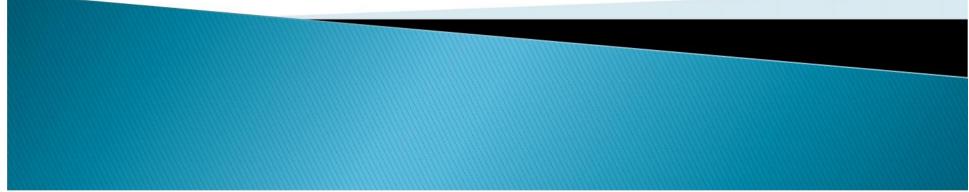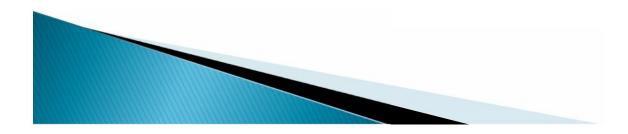# WCA's experience with mobile and tablet based data collection systems as a first time user

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Background

- WCA received supplemental budget to support project designs.
- WCA opted to invest these funds in baseline analyses in four countries: (i) Mauritania, (ii) Cote d'Ivoire, (iii) Burkina Faso, and (iv) Cameroon.
- The studies used a statistical sampling model to map key commodity value chains targeted by the proposed projects and further included household data for the targeted geographies.
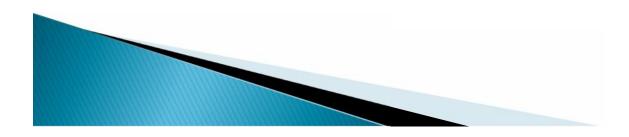
Output

- The intended outputs of the surveys were:

  A coherent and quantitative picture of who buys what from whom and when; the revenues, costs and gross margins of: input suppliers, producers, cooperatives, transporters, processors, wholesalers and retailers;

  Key statistics demonstrating: where IFAD should invest and what the impact of investing should result in; and

  Key individual and summary data on the characteristics of our target population at project start to be revisited periodically to assess project impact.

The GRASP System-1

▸ Prior to joining IFAD, the LRE had conducted such surveys for private clients and used trained enumerators, highly trained quality control staff, research supervisors and Microsoft Excel to catalogue and quality check data.

▸ Quality control was expensive and tedious.

The GRASP System-2

- GRASP has certain key features:
  - Data consolidation automatic;
  - Predefined ranges of survey responses;
  - Data safety;
  - Facility in rapidly updating questionnaires;
  - Pinpoint geographical reference;
- Promised to reduce tedium, HR cost and increase accuracy.

Appreciation

- I place this slide here because it's important to note before discussing what went well or otherwise:

    WFP was responsive, helpful and fantastic in every aspect of explaining and supporting this effort.

    IFAD's ICT department quickly understood why what we were doing was important and invested their time kindly and patiently in trying to support the outcomes.

    WCA's CPM's were fantastic in taking ownership and guiding the process in country to the best of their ability.

Experience

- Overall, the system performed as advertised.
  Questionnaires were easily updated;
  Responses were limited to realistic parameters;
  Data was consolidated on a consultant's laptop.
- All of these are highly appreciated.
- Nonetheless, we underestimated many of the complexities in using electronic data collection.

Improvements in Planning

- Until now, we have not yet been able to get access to a server allowing data to flow in and out from IFAD, UNICC or another source

  We realize now that we really needed months to anticipate the process of getting this critical need.

- Training of enumerators requires more time than using paper-based systems

  Enumerators needed to gain familiarity with the application;

  Because there were many fewer quality control staff, while questionnaires are easy to change, and answers easier to limit, less hands on supervision results in lower quality data.
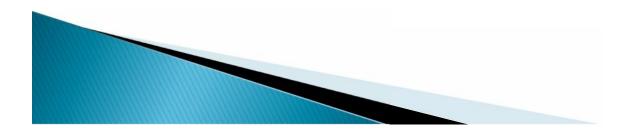
Improvements in Start-up

▸ GRASP has descriptive literature and the WFP-VAM team is fairly competent in the application.

Nonetheless, the establishment of a secure database on a server that enables access from handheld devices, without risking other data stored on the server, requires ICT expertise which went beyond our capacities.

Again, planning needed to start well in advance of research to enable this to work.

Outcome

- WCA has received four reports from the consultants hired to execute the baseline surveys.
- Raw data is okay but suffered from formatting shortcomings;
- Analytical data is better than we're used to having but still suffers from a lot of low quality input which was not arrested by quality control.
- All-in-all, I would give the experience a 4 of 6. With some better planning, better testing and more experience this would have been better.

Analysis

- While we liked this system for its features, the time required in busy lives of staff to ensure that the technology could be used effectively was discouraging.
- In subsequent data collection (Nigeria, others) we reverted to paper based systems because it was easier than teaching a new system.
- It was relatively easier to find competent human resources to do paper surveys well versus investing pre-planning, time and effort in an electronic system.
- Ultimately, the outcome (the analysed data) is what we need and how we get it is driven by finding the simplest and fastest method.