TRANSCRIPT

RESOURCES FOR MONITORING DURING COVID-19

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Okay. Hello, everyone and welcome to this USAID Webinar on resources for monitoring during the COVID19 pandemic. My name, as Melissa mentioned, is Jerome Gallagher. And I'm so pleased that so many of you both USAID staff and implementing partners could join us for this Webinar this morning. Please note that this Webinar is off the record. We will be recording the Webinar, though, and sharing the recording at a later date. Before I get started, I just want to acknowledge what a profound effect this pandemic has had on all of us and to thank all of the USAID staff and the implementing partners who are joining us on this Webinar for the work that you do in these trying times. Across the globe, USAID is working hard to support countries affected by COVID19. And we couldn't do that without all of you.

So thank you, and thank you to all of your colleagues who are not joining us today. Of course, as we respond to this pandemic, we must continue to monitor, evaluate and learn from our programs. But this is a challenging operating environment. I'm sure like many of you, I'm participating in – in this Webinar from my home rather than the office. Many countries where we work are in various stages of lockdown or under restrictions that limit our travel and our ability to – to monitor our programs. As a result we've all had to make some adaptations. And we will continue to need to make adaptations to our monitoring efforts so that we can continue to track and oversee our programs.

So what we'd like to do here today is discuss some of the resources for monitoring in this environment – particularly remote monitoring. This is not the first time that USAID and its partners have had to rely on remote monitoring. So I hope we can learn, a bit from these experiences. I'm very excited that we have a great group of folks who will be presenting today. After this introduction, we'll talk about a new guide, that USAID has produced on remote monitoring developed by our colleagues, in the USAID global development lab. Next, we'll talk a bit about our learning lab platform for sharing resources on monitoring during the COVID19 pandemic. And then we'll discuss a few examples of remote monitoring – how we've done remote monitoring in various places, where USAID works – particularly an example from Ethiopia, Nepal and, Afghanistan.

And we hope to leave plenty of time at the end of this Webinar for questions and answers. So as Melissa mentioned, as we go through this presentation portion of the Webinar please feel free to add questions to the Chat Box. And we'll try to get to as many of those questions as we can during the Webinar. Before I turn it over to the – the next
presenter. I do wanna know one resource right off the bat that I think is worth checking out as we consider adapting our monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic; and that's USAID’s digital strategy. Last month, USAID released its first-ever digital strategy via an online event with Deputy Administration Bonnie Glick.

[0:04:00] With this new strategy, we hope to increase USAID and USAID partners’ secure and appropriate use of digital technology. We also want to ensure that USAID and its partners are engaging responsibly in the digital ecosystem. Both of these objectives are addressed in the digital strategy. So I think it really came out at the right time. It’s so important that during this COVID-19 pandemic...if you haven’t seen the digital strategy yet, I hope you will check it out. All right. And with that, I would like to turn it over, to our first presenter, Kevin Horn, from USAID’s global development lab who will talk about USAID’s new guide on remote monitoring. Take it away, Kevin.

[0:05:00] Kevin Horn: Thank you, Jerome. Just as Jerome was saying, a lot of us are able to continue some of our operations because of some of the technology available, and many of us are participating from home. And related to that, we still have to be able to monitor these programs that are in place. Now I am part of the geo center which is part of the global development lab. And my colleagues in the lab have developed a guide to help missions and partners assess what tools are appropriate for their – for their remote monitoring.

And this guide is set up to provide a set of questions to help facilitate the decision-making process. "What things do you know about your programs that are going on?" Especially things such as location which will help you decide what technologies are available for your remote monitoring. The guide gives an overview of types of tools, such as how to use mobile phones and remote sensing, such as satellite imaging, to continue to monitor projects and conduct context monitoring.

[0:06:00] The guide stresses considering the information that you need, your current resources; such as, "Do you have cell phone numbers for your beneficiaries, or do you implementing partners have those contact numbers? Are there local firms that conduct research that can support your monitoring needs? And if there’s some physical change that can be monitored from above from satellite imagery that you can see as your program has a back door – something that needs to be preserved within the landscape if your program continues to have an effect."

And within the guide, there are links to the technical assistance resources and partnerships document to help missions identify mechanisms for remote monitoring. So the emphasis of this guide is to really help lead you through that decision-making process of, "Where do we stand as a mission, how are our programs currently being monitored," and then to link you with those tools and resource that will help you get the information through other mechanisms that are not – that are available in lieu of those that have been lost because of our needs for remotely monitored in this time because of the pandemic that is...many of these resources will connect you either with other people who have expertise or help you understand, "What are those policies that are currently in place" – that leverage to be able to get there.

With that, I'll pass it along. Feel free to ask any questions towards the end of this presentation about the guide. And most of you should've seen the guide by now. If not, please take a chance to look at it and connect to it through the links provided. Thank you, Jerome. Back to you.

Jerome Gallagher: All right. Thank you, Kevin. As Kevin noted, you – you can find, the guide in – in the Web Links box that will appear at the end of the Webinar. It was there in the beginning. We also put the Links in the Chat Box. It's also available on USAID's website with some Links we'll provide.

And one more place that you can find, the remote monitoring guide, and USAID's, uh – other USAID resources for monitoring evaluation during the COVID19 pandemic is our learning platform, USAID Learning Lab. Many of you may already be familiar with USAID's Learning Lab site. If not, it's a great resource for all kinds of USAID program cycle guidance and tools as well as resources from USAID partners. The Web address there is – is in the red Callout box on your screen. If you go to the USAID Learning Lab Homepage, you'll now see a Link – which I've circled here in blue – and that Link will take you to a new Page on the Learning Lab website.

Hard to read this. But, just to give you an idea of what's there. It's a new Page which lists some...the remote monitoring guide along with some other USAID guidance or monitoring evaluation and learning that we think are relevant during the COVID19 pandemic.

So please check it out. As USAID develops more resources, we will add them to this Page. In addition, that Page Links to yet another Page.
which I've...which you should see now. And this list contributions on monitoring, evaluation and learning resources tools from the broader development community that – again – we think are relevant, for your monitoring efforts during the COVID19 pandemic. And then finally. If you have a relevant tool or guidance document, on monitoring, evaluation and learning that you would like to share – again, that's relevant during this COVID19 pandemic – there's an E-mail listed there. That's the COVID19 partner resource center at usaid.gov E-mail.

And you can submit resources to that E-mail address so that we can Upload them to our Learning Lab Page. Please just note that that, E-mail address, is for a variety of questions that implementing partners may have. So just let us know if, the subject of your E-mail is to submit a MEL guidance, document or tool. And with that, I'd like to, turn it over to our next presenter. For examples of remote monitoring.

So first, we're gonna start with Juan Carlos Rodrigues from – who's the Chief of the Office of Assets and Livelihoods in Transitions Office of USAID Ethiopia, and Michael Mulford, the Chief of Party of World Vision to talk about adapting a food security activity in Ethiopia.

Michael Mulford: Great. Thanks for that introduction. Just as – by way of a little bit of background, strengthen PSNP4 institutions and resilience – or SPEAR – is a USAID food-for-peace-funded food security active...activity implemented by CARE, ORDA and World Vision in Ethiopia. If we can advance the slide – I guess that'll be me. Oh, great. Thanks. Yeah. So this program supports and builds on the government's productive safety net which reaches over 8 million food-insecure households with food and cash transfers in the form of payment for seasonal public work or through direct support to the elderly or disabled.

Our learning partner, IFPRE, is conducting a randomized control trial evaluation to measure the causal impact of SPEAR’s multi-factorial livelihood to nutrition, gender equity and mental health interventions through baseline, midline and end-line household surveys. Following our midline last July, we had planned a targeted survey at the end of March, to learn about the effects of an interpersonal psychotherapy for groups intervention to address maternal depression.

However due to the onset of the COVID19 pandemic, if we converted to a phone survey following up with women in our sample who were previously suffering from depression. While this is a very unique subgroup within our larger sample, we decided to use this opportunity
to include four questions to learn about the impact of COVID19 in these relatively remote areas and rural Ethiopia. The survey, which was conducted at the end of April, found that all respondents were aware of the Coronavirus.

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The effects of...and as you can see on the – on the side of the slide here, the effects of COVID19 on household income and food access varied with about 50-percent reporting no effect and about one-third reporting a large effect of COVID19. We also observed differences between regions with larger effects reported in Oromie in comparison to our operational areas in Amhara. Lastly, about 4 out of 5 women are greatly concerned about the effects of COVID19 on their well-being over the next three months.

We learned a lot from this experience, including practical strategies and callback protocols to achieve as high of a response rate as possible. Initially with a maximum number of five callback attempts, we only managed about a 56-percent response rate. But afterwards, we added two extra days for the survey team and used local Cabellie leaders – or sub-administrative-unit leaders – to... Their contacts to track down alternative phone numbers for the survey respondents. Based on those strategies, we were able to eventually obtain a response rate of 80 percent.

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While normal household surveys can be quite long, often lasting for two hours or more, we also worked hard to narrow down the number and complexity of the questions to limit the phone survey length to 15 to 20 minutes. IFPRI is incorporated, these and other lessons into the design of a larger COVID19 impact phone survey – which we will conduct with our full sample of households that have cell phones – are about 1,400, households. And the survey will be rolled out in all of our operational areas on the next two weeks. And we hope to have results to share and inform implementers and other stakeholders toward the end of June. So if there are any, um – if there’s time at the end, I’d be happy to share more details about the survey or respond to other questions. But at this point, hand it over to Juan Carlos.

[0:15:00]

Juan Carlos Rodriguez: Thanks, Michael, very much. This is Juan Carlos Rodriguez. I work in USAID Ethiopia. I manage a resilience and food security office, in the mission. Thanks everybody for the opportunity today to, speak with you a little bit. And – and Michael for his leadership on this front as well. I just have a few points to add. From the USAID side, you know, we simply tried to create an ad hoc platform for all stakeholders to come
together on remote data collection that we're connected to. So Michael and I exchange ideas on this one, on the surveys they were conducting.

And it quickly became clear that there was both room for and need for coordination if we're all going to get the most out of these sorts of exercises. What are we trying to get out of these exercises or these types of surveys? Well we wanna understand how households and communities are being affected by COVID-19. And most importantly, we wanna inform our responses, in an evidence-based way. So use that data collection to inform our programming in the short, medium and long-term.

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So the – the silver lining in this whole situation that the globe is facing is, we've been able to find here an opportunity in this challenging context. Michael and his team were able to leverage an ongoing survey to better understanding the media impacts related to COVID. Another – a team leader in my office...another team leader in our office worked with a resilience learning mechanism that has a built-in, recurring monitoring system. It got fast, they moved quickly and my colleague Endalay worked with Save the Children entangling metric to adapt phone surveys to also incorporate COVID in the questionnaire. It was originally going to be community and household, physical surveys. But we were able to adapt by having the information of phone numbers on hand. Another – another partner under USAID...different partnership came into the picture, and then the World Bank as well. And then, IFPRI was already involved as – as were other partners.

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So in no time – almost no time at all – we had a multi-donor, multi-implementing partner, research institutes and others all on the phone together talking about both survey methodologies and principles. We shared all questions from all surveys and side conversations, and designs have started, informed by this broader conversation. So – so while it was quite simple and practical in though in many ways, in the midst of this crisis a pretty big and diverse set of stakeholders came to an agreed vision and came together for collaboration and objective for understanding the impacts of COVID using remote data collection. It's basically the way we should be collaborating in normal times. But it's one really big positive that we found during this tough period. And with that, I'll close. Thanks again for inviting us to join today. Over.

[0:18:00]

Jerome Gallagher: All right. Thank you, Juan Carlos, and thank you, Michael, for your example from Ethiopia. Now I'd like to turn it over, and introduce Rakesh Karna who is the Deputy Chief of Party from Abt Associates
who will talk about our remote monitoring practice in a federalism support activity in Nepal. Rakesh.

Rakesh Karna: Thank you. Good afternoon. So I would, first give you a solid background, on – on Nepal. And we had not really much used to kind of remote or work-from-home context. Even, despite the geographic difficulties and even given the outbreak, back in 2015 we were getting the program monitoring in the field. So this is quite unique context to us in terms of not just experimenting but also learning.

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So with that, this project is a USAID project with support at the government in transition to federalism with focus on more inclusive and effective governance. And it has three integrated components; including policy promulgation, governance procedure and given participation. And, we’ll cover about 134 wards and 10 municipalities that serve over 157 households in two provinces as you can see in the map in the circle. Can see in the near and far ways part of the country. So most of the area were we work, are remote, under-developed and hard to reach. Not just in terms of distance but also in terms of connectivity.

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As Nepal having draft COVID response plan – the government – we have also adapted our existing work plan to sort into the government, plan for COVID response and integrated response plan that we have adopted that includes, comparable COVID policy. And we see some responses to community awareness to technical assistance-tracing and quarantine management to look and go track its response. So to do this, it’s very important that we look for alternatives how we can best not just understand the local context but also engender the productivity during plastics and movement. So, we have, adopted on the upper-right hand of the slide. You can see we have adopted a perimeter, tools for remote monitoring that includes Web Portals, tracking the services, cell phone and the use of radio stations.

[0:21:00]

And, these tools have but to monitor program activities also in support the implementation and information dissemination at all chain levels of government. So to elaborate a bit, in terms of Web Portal we have supported cities and government Interface-guided Web sites which included engagement and also now the information-sharing that is needed at the local level. We use cell phones to conduct interviews. JII’s and other to design and also to adjust our project interventions and also to produce daily guidance that details on-the-ground updates. Because, most of the area that we work are affected by this ongoing, cross-border movement. For interactive data missions, we are supporting
federal government, to develop institutional monitoring – monitoring platform across the country so that the local, information can be shared into a national level digitally.

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We also use radio stations across our working municipality and to disseminate particular COVID-related information plus heaviness rating and also support in the system planning process that has just begun. So they have photos that we have been using so far. It's been months that we have started using these, to improve our capacity, to perform better. Even during lock-down and restricted movement. We are looking for four different, kinds of tools, in coming days. That includes park parking monitoring, which allows us to give grants to look at community-based organizations to promote COVID-related activities and situation monitoring. We are also working with the federal-level ministry to develop and improve interactive, integrated draft book and application that collects, analyzes and disseminates information on policy, program and budget plus.

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Also, customization often, which allows users to share information based on his or her needs. We are also going to use SMS-based push notifications. And also, interactive voice response. Based on this, we the decision to identify the issue of one labeled population and feed into multiple decision-making. And the fourth one that we are also going to use in coming weeks and months is the GIS, GPS locations tracking and part of quality management and assessment. So the municipalities are where we're in front of. So with this I stop now and open for questions after all the presentations are done. So thank you very much.

[0:24:00]

Jerome Gallagher: All right. Thank you, Rakesh, for that very comprehensive set of adaptations that you are – that you're doing there in Nepal. It's great to see. So for our third example, I'd like to introduce Phillipa Morgan – who's the Senior Monitoring Leads from MSI – and Abdul Wakil, a Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor also from MSI – to discuss their work with the Afghanistan monitoring, evaluation and learning activity.

Phillipa Morgan: Good morning, afternoon, evening. I'm Phillipa Morgan, on behalf of the Afghanistan Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Activity. AMELA is USAID Afghanistan's M&E mission support platform. We are currently active in all 34 provinces across – across Afghanistan. And we monitor a – a variety of implementing partners on behalf of Afghanistan. My colleague and Senior M&A Specialist, Wakil Abdul on the AMELA platform will be talking to you today about some of our experiences and
lessons learned about our remote TPM activities in Afghanistan during COVID19. So without further ado, Wakil, over to you.

[0:26:00]

Abdul Wakeel:
Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to share our remote monitoring experiences from Afghanistan monitoring, evaluation and learning activity. I will go through four discussion points in this presentation that includes, interventions monitored remotely, remotened monitoring methodology, what worked well, lessons learned, limitations and mitigation measures. Let me mention that AMELA implemented remote monitoring protocols in April, 2020 as a startup. As COVID19 continues with the, prescient plans.

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And most of the experience of that I'm going to present in this presentation comes from Office of Humanitarian efforts and interventions as it composes a major part of our remote monitoring so far. We have monitored three, OHA interventions that includes warehouses we inspected, warehouses we monitor food item distribution points, non-food items distribution points. However, I would like to mention that the remote monitoring method or applicable... Are not applicable only like to OHA. Rather, it's applicable to majority of activity.

Furthermore, AMELA is also conducting person-monitoring of development activities with COVID19 mitigation protocols, in place. We have been using a consistent remote monitoring methodology that includes coordination with the IP about the site visits for each month, evaluation of monitoring sites through real calling, key informant interviews, through phones and beneficiary surveys reached through phone.

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Or, uh – or the remote monitoring of sites has been a good experience for us. But I would like to highlight a list of things in particular that went very well that includes evaluation of monitoring sites, that we conducted through video calling where we observed that and need to develop parts of the respective interventions very clearly. Those parameters across the intervention includes the facilities of the warehouses, the facilities of the distribution points, physical conditions of food and non-food items, module, contents of the module that were distributed, expiration dates of the food items at the warehouses and the distribution points. Stock recalls at the warehouses.

[0:29:00]
In addition to key informant interviews and beneficial surveys were conducted successfully in the monitoring site, we were recording in photos of the parameters of interventions where provided by IP stock through What’s Up, and E-mail and Skype to our team. However, the remote monitoring approach did have limitations, that were mitigated by, using mitigation measures where applicable. And we learned lessons, from our...from our past two months’ remote monitoring experience. The common limitation was a – a weak internet connection in remote areas where internet did not support video calling to observe the monitoring sites. So we couldn’t observe some of the, monitoring sites – video calling. But we shared the list of parameters that were to be monitored at the site with the IP as mitigation measures. And IP provided that we do recording and photos of the sites. And we observed the parameters of interaction from video recordings and from, photos of the sites where we video calling were not supported by weak internet connection.

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In addition — first, the distribution beneficiary survyes could not be, conducted; which was initially planned because the beneficiaries did not have phones or had weak, connections to their home. So we conducted beneficiaries that way – the distribution points – by using, IP staff phone. Remote, focus group discussion – which was initially in the methodology could not be conducted, due to insufficient time to coordinate and conduct into the – the distribution points. And to have an internet connection and considering the social distancing.

*Jerome Gallagher:* All right.

*Abdul Wakeel:* To conclude, AMELA team has, found remote monitoring a suitable alternative to in-person monitoring in this COVID19 pandemic situation.

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Because we have been able to implement all of the monitoring practices through remote monitoring approach that we use through in-person monitoring in normal situations. Thank you all for listening. That’s all from AMELA.

*Jerome Gallagher:* All right. Thank you, Phillipa and Abdul. Appreciate the examples — I now Afghanistan’s had a long history of remote monitoring. It’s great to get, to hear some of that experience from you all. So three really great examples, of our efforts across the globe to monitor USAID programs. So again. Thank you to all of our presenters who were able to share their experience. We do have time left.
So we can start to open it up to questions for any of our presenters, on any of the issues that we've touched on today. I'll remind everyone you can enter questions, into the Chat Box, and we'll try to get to as many as we can. So we've got our first question up. So let's start with that. We have a question, "Are there examples of using remote monitoring with marginalized groups? Including women, disabled senior citizens, LGTBIQA? Primarily those who have poor access to improved technologies." I wonder if, uh – can I turn this over to – to Kevin or to Kate to – to take?

Kate Dimsdale: Hey, Jerome. Sure. I think, probably some of the presenters might have a couple of good, examples there – particularly in Ethiopia.

Juan Carlos Rodriguez: Yeah. This is Juan Carlos-

Michael Mulford: Sure. This is Michael. Okay.

[0:33:00]

Juan Carlos Rodriguez: Sorry, Michael. I'll just say something very general – general and – and then pass it over to Michael for a specific example. For us, lots of the population that we're talking about with the World Vision team and our other partners are focused on vulnerable populations generally, but then in terms of the subgroups absolutely it's been a bit topic of conversation within our ad hoc group. We had a focused kind of E-mail chain on gender as it relates to this survey data collection and best approaches for making sure that voices of marginalized populations were captured. We reached out to Washington DC colleagues and Food For Peace and other bureaus who sent some guidance down. We've also been...one of the uses of this ad hoc group is just to share lessons learned.

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So we've been sharing Links from studies around the world that are looking at these questions too. It looks like Asia has a couple survey results back that are looking at this and recognizing the disproportionate impact on marginalized groups and women, in this time of COVID. I'll pass it over to Michael now.

Michael Mulford: Sure. Thanks, Juan Carlos. So yeah. For our survey or for initial survey, it just so happened that, actually, the population that we were, trying to survey was already...yeah. A subgroup of our larger sample which, Juan Carlos has mentioned, is already quite vulnerable. But we were actually targeting a survey towards, women that had already, scored high on, uh – on depression, scales. So kind of were moderate to severe, depressed then. Often, the phone...we had phone contact information for the
household. So often it wasn’t, individual phone for the women and, you know, phone contact information for both husband and wife.

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So we had a couple of steps in our survey to ensure that, you know, we could get to speak with, the female respondent and then, you know, kind of ensure that she was comfortable talking with us or with our enumerators and went through a couple of steps just to ensure that we were able to reach out and get her as the primary respondent and follow-up with questions, in our survey.

Chadd Nyerges: All right. Just adding. This is Chadd, as the Chief Party from AMELA and Afghanistan. As consistent with our normal practices, in Afghanistan typically we would use female enumerators to interview female respondents. And we found that during our remote monitoring activities we experience similar dynamics, requiring the same methods.

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So, one thing that we would do is – especially, considering the fact that we were conducting our – our interviews, at distribution points as opposed to post-distribution interviews... We would ensure that we would have both male and female monitors on the calls. And – and we would instruct the – the IP interlocutors in the field to hand the phone to, female respondents. At which time, we would of course have our female enumerator conduct the interviews. You know, kind of simple gender sensitivity methodology does work in both, in-person and remote contexts.

Jerome Gallagher: Okay. Excellent. Thank you – thank you all. I think we can move onto next question, from Mark. It's a question for, Rakesh in Nepal. " is the third-party data in Nashville Dashboard open to anyone in the country to see, or is it internal?"

[0:37:00]

Rakesh Kama: Uh – this is, partly internal for the government’s own internal decision-making, and partly public through the way sites.

Jerome Gallagher: And – and is it – is it focused more on – on your own programs or – or how the national programming is – is doing overall?

Rakesh Kama: Our project is to support the local map of government to better response. So, I would say this is for the broader US data for the project.

Jerome Gallagher: All right. All right. Thank you, Rakesh. Next question. "Any specific examples of how you do evaluations remotely?" well we – we know evaluations and – and monitoring often use, the – the same types of data
collection techniques. Although evaluations tend to do this often a bit more in-depth. Anyone want to discuss particularly in terms of evaluation from our presenters?

[0:38:00]

Chadd Nyerges: Yeah. Sure. This is Chadd Nyerges again, the Chief of Party of AMELA. You know, one of our main components, is – is an evaluation component. And we have a – a, um – a detailed contingency plan for how to convert all of our evaluations, to – to essentially remote data collection. Many of the methods are – are quite similar, in terms of utilizing telephonic, surveys or – in most cases – key informant interviews. And essentially it has a great deal to do with coordination with the various stakeholders.

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A lot more time in LOE is put into advance work in terms of, working directly with the, uh – the entities that you are evaluating, to develop a respondent-based...of course manage a significant number of contact numbers and deploy, remote – in our case, what we call researchers. But in many cases they would be enumerators if it were monitoring. And – and then, it also depends on the various technology platforms that are available. Be they What's Up, Skype, telephone.

So – so in large part, many of the evaluations will be conducted similarly to the monitoring. Now you – you wouldn't necessarily have the immediacy that you might find in conducting certain evaluations where you would be able to, go into a specific physical environment, speak with certain respondents and then, based on their inputs, track down additional respondents in the similar areas. However, that same type of dynamic is active. It would just be a delay to it.

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So, you know, with many evaluations you work off of your inputs from one respondent and moving onto another respondent. Just again. It requires greater coordination. But in large part, the principles are the same as monitoring. It’s utilizing various technology and remote platforms in order to collect the data. And of course, you know, having to be patient because most of these, would be extensive interviews. Additionally, if you’re seeking documents, much of the document production is handled technically remotely anyway. And because in many cases, that's always Forwarded via E-mail, et cetera. So, you know, the basic principles are the same. That's something that we’d be happy to provide additional information on offline if there’s a significant interest.
Jerome Gallagher: Great. Thank you, Chad. Yeah. I, the new guide on remote monitoring, it’s on remote monitoring. But those are many principles that can apply to and data collection technique that can apply to our evaluations as well.

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Any – any of our other presenters want to jump in, on evaluations? Remote evaluations? No? All right. Well then, let’s move onto the next question. For our Afghanistan colleagues. "How did you use the videos over What’s Up or Skype to conduct the observations? Did you ask someone already at the sites to Send you, or did you watch them live?" So Abdul or – or Chad for...

Chadd Nyerges: I think I’m – okay. Chad again. Hi. It was both, actually. So ideally what would happen is, you’re conducting a video chat. Okay? So you’re doing a warehouse walk-through. You’re actually with the individuals, say the IP representative. And you’re walking through the warehouse, and you’re actually conducting a real-time video monitoring site visit.

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In the event when technology fails us, what we have done is we have – we have asked, for the IP to actually shoot videos based on our specific instructions. "Get it from this angle. Give us a comprehensive view of the entire facility. Then go line-by-line and show us X, Y and Z." So we’ve actually done both. In a perfect world scenario...or I guess less than perfect. But in our current perfect world scenario, it would be a live video chat. If technology fails for one reason or another, then we would requires videos. Essentially based on the parameters that we’ve established. And if we don’t get what we asked for the first time, we go back. We ask again and we’re more specific in terms of what our needs are.

[0:43:00]

Jerome Gallagher: Great. Thank you. I think recorded, walk-throughs are something we’re gonna see more of in this environment. Okay. Our next question, for our Ethiopia colleagues. "How are persons selected for the survey? What steps were taken to verify the identity of the person responding to the surveys?" So Juan Carlos maybe, or...? Or Michael?

Michael Mulford: Yeah. I can go ahead and jump in on that. So, the survey respondents were actually people that we had already sampled as a part of our larger impact evaluation. So we, went back to households where we had already contact information. This is also perhaps pertaining to a later question that was raised that’s about, question of phone coverage. So perhaps unlike other areas, there’s relatively low, phone ownership – especially in these rural, populations where we work in Ethiopia. So,
perhaps in other countries there might be much higher phone ownership. For us, it was about, 35 percent phone ownership.

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So we understand as well that there's, certain characteristics that, go along with – like we – and we've, you know, actually studied in our survey that are associated with people that have phones that are, you know, better off for different... In important ways than the general, overall sample that – that doesn’t, have phones. So yeah. We're cognizant of that. But yeah. It's – we're kind of working in a second-best world and using that information still to, understand the situation and the issues there. And in terms of verifying the identity, we just go through a couple of steps. A lot of the, information we have about people are pre-loaded into the, survey tool and then we kind of ask them confirming questions that's at the beginning. Also maybe just to really quick, response. There was also a question directed towards me about the number of questions in the survey.

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So our first survey had 44 questions. We kind of looked at other, phone surveys that are going on to kind of get an idea of how many questions are typical. And I think many are aiming for this 20-minute mark. I think what we saw common was probably about 50 to 60 core questions with a few questions on the intro and consents section and a few at the end. We also have a public service announcement at the end related to kind of messaging about protection against COVID and informational, basic information on COVID19. So anyway. That’s a couple of the other questions that were directed as well to me.

Jerome Gallagher: Excellent. Thank you, Michael. We can move onto our next question. This one's directed to Rakesh, from Nepal. "How do you assure data quality from remote monitoring?" I know you use, a number of techniques or are planning to use a number of techniques. Maybe you could just talk a little bit about some of your data quality efforts.

[0:46:00]

Rakesh Karna: I think there is no smart answer to that...we have developed, uh – extensive inventory, of actors – including local CFO's, government agencies, media and other, contacts. So depends on the nature of data where you find; whether this needs to be very hard if you ask them work with data triangulation effort. So the smart answer is, we triangulate the data based on the nature, and we look other, spotting – sources.
Jerome Gallagher: All right. Yes. I think a – a good reminder of the importance of – of triangulating our data when, we're doing some of this remote monitoring work.

[0:47:00]

Next question from Ann, directed to our Afghanistan colleagues. "Do you feel beneficiaries could respond honestly if they were using an IP staff member's phone? Were you able to ensure that respondents had the privacy to respond honestly?" So I don't know if – Chad, you want to take that or...

Chadd Nyerges: Yeah. That – for sure. For sure. Yeah. That's a...you know, it's consideration of the potential pitfall limitation in terms of a variety of different, types of remote monitoring. I mean, the same type of question with something that we considered doing in the warehouses. I mean, yes, we are specifically directing people to go to certain areas. However, you know, they are still the ones on the ground with the camera. You know? And – and this is one of the limitations of – of remote monitoring. Now in – in the specific cases when we're dealing with respondents now in an an ideal case the respondent will have their own phone, will be able to obtain that contact number and we'll be able to contact them directly.

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in the case where – for whatever reason – we actually do have the IP hand the phone over, we do actually...we make it clear to the IP at the outset that this is something that you know, we want them to be able to conduct freely and in private. And we also do ask the respondent when we're on the phone with them if they are – if they feel comfortable talking, if they're free to talk. So essentially, these are inherent issues and limitations.

We do attempt to put in mitigation measures in order to ensure that that data is not corrupted. So again. A challenge, I think, across the board when it comes to remote monitoring. But yes. Those are the steps that we take. And if it's the case of where we're conducting a video chat, then that does make it easier, of course. Because you can actually observe the surroundings while you're – while you're speaking with the person.

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If it is strictly telephone, of course you have to rely on the questions that you ask of the respondent to ensure that they are comfortable and able to speak freely. But again. These are kind of the inherent limitations of the process and those are some of the steps that we take in order to mitigate them.
And Chadd. Can I just follow-up? If you had to adjust any of those processes, under the COVID19 pandemic in terms of social distancing or – or anything like that, are those things you’re currently considering?

Well to be honest, this entire, all – our remote monitoring right now is entirely in response to COVID19. So prior to this, we’ve actually had access, and we’ve been able to operate within all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. So we’re fortunate that we have, a strong partner – a strong, subcontractor that has pretty broad access. So in terms of adjusting, we are just starting with our remote monitoring because it is primarily because of COVID19.

So we’ve been conducting remote monitoring since April. We’ve – we’ve conducted, between 20 and 30, site visits at this time. And we are continuing to expand those as we proceed. So it’s...since it’s in such a nascent stage, there is literally an adjustment on every site visit. So – so yes, we have. One of the things that Wakil touched on during the presentation, was some of the complications surrounding, doing remote focus group discussions.

For example. Really – it’s easy to get one person on the phone. It is real tough to get, you know, five or ten people sitting around a phone. There are a variety of other, uh – uh – issues and limitations associated there too. But simply touching on the social distancing question, one of the reasons we can’t do that is because of social distancing. Now if we are able to obtain a – a – a good connection, say in an urban center, and call-in number, then you can conduct a remote focus group discussion.

Because obviously everybody is in their own place and there aren’t any concerns with that. Now social distancing, again, is one of the reasons we won’t conduct focus group discussions, say, at a distribution point. So to answer your question, we are kind of adjusting as we go and learning as we go every step of the way right now. And, we have found that we’ve had a considerable degree of success. But all of these questions are solid, and they are the questions that we initially thought of and the ones we have been encountering as we’ve progressed.

All right. Thank you, Chadd. Yeah. I think we’re all learning as we go during this time and trying to conduct our monitoring. But also do it safely, make sure we’re not, doing anything to harm any of the beneficiaries that we’re trying to – to help. So, uh – so keep sharing about that. And just, the struggles that we’re all going through to adapt and try to do this, you know, as best we can given the circumstances.
The next question. For all of the presenters. " were incentives offered to people who participated in remote monitoring interventions?" So i'll just open this up to any of our presenters from Nepal, Afghanistan, Ethiopia. Who wants to jump in?

**Rakesh Karna:** Perhaps I can start. From Nepal. So I don’t know how you define incentives. But if you mean incentives by money, we don’t provide. Because the situation is quite chaotic because of COVID and lockdown. So the incentives would be to getting the right information at the right time so that they can safely either race to home or be prepared. So these, I think, are the incentives that they receive when they participate in our interview.

**Jerome Gallagher:** Thanks.

**Michael Mulford:** From, Ethiopia, yes. We did also provide a small air-time credit, for participants; recognizing, just the opportunity cost of their time and also, that we're reaching them during a pandemic. So many may face a greater burden in taking time out to answer our questions. So it was about a little over $1 equivalent for the last survey. And maybe we're considering a little bit more for the next survey. Also in terms of thinking about, kind of retaining their interest and willingness to participate in future, phone surveys as well.

**Chadd Nyerges:** Similar in Afghanistan. Except in this case, we have elected not to. It’s something we're still considering, for future surveys. But, to-date we've elected not to.

But, typically the incentive would be, similar to that mentioned. Which would be a, you know, airtime and usually around the same amount. You know, $1 to $2 dollars' worth. But in our cases, during the COVID19 remote monitoring, we have not.

**Jerome Gallagher:** All right. Thank you. And I think we'll – we're about reaching the end. I think we'll take one last question. Team’s remote monitoring – at least in some examples, driving collaboration between different agencies. From a beneficiary point-of-view, is the collaboration also helping to better enable local leadership at getting out of the usual siloes?” I'll throw this again to – to any of our – our presenters from the field, who wanna touch on this.

**Juan Carlos Rodriguez:** Hi. This is Juan Carlos. I can just quickly touch on this. I wrote this in the – in the Chat Box as well. I think it's just sort of a mixed bag. We're
seeing, a very diverse approach in Ethiopia in terms of local government, leadership in terms of COVID response. Sometimes the responses or plans are very health-specific, and then sometimes they’re multi-sectoral.

[J:55:00]

When we're seeing the multi-sectoral approach, understanding things like food security impacts or livelihood impacts simply from the COVID mitigation measures, then we're starting to see, some examples of like cross-sectoral collaboration. But in cases where the plans themselves and their response mitigation efforts are siloed then, we're not seeing anything dramatic there. Over.

Jerome Gallagher: Great. Thank you. Any of our other presenters wanna jump in?

Chadd Nyerges: You know, the only thing I would add is more from a monitoring perspective. You know, it's unfortunate because there were the technical difficulties in the beginning of the AMELA presentation. But just for everyone's edification, AMELA is the Afghanistan monitoring, evaluation and learning activity. And we are the monitoring, evaluation and mission support for the United States – for the USAID Afghanistan mission.

[J:56:00]

So just from an M&E perspective, it's very interesting for us. Because the bottom line is, one of our pillars is the idea of coordination and collaboration with the entities that we are monitoring and evaluating. That said, that means that essentially what we do is, we attempt to engage and, sneak by. And from the people that we're evaluating and monitoring. Not that we're going to, of course, in any way hinder our objectivity. But in the sense that what we do is, we like to plan, develop tools together, seek the answers that the IP's are looking for as well as USAID is looking for.

[J:57:00]

So what that does is, it actually, instead of engendering a dynamic where you find that, people look at us as auditors or as potential hostile actors or as people coming to get them, they actually look at us as members of a team who are working to inform and improve future programming. And we have found that our coordination with the IP’s in response to the COVID19 crisis, and in terms of the enhanced coordination that we've had to use, for the remote monitoring has achieved the exact same objective; in that, you know, our objectivity has not necessarily been compromised.

However, the, ability to work together and the engagement has been
strengthened; the sense that, "Yes. We have a specific job to do, and the answers we provide may not always be what you want to hear. But the idea that we are all on the same team and we are all working to make things better for the beneficiaries and For all stakeholders. We found that that has been greatly enhanced throughout the whole process.

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Jerome Gallagher: Excellent. Thank you, Chad. And, I think remembering that we're all on the same team and trying to reach the best results we can, I think, is an important point to end on. We are, a little bit past time. So again. Lemme just thank all of the presenters and thank everyone who's still with us for joining us today. If you have a moment, please fill out, the poll questions that you should see on your screen. Please download the resources, in the Web Links box. And again. Lemme thank all the presenters, all of you, all the folks, who are behind-the-scenes who helped, make this Webinar happen. Really appreciate everyone joining us today. So, thanks and everybody have a great rest of your day. Bye now.

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