DATA COLLECTION GUIDELINES 2022

This brief discusses principles that can be employed to ensure that your data collection is an appropriate high-yielding process. There is value in reflecting and referring to these principles regularly to avoid costly mistakes. The principles are divided into five thematic areas, and acronymised as '**SCRAP**'.

SIMPLICITY & CLARITY
Before collecting data, be clear about the process in its entirety and ensure you take a simplistic approach in order to mainstream operations.

RELEVENCE
Less is more. Only collect data that is relevant to the specific topic.

ACCURACY
Ensure integrity of the data being collected through systematic processes.

PREDICTABILITY
Weigh the implications of each step to review your practical capacity based on existing M&E processes in the organisation.

Important!

Data collection is a 'process' and not an 'event'. Before collecting data it is essential that one understands the process in its entirety.

Simplicity & Clarity

Consider the following key questions:

- What are you gathering and why is the information needed?
- When will the information be recorded, updated and used?
- Who will access and use the information once collected?
- How will the information be analysed and used?

Essentially, regardless of the phase or stage one joins the data collection or processing conversation, they should be able follow all processes with ease.

Graphs are great in making data easier to understand.

Accuracy

Data analysis is only as good as the quality of data obtained during the data collection process. Consider the following:

- Have precise definitions of gathered information and the appropriate method of collection.
- Use tools to measure precisely what they are intended to measure to ensure validity.
- Use the same tools consistently throughout the data collection process to ensure reliability of results.

Remember that data collection is a scientific procedure and, therefore, ought to be conducted **systematically** and **methodically**.

Relevence

It is important to collect **only** the data that is relevant to the specific topic, issue or impact the organisation seeks to achieve. Collecting data on a wide range of variables often leads to the collection of data that never gets used.

It is equally important to collectively review and track your M&E systems and processes regularly to ensure relevant data is being collected and used. **If it's not used, stop collecting it.**

Predictability

Some key questions to consider:

- Do I/we have the access and appropriate permissions for collection and use?
- Do I/we have the required financial resources to engage in the data collection?
- Is there organisational buy-in and support to carry out data collection?
- Are roles and responsibilities clear?
- Who is available to capture, monitor and process incoming data?

Conclusion

There is the temptation to over-complicate M&E and data collection. The reality is most of the activities can be designed and facilitated by non-experts. If well-planned and coordinated, data collection can be a profitable and effective element of an organisation's operations.

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