Survey Implementation

Document

Pilot Protocol

Zone of Influence Survey

[Survey name]

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# Introduction

Piloting survey fieldwork is one of the most significant parts of fieldwork preparation. During the pilot, which is conducted under field conditions, Interviewers and other field staff will encounter many issues they may not see in the classroom. Piloting survey fieldwork is one of the most critical parts of fieldwork preparation. The main purpose of the pilot is to run an end-to-end test of all survey procedures under field conditions and resolve any issues that arise. Field teams carry out comprehensive fieldwork procedures so that when fieldwork begins, they have a better understanding of how fieldwork should be implemented and gain more confidence in performing their roles and responsibilities. The pilot will identify issues with fieldwork procedures, logistics, and communication. The pilot will also identify issues with the Census and Survey Processing System computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) data collection system, including data transfer and transmission. The pilot is also one of the last opportunities before data collection begins to identify any issues with questionnaire content and translations. Before reading this protocol, refer to the Survey Organization Manual in the Feed the Future ZOI Survey Methods Toolkits and other key survey documents to understand how the pilot fits into the overall survey implementation process and timeline and to understand key roles and responsibilities between the survey Contractor and local Survey Implementing Organization.

# Steps in the pilot

The pilot takes place after the main field staff trainings and before survey data collection starts, taking up to a week to complete, including traveling to the pilot locations, conducting interviews, and debriefing with the entire survey team. After the debriefing, adequate time must be allowed for adjustments to be made based on the pilot findings before fieldwork begins.

The pilot provides field practice for the Interviewers, Field Supervisors, and Quality Control and Support (QCS) team members. It also provides an opportunity for the Field Supervisors and QCS teams to assess the preparedness of the Interviewer teams in identifying households, making contact with the households, selecting eligible respondents, demonstrating familiarity with the questionnaires, problem solving any technical issues, and transmitting data.

The following steps are required to implement the pilot:

1. Select the pilot locations and determine the sample.
2. Prepare logistics and materials.
3. Implement the pilot, practicing all survey procedures.
4. Prepare feedback and debrief survey staff on problems encountered and discuss possible solutions.
5. Revise the survey instruments or procedures, as needed, based on findings from the pilot.

After the pilot has been completed, the local survey implementing organization will develop a main field staff training and pilot report in collaboration with the Contractor, which the Contractor will submit to the United States Agency for International Development for review. A template for the report is provided in the Feed the Future Zone of Influence (ZOI) Survey Methods Toolkit.[[1]](#footnote-2)

## Step 1: Select the pilot locations and determine the sample.

The pilot will be conducted under realistic field conditions, in communities in the ZOI that are not included in the survey sample. The communities should have cultural, linguistic, and livelihood characteristics that are similar to those in the sampled areas of the ZOI. It is important to conduct the pilot in areas where the languages of translated questionnaires are spoken so that the translations can be tested and Interviewers can practice carrying out interviews in all the local languages that will be used in the survey fieldwork. The pilot may be conducted in one or more locations, depending on the language requirements of the survey and the number of interviews to be conducted.

The size of the pilot sample depends on the overall survey sample and the number of field staff (Interviewers, Field Supervisors, and QCS team members) that need to have substantive participation in the pilot, as well as the length of the questionnaires and the amount of time available for the pilot. A sample of about 5 percent of the survey sample is usually sufficient to identify major problems in survey procedures and implementation. In addition, the pilot sample should be large enough to allow each Interviewer team to complete six household interviews.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Because the households chosen for inclusion in the pilot are a convenience sample, households with members eligible for multiple survey modules should be targeted—that is, women 15-49 years of age, children under 5 years of age, children under 2 years of age, and farmers of priority value chain commodities.[[3]](#footnote-4) Furthermore, households should be targeted so that at least 6-12 household interviews can be conducted in each survey language.

A typical 3-day pilot for a ZOI Survey with a sample size of 2,200 households should include 120-180 households in the pilot sample.[[4]](#footnote-5)

After the pilot dates and locations are determined, complete the Pilot Information Form (see **Annex 1.A**) and submit it to United States Agency for International Development.

## Step 2: Prepare logistics and materials.

The following preparatory activities should be completed by the local survey implementing organization as part of the pilot:

1. Plan travel logistics.
2. Prepare required materials:

* Print backup paper questionnaires in all languages.
* Print field forms and other materials for all Interviews and Field Supervisors, including the following:
  + Interviewer’s Assignment Sheets (*Interviewer’s Manual,* Appendix B)
  + Country-specific Calendar Events (*Interviewer’s Manual,* Appendix C)
  + Age and Birthdate Consistency Chart (*Interviewer’s Manual,* Appendix D)
  + Informed Consent Sheet (*Interviewer’s Manual,* Appendix E)
  + Field Supervisor’s Assignment Sheet (*Field Supervisor’s Manual,* Annex A)
  + Standard Symbols Used in Cluster Maps (*Field Supervisor’s Manual,* Annex C)
  + Interview Observation Form (*QCS Team’s Manual,* Appendix B)
  + Feedback Form for Field Supervisor Observation (*QCS Team’s Manual,* Appendix C)
  + Any pictures that will be used to aid Interviewers and respondents to identify particular objects (e.g., local brands of medicines, ready-to-use therapeutic foods, oral rehydration solution packets, methods of storing and transporting harvested crops)
* Ensure that tablets have the most recent version of the CAPI system and are charged to 100 percent battery life.

1. Distribute the required materials and equipment.

## Step 3: Implement the pilot, practicing all survey procedures.

All survey procedures described in the *Interviewer’s Manual,* *Field Supervisor’s Manual, QCS Team’s Manual,* and *In-Country Data Manager’s Manual* are to be followed during the pilot. Interviewers will administer the survey questionnaires in female or male/female pairs. To the extent possible, each Interviewer should take the lead as Interviewer A for half of the household interviews.

As part of the pilot, the following procedures for conducting interviews, implementing quality control and quality assurance, and transmitting the data should be completed:

1. Conduct the interviews.

* Field Supervisors assign households to Interviewers.
* Interviewers interview all eligible respondents in each household.
* Interviewers follow established procedures, using good interviewing techniques.
* Interviewers walk the perimeters of selected plots to collect plot area measurements from all eligible farmers (if Module 7.9 is included in the survey).

1. Implement quality control and quality assurance procedures.

* QCS teams supervise Interviewers and Field Supervisors and provide feedback.
* Interviewers transmit completed questionnaires to Field Supervisors.
* Field Supervisors review data received from Interviewers.

1. Transmit data from the field to the secure server.

* Field Supervisors transmit data from their tablets to the secure server.
* The In-Country Data Manager downloads data from the secure server to the Central Office computer and reviews the downloaded data.

It is important that all staff take notes on problems encountered throughout the pilot, especially regarding their own responsibilities. Specifically, field staff should note issues with household assignments, respondent selection, and survey procedures, as well as questionnaire and CAPI issues—including problematic wording and any lingering issues with flow or skip patterns. Issues should be logged in the Pilot Issues Log (see **Annex 1.B** for a template).

## Step 4: Prepare feedback and debrief survey staff on problems encountered and discuss possible solutions.

Following the pilot, a debriefing session will be scheduled. To ensure an effective, efficient debriefing session, all Field Supervisors must review and consolidate, by field team, all the feedback forms submitted by the Interviewers. Specific issues should be noted directly on the Pilot Issues Log, paying close attention to the following:

* Problems with the questionnaires or translations
* Problems with the CAPI system or data transmission
* Problems during the interview
  + Issues with the selection of respondents in a household
  + Lack of rapport with the respondent or respondent fatigue or reluctance
  + Household dynamics that may have influenced the interview
* Problems with logistics or transportation
* General observations about the fieldwork and interview

The debriefing session should take place in a classroom setting with survey team members and training staff, including Field Supervisors, Interviewers, QCS team members, and the In-Country Data Manager. The session should include a discussion of issues encountered and clarify any points on the questionnaires, manuals, survey procedures, CAPI system, and logistics. At the debriefing, survey staff will receive feedback on their performance and clarification on any difficulties they may have encountered or questions they may have.

All Field Supervisors must also fill out an Interview Observation Form for each interview they observe. The observation forms will be used to evaluate Interviewer performance and serve as references if re‑training becomes necessary. The Interview Observation Form is available in Appendix B of the *QCS Team’s Manual.*

## Step 5: Revise the survey instruments or procedures, as needed, based on findings from the pilot.

The survey questionnaires and CAPI data collection applications will be rigorously pretested prior to the Interviewers’ training, allowing the pilot to focus mainly on identifying practical implementation issues, including challenges encountered with logistical arrangements, such as transportation and equipment distribution, and issues with data collection procedures or data transmission. In the instance that questionnaire content needs to be revisited with field teams or specific Interviewers, a refresher training should be conducted. All concerns should be raised internally and discussed with the Contractor as necessary so appropriate corrective actions can be taken. It is critical that each issue be properly addressed before the fieldwork begins.

# Annex 1: Forms

*Note: The forms in this annex should be used and customized as needed.*

## Annex 1.A: Pilot Information Forms

There are two versions of the Pilot Information Form. Use Version 1 if the pilot will be conducted in one geographical area (e.g., the administration level 1 and 2 units are the same for all pilot locations). Use Version 2 if the pilot will be conducted in multiple locations across different administration units.

### Pilot Information Form (Version 1)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pilot Information Form** | | |
| **Survey name** |  | |
| **Survey contractor** |  | |
| **Survey implementing organization** |  | |
| **Pilot dates** | **Fieldwork:**  **Debrief:**  **Travel:**  **Total:** | |
| **Pilot location** | **[Admin level 1]:**  **[Admin level 2]:**  **Village:** | |
| **Language** | **Number of Interviewer pairs** | **Number of interviews** |
| [Language 1] |  |  |
| [Language 2] |  |  |
| [Language 3] |  |  |
| **Total** |  |  |
| **Notes and** **additional considerations** | | |

### Pilot Information Form (Version 2)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pilot Information Form** | | | | | | |
| **Survey name** |  | | | | |
| **Survey contractor** |  | | | | |
| **Survey implementing organization** |  | | | | |
| **Pilot dates** | **Fieldwork:**  **Debrief:**  **Travel:**  **Total:** | | | | |
| **Language** | **[Admin level 1]** | **[Admin level 2]** | **Village** | **Number of Interviewer pairs** | **Number of interviews** |
| [Language 1] |  |  |  |  |  |
| [Language 2] |  |  |  |  |  |
| [Language 3] |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Notes and** **additional considerations** | | | | | |

## Annex 1.B: Pilot issues log template

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **[Year] [Country] ZOI Survey Pilot Issues Log** | | | | | | | |
| **Interviewer team:** | | | | | | | |
| **Pilot location:** | | | | | | | |
| **Notes by:** | | | | | | | |
| **Type of issuea** | **QREb** | **Item number** | **Issue** | **Proposed change** | **Statusc** | **Next steps, if not complete** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

a Type of issue: Content, CAPI, Translation, or Other

b QRE (questionnaireMain (M) or parallel (P)

c Status: Complete (i.e., proposed change was approved by USAID and made)

Tentative (i.e., proposed change was made but awaiting USAID approval)

In progress (i.e., proposed change was approved by USAID but not yet made)

Text

Description automatically generated



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1. <https://agrilinks.org/post/feed-future-zoi-survey-methods> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For phase two ZOI Midline Surveys, for example, the six household interviews should comprise four main survey questionnaires and two parallel survey questionnaires. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. If additional populations are targeted in the survey, ensure that they are also included in the pilot. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. If there are 20 Interviewer pairs (10 field teams) that can each conduct 2 household interviews a day, 120 interviews can be completed over 3 days of pilot fieldwork. If there are 30 Interviewer pairs (15 field teams) that can each conduct 2 household interviews per day, 180 interviews can be completed over 3 days of pilot fieldwork. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)