Remote evaluations during COVID-19: What are common challenges and how could we cope and adapt?

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Remote evaluations during COVID-19
Managing teams

Challenges

- Stress and underperformance due to psychological or physical problems
- Remote data-collection requires more time, interaction and planning
- Sudden leave of team members with no time for replacement or re-doing that part of the data-collection
- Limited experience in remote evaluations: e.g. presenting on zoom, using new software such as Mural, MS Teams

Possible solutions

- Be a sounding board: frequent check-ins
- Allow extra time and days (budget & planning permitting) use a communication platform to exchange efficiently
- Move contract days to other team members (time/expertise/language permitting) or acknowledge limitation in report
- Invest time in coaching and dry-runs
Remote evaluations during COVID-19
Managing expectations & building trust

Challenges

- Rapidly changing context and restrictions → longer timeline, more risks and limitations
- Project rejects certain findings as “the team did not see or understand the field reality sufficiently”
- Difficulty in gaining trust through a computer screen
- Project delays and is not always able to submit latest data in time

Possible solutions

- Be transparent in Terms of Reference of consultants and evaluations (e.g. planning subject to further clearance, payment based on actual days, etc.)
- Increased consultations and more detailed debriefing
- “Visit” project area on Google street view to understand project environment / no recording on Zoom
- Clear cut-off for data-collection and scope: where do we draw the line?
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discussion

- Which challenges are you facing?
- How are you coping and adapting to this new way of working?
- What tools and actions are helping you?
- How do you ensure safety and trust during in-person or remote meetings?
- How do you conduct focus-group discussions at community level?