

Collecting social data: Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic

Agenda

Ayesha Ismail and Tamika Fellows, Genesis Analytics

Client exit interviews across seventeen countries in the time of COVID-19: What lessons did we learn?

Thursday, 22 October 2020

10:00-12:00

Solly Molayi and Niel Roux, Statistics South Africa (StatsSA)

Between the devil and the deep blue sea: navigating data collection in a time of uncertainty

Prof Robert Mattes, University of Strathclyde and Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer and the Challenges of Covid to Cross Continental Research in Africa

Dr Benjamin Roberts, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

The South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)

Dr Julia de Kadt, Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

The GCRO's Quality of Life (QoL) survey

Reflection:

*What are we compromising
and what are we gaining?*

Ayesha Ismail and Tamika Fellows, Genesis Analytics

- **Julia:**

- Any tips on what you'd suggest including in the timeline contingency plan & risk mitigation strategy? **We believe it's important to do a risk assessment and to plot possible scenarios on some sort of matrix, which would then help you to prioritise with different scenarios. This will then help develop a response plan according to each scenario and triggers what would need to happen for a contingency plan.**
- Thoughts around what you might retain in the longer term? I've been wondering whether we might want to hold onto self-screening and masking in the longer run...

- **Tara:**

- Can you share any lessons about managing the relationships among project implementing partners - funders (UK Govt), implementation lead (IPPF), study lead and field org and local field agencies? **What we found working well was releasing and understanding what the situation was in each of the countries. We did this by working closely with the members/ associations that were delivering the services and well as our in field country partners who were conducting the survey. So understanding everything as it is and documenting that information really helped us manage our relationships with our partners. Also, what we did was having daily updates on field work, and highlighting any challenges experienced in field and exploring how this could be addressed. So managing communications at all levels is key.**
- Please also talk about how the risk contingency plan works across different partners in the study, since risks differ for orgs fulfilling different functions in the overall study. **From our perspective, we think as a partner that is responsible for the overall success of the project, we thought it would be good for us to develop our own risks mitigation strategies from the onset and to have an overall strategy which can then be fed down to the country's specific field work team who are responsible for conducting the study and then they could adopt the country's strategy. This should be communicated with us to understand what affect field work in the group and what affect us.**

Solly Molayi and Niel Roux, Statistics South Africa (StatsSA)

• Tara:

- Solly, please talk about the sampling frame you used for the CATI numbers. **What we did was going back to our data and looked at the dwelling units that provided us with telephone numbers, and that's how we conducted our surveys for the 2020 programme. Hence, as I said during the presentation that; this was one of the challenges we faced when we were conducting our surveys this year.**
- The Feb 2021 pilot is for the census? **Yes, February 2021 is for the census pilot and the aim would be to test CAWI and CATI because these are the only two data collection instruments we haven't tested.**
- Please say something about the specific challenges for a census, since need ways to know coverage of whole population. **In terms of the specific challenges for census, it would be worth noting that censuses experience the similar challenges experienced with surveys. One of the main challenge though is covering the whole country, and the processes followed to make this a reality. That's why we work closely with our stakeholders to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that all areas in the country are covered.**
- Have you explored any other sources of phone numbers, such as through Telecoms companies? **Yes, we do have a group working with all these Telecoms companies.**
- Is there a parallel process in StatsSA about coordinating and harvesting various forms of administrative data in place of or to complement survey data (like in some other countries)? **We wanted to conduct a parallel run, but unfortunately, we couldn't due to costs and budget constraints.**

• Julia:

- Do you know whether Census 2021 timelines are likely to shift at all? **For now, we don't think that we'll shift Census 2021 timelines due to financial implications, but we are hoping that we'll be able to conduct it from October 2021.**
- Would also love to know your thoughts about variable implications for different surveys - especially trying to do longer ones using CAWI/CATI. **We are currently trying to work on writing a concept document because we know there will be a little bit of challenge in terms of using a sort of a mixed mode. So, I think for now; I will rather say that we will share what our views are in terms of using CAWI and CATI.**

Prof Robert Mattes, University of Strathclyde and Afrobarometer

- **Julia:**

- Do you have any sense of timelines around re-entering the field yet? From our last Board meeting, we had agreed to resume with the face-to-face interviews in Mauritius in the next month or so. So, our hope is, in the next 6 months we'd be able to complete the remaining 17/18 countries.
- Have you dropped any content to accommodate COVID content? There will be a need to drop a few because the questionnaire is pretty full, and adding the COVID content would make it even longer to complete. There are a few questions from our initial questionnaire that we saw didn't work well, and there are a few more we'd need to test. We'll do some basic data analysis on these and we'll see what we can drop to accommodate the COVID content.

- **Tara:** Any thoughts on how to disentangle whether changes in responses are due to COVID context or due to COVID methods changes. The COVID context or the COVID methods changes, we'll at least try to get some data on it in Ghana where we are doing a small survey using PPE and comparing it to the same provinces' results without PPE to see if all the questions that shouldn't change a lot.

- **Benjamin:** I would be interested in any insights on IRB ethics applications in the context of COVID-19 in the cases of both WISH and AB. Were there particular demands in terms of safety protocols, etc. For us, generally the questionnaire has undergone the IRB ethics at the UCT to cover the entire network, and the national partners follow the same protocols such as seeking approval from the government.

Dr Julia de Kadt, Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

- **Tara:** Can all the presenters say something about health insurance for enumerators? or protocols around covering costs/providing support to enumerators who get ill (whether or not infected during data collections) **I think we're in a slightly different position in a few senses, especially we have contracted the GeoSpace as a service provider for fieldwork, so we don't employ any field workers directly. In terms of health protections for enumerators, unfortunately we haven't been able to provide any level of insurance and field workers are entitled to sick leave and are eligible to workman's compensation.**
- **Stanford:** Did any of the fieldworkers actually contract COVID? **No.**

Dr Benjamin Roberts, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

- **Julia:**

- How are field teams feeling now, relative to March/April? We're all trying to get back to the field for live interviews, and I think partly on this is the reflection on financial vulnerability and the mental stress at the moment, having to work during this difficult time. PPE and COVID protocols are put in place to protect both the field workers and the respondents.
- Is this a resource you'd be willing to share? (the cartoon)

- **Tara:**

- Similar to my question for the Genesis team, can you say something about managing the relationships between the project partner orgs (donors, research lead, field orgs, enumerators) in terms of negotiating cash flow, timelines, risk protocols, uncertainty. We had quite an extensive engagement with the provincial supervisors, and in many cases; most requests about advanced payments to pay field workers.
- Am also interested from all speakers about how the financial vulnerability of field workers has been managed, especially when field work had already started and then had to stop for an uncertain time. Did anyone continue paying field researchers or some other way of supporting livelihoods and families during lockdown?