

QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES

Quality control measures for the Enterprise Baseline Survey are undertaken at different levels of the survey. The levels include:

1. Publicity of the survey;
2. Recruitment of survey personnel;
3. Designing of Data Collection Instruments
4. Development of Fieldwork Training Manual
5. Training of survey personnel;
6. Pre-test and pilot survey;
7. Data collection
8. Management of non-response and;
9. Data processing.

1. Publicity of the Survey

It is vital that the survey launch is preceded by wide publicity to secure full support of the local business community so that owners and managers of enterprises will co-operate and provide the required information. The Institute of Southern African Studies (ISAS) has already sent out letters of awareness and made follow-up calls to District Administrators' (DAs) offices, Chinese Embassy and organizations of the business community. The awareness campaign and pre-notification process will continue throughout the data collection period.

The letters of awareness will be followed up by physical visits and contacts with the Districts Administrators and local council secretaries. Follow-up visits will be done by district supervisors before research assistants get to the field to collect data. The selected enterprises will also be contacted to make them aware that there will be research assistants coming to interview them about their operations, and to set appointments for interviews.

2. Recruitment of Survey Personnel

The quality of the data from the survey depends directly on the capabilities of supervisors and research assistants, which in turn depends on their level of education, work experience and level of training. Thus recruitment of qualified and competent supervisors, research assistants and data clerks is one of the key pre-requisites in a survey; for ensuring quality of data and survey results. ISAS has already recruited graduates in various fields, such as Statistics, Business Administration, Economics, Demography, Sociology, Public Administration, Geography and other relevant fields, as supervisors, research assistants and data clerks. Preference was given to graduates with some formal training background in research methodology and/or experience in data collection or data capturing.

Research assistants with a working knowledge of Chinese and isi-Xhosa (Thembu) have been recruited to collect data from enterprises owned and/or managed by people of Xhosa and Chinese descent. This is done to circumvent language barrier between interviewers and respondents who do not understand Sesotho and/or English, which can lead to loss of or poor quality data.

3. Development of Data Collection Instruments

The use of properly designed survey instruments that addresses information needs and expectations of the Client is fundamental to the collection of quality data. In order to address diversity in the operations of manufacturing and retail/services enterprises, the survey instruments entail the core questionnaire plus manufacturing and retail/services modules. The manufacturing module is tailored for enterprises that manufacture goods, while the retail/services module is tailored for enterprises that sell goods and services. Questions in the questionnaire and modules are worded in such a way that they are easily understood by interviewees and seek information that responds to the needs of the Client. The survey instruments are translated into Sesotho to reduce bias that may be induced by research assistants when they interpret same questions differently, as well as to save time that can be taken to translate questions during interviews.

4. Development of Fieldwork Training Manual

The training manual, which will be used by supervisors and research assistants for reference during data collection, has already been developed and used during the training of area supervisors, research assistants and data clerks. The manual gives guidance to area supervisors and research assistants on what is expected of them during data collection and on issues that are of importance in collecting quality data. These include duties of area supervisors and research assistants, code of conduct, the relationship between research assistants and supervisors, research ethics, important considerations when conducting interviews, and fundamentals of conducting interviews.

The manual also explains the structure of the survey questionnaire, types of questions and how to record responses. \ In addition it explains how to navigate through the questionnaire, gives instructions and explanations that make area supervisors and research assistants have a better understanding of questions in the survey.

5. Training of Survey Personnel

Training of supervisors, research assistants and data clerks, on the data collection process, good practices in interviewing, survey instruments and the data entry form, is imperative to ensure quality data. All survey personnel will be trained and provided with manuals describing what is expected of them in their respective tasks of data collection and capturing. The aim of the training is to ensure that all research assistants understand the survey instruments thoroughly, and ask questions in a manner that will convey the same message to respondents. Data collection personnel were trained on procedures of collecting data, interview techniques, proper recording of responses, and management of risks and challenges that may emerge during data collection. The training was conducted by a team of ISAS's principal researchers.

The training included, but was not limited to, the following;

- (i) description of the Baseline Enterprise Survey to the research assistants and potential supervisors;
- (ii) description of the survey instruments; and

- (iii) role play - where trainees used questionnaires to rehearse interviews by interviewing each other.

6. Pre- test and Pilot Survey

One way of ensuring quality of data, to be collected during the main survey, is to pre-test survey instruments in the field and to undertake a pilot survey. The core questionnaire plus manufacturing and retail/services modules have been pre-tested in the field on few enterprises by ISAS's principal researchers. The pre-test helped to establish whether questions are properly worded, clear enough to be easily understood by respondents and to find out if the sequence of questions is logical. The pilot survey was conducted in the Berea and Qachas'Nek districts by twenty eight (28) field personnel comprising sixteen (16) potential supervisors and twelve (12) research assistants. The was helpful in assessing fieldwork logistics, survey instruments and competence of research assistants in administering questionnaires.. The pilot survey gave an idea of the response rate, and most importantly it helped to detect biases due to interviewers so that they can be corrected at this stage before the commencement of the main data collection.

It was agreed that the first day of interviews be used by research assistants to conduct interviews on another set of enterprises not included in the sample, for practice purposes. This will give all research assistants the requisite experience of conducting interviews with enterprises prior to the commencement of data collection for the main survey. The experience will help them have a better understanding of the questionnaires and get used to conducting interviews.

7. Data Collection

As part of the field quality control program, a follow-up system where districts supervisors will move around designated districts to supervise area supervisors and research assistants will be put in place. They will monitor progress in fieldwork and take remedial action where necessary. This will involve supervisors moving around during interviews to observe research assistants when they conduct interviews, particularly on the first two days of data collection. Observing research assistants during early stages of interviews will help supervisors to pick out errors and misconceptions, which may not be detected through editing,. This is essential since it is common for a filled questionnaire to be technically free of errors despite the fact that research assistants may have asked a number of questions inaccurately. The observation of interviews will also help supervisors check if research assistants are interviewing the selected enterprises. Supervisors will then discuss the identified errors and misconceptions with research assistants at the end of every interview day so that they can be corrected at the early stage of data collection. Post-checking or re-interviews, will be undertaken where district supervisors will sub-sample interviewed enterprises and interview them again to check inconsistencies or irregularities and biases that may arise due to research assistants interpreting same questions differently. Identified irregularities will be brought to the attention of the responsible research assistant for correction. Principal researchers will design fieldwork control sheets to be filled by area supervisors at the end of every interview day. Each control sheet will be used to record interviewed enterprises and non-responses. It will show enterprises that fall under partial and full non-response categories.

Completed questionnaires will go through different levels of quality checks by research assistants, area supervisors, district supervisors and data clerks. At the end of every working day of data collection period, research assistants will go through filled questionnaires to check for missing information, inconsistencies, and that markings and/or handwriting are legible. This will help the research assistants to make corrections while they are in the vicinity of interviewed enterprises. On the following day, area supervisors and research assistants will go through filled questionnaires together after the research assistants have checked the questionnaires and are satisfied that they are filled correctly. Thereafter, area supervisors will collect filled questionnaires from research assistants and check them on their own, to ensure that questionnaires are filled out in accordance with instructions, and responses are legible, clear and consistent, before they are collected for data capturing. If supervisors discover questionnaires with missing information or they are not happy with the way some of the responses have been recorded, such questionnaires will be returned immediately to research assistants for correction.

8. Management of Non-response

Non-responses emanating from refusals and absence of respondents from the premises of enterprises during the survey periods can compromise completeness and quality of data. The rate of non-response resulting from refusals will be reduced by, training of interviewers on data collection procedures, which includes guarantees of anonymity of enterprises to ensure confidentiality, motivation of respondents to co-operate, arousal of respondents' interest with appealing opening remarks and questions. Area supervisors will conduct call backs where research assistants fail to convince respondents to co-operate and respond to the survey questions. Callbacks will also be used for cases where respondents were away from the premises of enterprises in the first attempt of an interview.

9. Data Processing

An information technology (IT) specialist, together with a statistician, will design a data entry form with validation checks for capturing data. The data form will be designed using Microsoft Visual Studio 2008, which will result in MySQL database. Data clerks will enter and verify the correctness and completeness of the captured data. The data will be verified using the verification system, where an entry or a record of an enterprise will be retrieved and checked against the information of the enterprise on a corresponding questionnaire. The system will help in reducing incidences of key-in errors. The resultant MySQL database will be cleaned and converted to SPSS as per MCA-Lesotho requirement.

In the case where data clerks fail to make sense of the recorded responses during data capturing, or data entry programs detect errors, the problematic questionnaires will be returned to area supervisors who will liaise with research assistants for clarification and/or correction.

The designed data entry form will be tested using the data obtained from the pilot survey. This will help in assessing the accuracy and precision of the data entry form, verification system and data entry statistical software. In addition the testing of the data entry form will assist to detect irregularities and discrepancies within the system of capturing and storing data.