

CHAPTER 9 • MEAL SERIES

Data-Collection Methods and Tools

Designing and Implementing High-Quality MEAL Data Collection

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Distinguish quantitative and qualitative data
- Differentiate primary and secondary data
- Select appropriate data sources and respondents
- Design clear questionnaires
- Develop interview and focus-group guides
- Prepare observation checklists
- Review records and documents systematically
- Apply community and participatory methods
- Use digital data-collection platforms
- Avoid common question-design errors
- Translate and contextualize tools
- Pretest and pilot data-collection instruments
- Select and train enumerators
- Supervise field data collection effectively

What is Data Collection?

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering information to answer monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning questions.

Data may be collected to:

- Track indicators
- Measure project progress
- Understand participant experiences
- Assess service quality
- Test project assumptions
- Inform decisions
- Support reporting
- Generate learning

Start with the Information Need

Before selecting a method, ask:

- What do we need to know?
- Why do we need the information?
- Who will use it?
- What decision will it inform?
- Which indicator or evaluation question does it support?
- What is the safest and most efficient way to obtain it?

The Data-Collection Planning Process

- 1 Define the information need
- 2 Identify the data source
- 3 Select the method
- 4 Develop the tool
- 5 Translate and contextualize
- 6 Pretest and revise
- 7 Train data collectors
- 8 Collect and supervise
- 9 Validate and store data
- 10 Document limitations

What is Quantitative Data?

Quantitative data are numerical data that can be counted, measured and statistically analysed.

Examples:

- Number of participants
- Household income
- Attendance rate
- Test scores
- Percentage using services
- Distance to a facility

Common Quantitative Questions

Quantitative methods help answer:

- How many?
- How often?
- What percentage?
- How much?
- What is the average?
- How has the value changed?
- Are there differences between groups?

What is Qualitative Data?

Qualitative data describe experiences, perceptions, meanings, explanations and processes.

Examples:

- Participant opinions
- Reasons for non-participation
- Experiences of service quality
- Perceived barriers
- Community priorities
- Explanations of behaviour

Common Qualitative Questions

Qualitative methods help answer:

- Why did this happen?
- How did participants experience the project?
- What barriers affected implementation?
- What does quality mean to participants?
- How did the context influence results?
- What unintended changes occurred?

Quantitative versus Qualitative Data

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numerical	Textual, verbal or visual
Measures magnitude	Explores meaning
Structured tools	Flexible tools
Larger samples	Smaller purposive samples
Statistical analysis	Thematic or content analysis
Answers “how many?”	Answers “how and why?”

Mixed-Methods Data Collection

Mixed methods combine quantitative and qualitative data.

QUANTITATIVE

Percentage of households using a health service.

QUALITATIVE

Reasons some households do not use the service.

Together they show:

- The scale of the issue
- Differences between groups
- Reasons behind the pattern
- Possible corrective actions

What is Primary Data?

Primary data are collected directly for the current project or study.

Examples:

- Household surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations
- Tests
- Measurements
- Community consultations

What is Secondary Data?

Secondary data already exist and were collected by another person, project or system.

Examples:

- Government statistics
- Health-facility records
- School records
- Previous assessments
- Project databases
- Research studies
- Administrative reports
- Market data

Advantages of Secondary Data

Secondary data may offer:

- Lower cost
- Faster access
- Larger populations
- Historical trends
- Reduced respondent burden
- Comparability with official statistics

Limitations of Secondary Data

Secondary data may be:

- Outdated
- Incomplete
- Poorly documented
- Collected using different definitions
- Missing required disaggregation
- Inconsistent across locations
- Difficult to verify
- Inaccessible due to ownership restrictions

Assessing Secondary Data Quality

Before using secondary data, ask:

- Who collected the data?
- Why were they collected?
- When were they collected?
- Which population was covered?
- Which definitions were used?
- What was the sampling method?
- Are missing values documented?
- Can the data be verified?
- Are they comparable with project indicators?

What is a Data Source?

A data source is the original place from which information is obtained.

Examples:

- Project participants
- Community leaders
- Service providers
- Attendance registers
- Financial records
- Observation sites
- Government systems
- Partner reports

Who is a Respondent?

A respondent is a person who provides information during data collection.

Possible respondents include:

- Project participants
- Household heads
- Children and caregivers
- Teachers
- Health workers
- Government officials
- Community leaders
- Partner staff
- People who did not participate

Selecting the Right Respondent

Ask:

- Who directly experienced the issue?
- Who has reliable knowledge?
- Who may have a different perspective?
- Who may be excluded from ordinary consultation?
- Can the person respond safely?
- Is consent possible?
- Could power dynamics influence the response?

Using Multiple Sources

For important questions, combine sources.

Example · Assessing whether a water point is functional

- Physical observation
- Maintenance records
- User interviews
- Water-committee interview
- Technical inspection

What is Triangulation?

Triangulation means comparing information from multiple:

Compare across

- Sources
- Methods
- Respondent groups
- Researchers
- Time periods

It helps

- Verify findings
- Identify inconsistencies
- Reduce bias
- Strengthen credibility
- Understand different perspectives

What is a Questionnaire?

A questionnaire is a structured set of questions used to collect standardized information from respondents.

It may be:

- Self-administered
- Enumerator-administered
- Paper-based
- Digital
- Face-to-face
- Telephone-based
- Online

Advantages of Questionnaires

Questionnaires can:

- Reach many respondents
- Produce standardized data
- Support statistical analysis
- Compare groups
- Measure indicators
- Reduce variation between interviewers
- Be administered digitally

Types of Questionnaire Questions

CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS

Provide predefined response options.

What is your primary water source?

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Allow respondents to answer in their own words.

What difficulties do you face when collecting water?

Common Closed-Question Formats

- Yes or no
- Multiple choice
- Single response
- Multiple response
- Rating scale
- Likert scale
- Ranking
- Frequency category
- Numerical entry

Response Options

Good response options should be:

- Clear
- Non-overlapping
- Exhaustive where possible
- Context appropriate
- Balanced
- Consistently coded

Example • How often do you attend the service?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Questionnaire Structure

A questionnaire may include:

- 1 Introduction and consent
- 2 Eligibility screening
- 3 Background information
- 4 Main thematic sections
- 5 Sensitive questions later
- 6 Feedback or comments
- 7 Closing and referral information

Questionnaire Length

Long questionnaires can cause:

- Respondent fatigue
- Incomplete responses
- Rushed answers
- Higher refusal rates
- Enumerator errors
- Increased cost
- Poor data quality

What is a Key Informant Interview?

A Key Informant Interview (KII) is a semi-structured interview with a person who has specialized knowledge or experience relevant to the project.

Possible key informants:

- Government officials
- Technical experts
- Community leaders
- Service providers
- Project managers
- Partner representatives

When to Use KIIs

KIIs are useful for:

- Understanding systems and policies
- Exploring implementation challenges
- Examining institutional performance
- Understanding context
- Identifying causes and explanations
- Exploring sensitive issues privately
- Gathering expert perspectives

KII Guide Structure

A KII guide may include:

- Introduction and consent
- Respondent role and experience
- Main thematic questions
- Probing questions
- Recommendations
- Closing comments

Effective Interview Probes

Useful probes include:

- Can you explain further?
- Can you give an example?
- Why do you think this happened?
- Who was most affected?
- Has this changed over time?
- What evidence supports that view?
- Were there any exceptions?

Interviewer Skills

A strong interviewer should:

- Listen actively
- Remain neutral
- Build rapport
- Ask clear questions
- Probe respectfully
- Manage time
- Recognize distress
- Protect confidentiality
- Record accurately

What is a Focus Group Discussion?

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a facilitated discussion with a small group of participants who share relevant characteristics or experiences.

FGDs explore:

- Perceptions
- Experiences
- Norms
- Differences
- Priorities
- Community explanations

Appropriate FGD Group Size

A typical FGD includes approximately 6–10 participants, a facilitator and a note-taker.

Typical composition

- 6–10 participants
- A facilitator
- A note-taker

Group composition should consider

- Age
- Gender
- Status
- Language
- Power relationships
- Sensitivity of the topic

Homogeneous versus Mixed Groups

Homogeneous Groups

Participants share important characteristics.

- Greater comfort
- Reduced power imbalance
- Easier discussion of sensitive issues

Mixed Groups

Participants bring different perspectives.

- Broader debate
- Identification of disagreement

When Not to Use an FGD

Avoid FGDs when:

- The topic is highly confidential
- Disclosure may create risk
- Participants are likely to intimidate one another
- Individual case histories are required
- The issue involves safeguarding allegations
- The group setting may expose identities

FGD Facilitation Skills

The facilitator should:

- Explain ground rules
- Encourage all participants
- Manage dominant voices
- Invite quieter participants
- Remain neutral
- Explore agreement and disagreement
- Prevent harmful disclosure
- Summarize key points
- Check participant meaning

FGD Ground Rules

Suggested rules:

- One person speaks at a time
- Respect different views
- Participation is voluntary
- Do not share personal stories outside the group
- Participants may decline questions
- Avoid naming people in sensitive cases
- There are no right or wrong answers

What is Observation?

Observation involves systematically examining and recording conditions, behaviours, facilities or practices.

Examples:

- Classroom teaching methods
- Handwashing facilities
- Warehouse conditions
- Service accessibility
- Distribution processes
- Infrastructure functionality

Structured Observation Checklist

A checklist should define:

- What will be observed
- The standard or criterion
- Response options
- Location
- Timing
- Instructions
- Evidence required
- Space for comments

Example Observation Items

Indicator • Functional handwashing facility

- ✓ Facility is present
- ✓ Water is available
- ✓ Soap or cleansing agent is available
- ✓ Facility is accessible
- ✓ Drainage is safe
- ✓ Facility appears in regular use

Observation Limitations

Observation may be affected by:

- Observer bias
- Different interpretations
- Participants changing behaviour
- Time of visit
- Seasonal conditions
- Restricted access
- Safety limitations

What is Record Review?

Record review involves systematically extracting information from existing project or institutional records.

Examples:

- Attendance registers
- Distribution lists
- Case-management files
- Financial reports
- Stock records
- Facility registers
- Meeting minutes
- Complaint databases

Document Review

Documents may include:

- Policies
- Strategies
- Project proposals
- Monitoring reports
- Evaluation reports
- Training materials
- Government plans
- Research studies
- Agreements and contracts

Record-Review Quality Questions

Ask:

- Are records complete?
- Are definitions consistent?
- Who entered the information?
- Were records verified?
- Are dates clear?
- Are duplicates possible?
- Are corrections documented?
- Is the source independent?
- Can the information be triangulated?

What is Community Consultation?

Community consultation is a structured process for gathering community perspectives on:

- Needs
- Priorities
- Project design
- Service quality
- Risks
- Results
- Recommendations
- Accountability concerns

Consultation Methods

Possible methods include:

- Community meetings
- Small-group discussions
- Listening sessions
- Public forums
- Household visits
- Stakeholder workshops
- Community scorecards
- Feedback sessions

Inclusive Consultation

Ensure participation of:

- Women and girls
- Men and boys
- Older persons
- Persons with disabilities
- Minority groups
- Remote households
- Displaced people
- People who did not benefit
- People with complaints

Avoiding Consultation Fatigue

Reduce fatigue by:

- Coordinating with other teams
- Reviewing existing information
- Asking only necessary questions
- Keeping sessions focused
- Communicating how feedback was used
- Avoiding repeated assessments
- Sharing findings with participants

What are Participatory Methods?

Participatory methods enable stakeholders to actively contribute to:

- Defining issues
- Collecting evidence
- Analysing findings
- Prioritizing problems
- Developing solutions
- Monitoring change

Examples of Participatory Tools

- Community mapping
- Social mapping
- Seasonal calendars
- Problem ranking
- Preference ranking
- Venn diagrams
- Transect walks
- Timeline analysis
- Community scorecards
- Most Significant Change stories

Community Mapping

Community mapping may identify:

- Services
- Resources
- Risk locations
- Access barriers
- Population groups
- Infrastructure
- Safe and unsafe spaces

Seasonal Calendars

Seasonal calendars help examine changes across the year in:

- Food availability
- Income
- Disease
- Migration
- School attendance
- Workload
- Water access
- Security

Ranking and Scoring

Participants may rank:

- Priority needs
- Service quality
- Project options
- Risks
- Barriers
- Preferred solutions

What is Digital Data Collection?

Digital data collection uses electronic devices and platforms to gather and transmit data.

Common platforms include:

- KoboToolbox
- ODK
- SurveyCTO
- CommCare
- Microsoft Forms
- Google Forms
- Custom mobile applications

Advantages of Digital Collection

Digital systems can provide:

- Faster data availability
- Skip logic
- Validation checks
- GPS and timestamps
- Reduced data-entry errors
- Multimedia capture
- Automated calculations
- Centralized storage
- Real-time monitoring

Digital Data Risks

Risks include:

- Device loss
- Unauthorized access
- Weak passwords
- Data transmission failure
- Software errors
- GPS sensitivity
- Poor battery life
- Enumerator unfamiliarity
- Server-location concerns
- Accidental sharing of sensitive data

Digital Form Design

Digital forms should include:

- Required fields where appropriate
- Range checks
- Skip patterns
- Relevance conditions
- Duplicate controls
- Consistent codes
- Error messages
- Consent confirmation
- Safe handling of identifiers

Real-Time Quality Monitoring

Supervisors can monitor:

- Submission volume
- Interview duration
- Missing responses
- GPS patterns
- Enumerator performance
- Unusual values
- Duplicate records
- Daily completion rates

Characteristics of Good Questions

Good questions are:

- Clear
- Simple
- Specific
- Neutral
- Relevant
- Answerable
- Culturally appropriate
- Focused on one issue
- Appropriate to the respondent

Use Simple Language



WEAK

To what extent have project interventions enhanced household socioeconomic resilience?



BETTER

During the past three months, was your household able to meet its basic needs without borrowing money?

Specify the Reference Period



AMBIGUOUS

Do you regularly attend school?



CLEARER

During the last four school weeks, on how many days were you absent?

Ask Questions Respondents Can Answer

Avoid asking respondents to provide information they do not know.



WEAK

What percentage of the community uses the health centre?



BETTER FOR A HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENT

During the past six months, has anyone in your household used the health centre?

Leading Questions

A leading question suggests the desired answer.



LEADING

How helpful was the excellent training provided by the project?



NEUTRAL

How would you rate the usefulness of the training?

Double-Barrelled Questions

A double-barrelled question asks about two issues at once. A respondent may have different answers for each.



WEAK

Was the service accessible and respectful?

BETTER

- Was the service accessible?
- Were you treated respectfully?

Ambiguous Questions

Ambiguous questions use unclear words.

Examples of unclear words:

- Regularly
- Often
- Adequate
- Nearby
- Improved
- Sufficient
- Youth
- Vulnerable

BETTER Define the term through measurable criteria.

Loaded or Sensitive Wording



WEAK

Why did you fail to attend the training?



BETTER

What were the main reasons you were unable to attend the training?

Hypothetical Questions

Hypothetical questions may produce unreliable answers.



WEAK

Would you use a new clinic if one were built?



BETTER

Which factors currently influence where you seek healthcare?

Recall Problems

Long recall periods can produce inaccurate answers.



WEAK

How many times did you visit a health facility last year?



BETTER

During the past four weeks, how many times did you visit a health facility?

Social Desirability Bias

Respondents may provide answers they believe are socially acceptable.

Sensitive topics may include:

- Hygiene behaviour
- Violence
- Income
- Sexual health
- Corruption
- Satisfaction
- Compliance with project advice

Why Translation Matters

Poor translation can change:

- Meaning
- Tone
- Technical definitions
- Response categories
- Sensitivity
- Comparability

Translation Process

A strong process may include:

- 1 Translate the original tool
- 2 Review by a second speaker
- 3 Back-translate selected questions
- 4 Compare meanings
- 5 Resolve differences
- 6 Pretest with local respondents
- 7 Finalize terminology

Contextualization

Contextualization may require adapting:

- Local terminology
- Examples
- Currency
- Units of measurement
- Age categories
- Social roles
- Service names
- Seasonal reference periods
- Response options

Translation Challenges

Possible challenges include:

- No direct equivalent word
- Different dialects
- Technical terms
- Stigmatizing language
- Gendered meanings
- Low-literacy populations
- Concepts understood differently across communities

What is Pretesting?

A pretest is a small-scale test of a data-collection tool before formal use.

It checks:

- Question clarity
- Response options
- Sequence
- Interview length
- Skip logic
- Cultural appropriateness
- Enumerator instructions
- Sensitive reactions

What is Piloting?

A pilot tests the broader data-collection process.

It may test:

- Sampling
- Recruitment
- Consent
- Tools
- Digital systems
- Field logistics
- Supervision
- Data transfer
- Quality checks
- Analysis procedures

Pretest Questions

After the pretest, ask:

- Were any questions misunderstood?
- Were terms unfamiliar?
- Were response options missing?
- Did respondents feel uncomfortable?
- Were instructions clear?
- Did skip patterns work?
- Was the interview too long?
- Did questions generate useful data?

Cognitive Interviewing

Cognitive interviewing explores how respondents understand and answer questions.

Possible probes:

- What does this question mean to you?
- How did you choose your answer?
- Was any word unclear?
- What time period were you thinking about?
- Were any response options missing?

Tool Revision

After pretesting:

- Revise wording
- Add or remove response options
- Correct skip logic
- Clarify instructions
- Reduce length
- Adjust translation
- Update digital validation
- Repeat testing where necessary
- Document the final version

Enumerator Role

Enumerators are responsible for:

- Explaining the study
- Obtaining consent
- Asking questions consistently
- Recording responses accurately
- Protecting confidentiality
- Following sampling instructions
- Reporting field problems
- Maintaining professional conduct

Enumerator Selection Criteria

Consider:

- Language skills
- Literacy
- Communication ability
- Local knowledge
- Neutrality
- Previous experience
- Digital skills
- Availability
- Gender balance
- Sensitivity to culture
- Safeguarding awareness

Enumerator Conflicts of Interest

Avoid assigning enumerators who:

- Directly delivered the service being assessed
- Supervise respondents
- Have unresolved community disputes
- May influence responses
- Cannot protect confidentiality
- Have personal interests in the results

Enumerator Training Content

Training should cover:

- Study purpose
- Indicators and key concepts
- Sampling procedures
- Tool-by-tool review
- Consent
- Ethics and safeguarding
- Interviewing skills
- Digital devices
- Quality standards
- Referral procedures
- Field logistics
- Security

Tool Practice

Training should include:

- Demonstration
- Question-by-question review
- Role plays
- Paired practice
- Mock interviews
- Feedback
- Field practice
- Standardization exercises

Standardization

Standardization ensures that all enumerators:

- Read questions consistently
- Use the same definitions
- Apply the same probes
- Follow the same skip patterns
- Record answers consistently
- Apply observation criteria equally

Enumerator Assessment

Before selection, assess:

- Tool understanding
- Consent practice
- Interviewing technique
- Digital accuracy
- Neutrality
- Language ability
- Ethical judgment
- Ability to follow instructions

Safeguarding and Referral Training

Enumerators should know:

- What constitutes a safeguarding concern
- How to respond to disclosure
- What not to promise
- Who to contact
- How to protect confidentiality
- How to refer urgent cases
- How to manage personal distress

Purpose of Field Supervision

Field supervision ensures:

- Tools are applied correctly
- Sampling procedures are followed
- Ethical standards are respected
- Problems are identified early
- Data are reviewed daily
- Enumerators receive support
- Fieldwork remains on schedule

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors should:

- Assign daily workloads
- Confirm locations and samples
- Observe interviews
- Review completed forms
- Check digital submissions
- Conduct spot checks
- Resolve field problems
- Lead daily debriefs
- Track refusals and replacements
- Escalate ethical concerns

Daily Quality Checks

Review:

- Missing responses
- Interview duration
- Skip errors
- Unusual values
- Duplicate records
- Consent completion
- GPS or location consistency
- Enumerator notes
- Number of interviews
- Refusal patterns

Spot Checks

Spot checks may include:

- Observing interviews
- Revisiting selected households
- Calling respondents
- Verifying locations
- Reviewing source documents
- Comparing enumerator patterns

Field Debriefing

Daily debriefs should discuss:

- Questions respondents misunderstood
- Missing response options
- Ethical concerns
- Access challenges
- Sampling issues
- Device problems
- Security changes
- Enumerator well-being
- Required tool clarifications

Managing Field Changes

If a tool or procedure must change:

- 1 Assess the effect on comparability
- 2 Obtain technical approval
- 3 Document the change
- 4 Update all devices and versions
- 5 Retrain the team
- 6 Inform affected stakeholders
- 7 Record the date of implementation

Ethical Data Collection

All methods should protect:

- Informed consent
- Voluntary participation
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Participant safety
- Inclusion
- Data minimization
- Responsible use

Collect Only Necessary Data

Before including a question, ask:

- Does it support an indicator?
- Does it answer an evaluation question?
- Will the information be used?
- Can the answer create risk?
- Is there a safer alternative?
- Can the question be removed?

Safe Interview Locations

The location should:

- Protect privacy
- Be physically accessible
- Be safe for respondents and staff
- Avoid creating suspicion
- Be appropriate for children
- Prevent others from overhearing
- Allow participants to leave freely

Handling Personal Identifiers

A combination of characteristics may identify a person even without a name.

Identifiers may include

- Names
- Phone numbers
- Identification numbers
- Addresses
- GPS coordinates
- Photographs
- Case numbers

Good practice

- Collect only when necessary
- Store separately
- Restrict access
- Encrypt data
- Remove before analysis

Method Selection Questions

Ask:

- What question must be answered?
- Is numerical or explanatory data needed?
- Which source is most credible?
- Is the issue sensitive?
- What sample is required?
- What resources are available?
- What ethical risks exist?
- How quickly are results needed?
- Will respondents understand the method?

Method Selection Matrix

Information Need	Suggested Method
Number of participants reached	Record review
Percentage adopting a practice	Survey and observation
Reasons for non-participation	Interview or FGD
Quality of infrastructure	Observation checklist
Institutional perspectives	KII
Community priorities	Participatory consultation

Cost and Complexity

Consider:

- Staff time
- Travel
- Translation
- Devices
- Software
- Training
- Sampling
- Data entry
- Analysis
- Participant burden
- Security

Practical Exercise Overview

Participants will design and pretest:

- 1 A questionnaire
- 2 A key informant interview guide
- 3 An observation checklist

Use one project objective or evaluation question.

Part 1 — Define the Information Need

Each group should identify:

- Project result
- Indicator or evaluation question
- Intended users
- Data required
- Respondent group
- Ethical considerations

Part 2 — Questionnaire

Develop

- Introduction and consent
- Screening questions
- 10–15 main questions
- Response options
- Skip instructions
- Closing section

Check for

- Leading questions
- Double-barrelled questions
- Ambiguous wording
- Unclear recall periods

Part 3 — Interview Guide

Develop:

- Interview purpose
- Respondent type
- Introduction and consent
- Five to eight main questions
- Probes
- Closing recommendations question
- Confidentiality notes

Part 4 — Observation Checklist

Develop:

- Observation objective
- Location
- Criteria
- Response options
- Definitions
- Comment fields
- Evidence requirements
- Observer instructions

Part 5 — Pretesting

Groups exchange tools and conduct mock data collection. Review:

- Clarity
- Flow
- Duration
- Missing options
- Sensitivity
- Translation needs
- Instructions
- Recording accuracy

Tool Quality Checklist

Confirm that:

- ✓ Questions support the information need
- ✓ Language is clear
- ✓ Each question measures one issue
- ✓ Response options are appropriate
- ✓ Recall periods are defined
- ✓ Sensitive questions are justified
- ✓ Consent is included
- ✓ Skip patterns work
- ✓ Instructions are clear
- ✓ The tool has been pretested

Field Readiness Checklist

Before deployment, confirm:

- ✓ Final tool approved
- ✓ Translation verified
- ✓ Digital form tested
- ✓ Sample available
- ✓ Enumerators trained
- ✓ Supervisors assigned
- ✓ Devices prepared
- ✓ Referral pathways confirmed
- ✓ Security reviewed
- ✓ Daily quality checks planned
- ✓ Data-storage procedures established

Common Tool-Design Mistakes

Avoid:

- Collecting unnecessary data
- Very long questionnaires
- Technical language
- Missing response options
- Leading questions
- Unclear definitions
- Poor sequencing
- No consent script
- Weak translation
- No pretesting

Common Fieldwork Mistakes

Avoid:

- Weak enumerator training
- Ignoring sampling procedures
- Interviewing without privacy
- Inconsistent probing
- Delayed form review
- Poor device security
- Informal changes to tools
- No daily debrief
- Failure to document refusals
- Weak supervision

Common Method-Selection Mistakes

Avoid:

- Using surveys for every question
- Using FGDs for confidential issues
- Interviewing only leaders
- Relying only on self-report
- Ignoring existing records
- Using qualitative data to estimate prevalence
- Using quantitative data without explanation
- Failing to triangulate important findings

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learned that:

- Quantitative data measure magnitude and frequency.
- Qualitative data explain meaning, experience and context.
- Primary data are collected directly; secondary data already exist.
- Data sources and respondents must be appropriate.
- Questionnaires support standardized data collection.
- KIIs and FGDs explore perspectives and explanations.
- Observation verifies conditions and practices.
- Record review uses existing documentation.
- Participatory methods strengthen ownership and understanding.
- Digital systems improve efficiency but create new risks.
- Questions must be clear, neutral and focused.
- Tools require translation, contextualization and pretesting.
- Enumerator training and supervision are essential to quality.

Knowledge Check

Review questions:

1. What is the difference between quantitative and qualitative data?
 2. How do primary and secondary data differ?
 3. When should a KII be used?
 4. When is an FGD inappropriate?
 5. What is triangulation?
1. What is a leading question?
 2. What is a double-barrelled question?
 3. Why should tools be pretested?
 4. What should enumerator training include?
 5. What is the role of field supervision?

Action Planning

Each participant should identify:

- One tool requiring revision
- One question-design problem
- One missing translation review
- One enumerator-training gap
- One field-supervision weakness
- One corrective action
- Responsible person
- Completion date

Thank You

Questions and Discussion

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High-quality data collection begins with a clear information need, an appropriate method, a well-designed tool and respectful engagement with every participant.