible to work in the field. The evaluator would decide to engage the facilitator in the field data collection like as; conduct interviews, facilitate phone calls, collect survey data, etc. All safety measure will

be adopted during the data collection. Once data collection is completed, facilitators send output (probably result) of the data collection through online/offline mode.

Assumptions

- That local community members are available and willing to be trained as facilitators
- That evaluators will be willing to trust their data collection to novice data collection facilitators

Limitations

- Only viable for basic and traditional data collection methods (such as interviews, surveys, desk reviews, observations, etc.)
- Would still face limitations based on digital connectivity barriers

Who benefits from the solution?

- Evaluators needing to conduct fieldwork but unable to travel
- Local community members that are trained as data collection facilitators and receive payment for their work
- Wider beneficiary communities, as this solution reinforces a growing trend of local participation in the evaluation process
- Donors and program implementers that want to see data on the impact of the projects they are funding/administering

Viability:

The basic concept of the solutions are not exactly similar with models already in use but they are based on similar models already in use:

- Type 1 is more similar with PRA but it is modified as per necessities. Beneficiaries themselves their situation would be more reliable.
- In the fight against COVID-19, variety of free online trainings have emerged that target individuals with no background in the field.
- Census- When the countries conducts its nation-wide census almost I in every 10 years, they hired enumerators and provided on the job training.