



Mobile Data Collection Guidance:

Mobile Data Collection (MDC) is the use of mobile devices (phones, tablets, etc.) to collect quantitative and qualitative data at one or more stage of a project. This handout will help guide staff through a range of considerations related to implementing a MDC system.

Note: Using MDC requires sufficient time, resources and staffing for M&E, which to date has been significantly under-allocated in most LWR projects.

Should I use mobile data collection? - General Considerations:

1. Does MDC clearly respond to a need of the project (e.g. survey collection, data quality, etc.)?
2. Is there enough time to set up MDC? Set-up considerations include:
 - a. Procurement of devices
 - b. Building the surveys
 - c. Trainings
3. Is there adequate infrastructure for MDC? Infrastructure considerations include:
 - a. Is mobile coverage and/or internet available?
 - b. Is using the devices practical in project location?
 - i. Availability, maintenance, charging, durability, etc.?
4. Does MDC conform to government, donor, and organizational standards for data security and privacy?
 - a. Certificates, permission restrictions, data storage, backups, etc.
5. Is MDC required by the donor?
 - a. Does the donor designate a required platform or data type?

Financial Considerations:

1. Will the donor pay for any required MDC?
 - a. Can donor-funded MDC be used for other projects?
 - b. If the donor does not fund required MDC, is it feasible for LWR to do so?
2. Is MDC more cost effective than paper collection? Consider the following in the project context:

Mobile Data Collection	Paper Collection	Often Cheaper
Easily edit and instantly distribute forms	Must reprint and redistribute edited forms	Mobile
Subscription fees for paid services	No subscription fees	Paper
Paid support for trainings, form creation, and platform troubleshooting	No need for outside support	Paper
Cost of devices (phones/tablets/peripherals)	Cost of printing forms	Depends on scale
Cost of mobile network and/or internet	Cost of labor for distribution	Depends on scale
Real-time addition of data to database	Time and cost of transporting forms and encoding data	Mobile
Cost of additional IT support and/or survey creation	Cost of survey creation	Paper
Cost of translations	Cost of translations	Depends on project



3. Cost efficiency and investment for the future:
 - a. Are any costs shared by more than one project?
 - i. Platform subscription/support?
 - ii. Devices?
 - iii. Mobile network and/or internet in a country or region?
 - iv. Staff training/knowledge?
 - b. Will using mobile data collection benefit any future projects? Benefits include:
 - i. Costs and time recovered
 - ii. Increased organizational knowledge for future project implementation and funding opportunities
4. Additional staffing:
 - a. Can IT support be procured locally?
 - i. Is local IT procurement cheaper than paying for the platform to create and support project MDC?
 - b. Based on the platform and scale, will a full-time or part-time IT position be required to support the project?

M&E Considerations:

The table below compares aspects of fixed point and recurring collection. At this time, LWR employs mostly fixed point collection which are generally simpler to implement and require a less comprehensive understanding of M&E systems including roles, responsibilities, and logistics over the life of the project.

	Fixed Point Collection:	Recurring Collection:
What:	Is a fixed data collection methodology that gathers data from one or more predetermined period in time (e.g. needs assessment, baseline, midterm, endline, project evaluation)	Is a data collection methodology that collects primarily activity and output level data throughout the life of the project. It requires a detailed M&E system with clear roles, responsibilities and logistics
Who:	Often times collected and managed by a consultant with contractual staff	Normally collected by field officers or field staff and managed by project
Etc:	No concerns about staff turnover	Staff turnover is a problem

1. Can data quality be ensured?
 - a. Can staff monitor progress towards completion?
 - b. Are there systems in place to ensure high standards?
 - c. Are the systems in place to ensure established methodologies?
2. Can collected data be effectively analyzed?
 - a. Can data be exported to preferred analysis programs?
 - b. Is analysis included in MDC platform effective for project needs?



Human Considerations:

Enumerators:

1. Who retains ownership of the device after project completion?
 - a. Does the organization, the country office, or the enumerator own the device?
 - i. Device ownership has implications for care and security of the device
 - ii. Can the device be used in another project?
2. Is data collection possible in local language/scripts?
 - a. Is there one common language for the project enumerators?
 - i. Is it the preferred language, the language of education, the language of the government, etc.?
 - ii. Are enumerators sufficiently proficient and comfortable to collect data in the language?
 - b. Can enumerators choose to collect in the language they are most comfortable with?
 - c. Are additional trainings and/or translations necessary?
3. Can field staff ensure data quality?
 - a. Do the enumerators sufficiently understand the survey and protocol for collection?
 - b. Do the enumerators adhere to the protocol for collection?
 - c. Can anyone at the country or regional level monitor and verify data quality?

Beneficiaries:

1. Is data collection sensitive to the cultural context?
 - a. Are people comfortable with the devices around?
 - b. Are people drawn to the devices?
 - c. Are people alienated by the devices?
 - d. Does use of devices change who answers questions and how?
 - i. Within a family unit?
 - ii. Within a community?
 - iii. Across gender?
 - iv. Based on comfort level with device?
 - v. Based on comfort level with recorded media?
2. Is data collection possible in local language/scripts?
 - a. Is there one common language for the project beneficiaries?
 - i. Is it the preferred language, the language of education, the language of the government, etc.?
 - b. Can beneficiaries choose to answer in the language they are most comfortable with?
 - c. Will beneficiaries have to be literate and/or write?