

Listening to Africa

How to do a mobile phone survey – 4 Steps

Step 1: Baseline survey

Mobile phone surveys start with a face-to-face baseline household survey during which respondents are identified and core household and respondent characteristics are collected. A stand-alone new baseline survey can be implemented, but an existing representative household survey can also be used provided it is of good quality and was recently completed. The latter may seem a good way to reduce cost, but revisiting the household would still be required, to select the respondents, to obtain permission for participation in the mobile survey, to distribute mobile phones and solar chargers.

Step 2: Mobile survey questionnaires

A mobile phone interview starts with respondent verification questions (e.g. name, age, gender). 1,500 - 2,000 respondents are called every month for about 20 minutes, with the questions changing every month. Respondents who successfully complete the interview are 'remunerated' with phone credit transferred directly to their mobile phone. Once the baseline has been completed, respondents start receiving calls from the Call Center every month for additional questions. The Call Center can be run either independently or through a think tank or at a statistical office. Call Center enumerators need to be very well trained and closely supervised to assure data quality.

Step 3: Rapid Analysis

Once the data has been collected, data cleaning and quality checks are carried out and the data are analyzed. The analysis combines data from the mobile phone survey with data collected in the baseline survey or in earlier mobile survey rounds, to allow reporting on an array of issues. Since questionnaires are short, analysis can be completed in a short period of time.

Step 4: Dissemination

Following data analysis, monthly reports are prepared, released during press conferences, and possibly published by local newspapers. Anonymized data will be made publicly available through various channels. Collaborating agencies would have to commit to open data principles.