

## What are surveys useful for?

Surveys are used to collect information for needs' assessments, and/or for project monitoring and evaluation. A good survey provides information on what your audience really knows, does, thinks, and/or believes. A poorly developed survey can lead to incorrect or misleading information.



## What are the key steps in developing a good survey?

- 1) **Have clear goals for your survey:** What information do you need to help the project be successful?
- 2) **Collect Secondary information** (i.e., information that already exists) to help understand current issues and barriers. Such information can help identify key players, the best setting, questions and language for your survey, and may identify farmers willing to be interviewed. So to start:
  1. Review literature on the issue you want to evaluate, and
  2. Interview key players to help identify the major issues of interest and considerations of context (main problems, priorities, gender issues, etc), and potential 3-5 key questions.
- 3) **Develop the questionnaire.** Think again about the goal and review who is the audience, the timeframe you have to survey and analyze your data, how much of the farmers' time you will ask (remember they have their own priorities), and the available budget. When you start developing your questions, consider:
  1. What is the information you **really need to know**.
  2. Use simple and common (locally-used) words (avoid technical terms) to phrase your questions. Define new/uncommon concepts that are absolutely necessary to use.
  3. Be as brief as possible without losing information quality; ask fewer but well developed questions.
  4. Use direct questions and be specific.
    - i. Avoid double negatives. Ex: "Do you not find good Ag information easily?" Better to ask "How easy is it for you to find good Ag information? Hard, somewhat difficult, easy?"
    - ii. Avoid multiple part questions needing multiple answers. Ex: "Do you apply fertilizers and pesticides wearing protective clothes?" Better to ask two separate questions, for fertilizer and pesticide application, or to ask "please indicate all occasions when you wear protective clothes".
  5. For multiple-choice questions:
    - i. Always offer a middle point when rating (satisfaction, agreement with a statement, etc.). Ex: 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent; strongly agree, agree, somewhat disagree/agree, disagree, strongly disagree.
    - ii. Offer exclusive choices so that each choice does not "overlap" another choice.
    - iii. Offer a "way out". Ex: "Do you fertilize your orchard? Yes, Sometimes, No, I don't have an orchard"
    - iv. Offer "other" when applicable.
  6. Whenever possible, include an open-ended question at the end. Ex: "Are there any other comments you want to add?"
- 4) **Test the questionnaire (Does your audience understand the questions?)**
  1. Ask for a review of your questionnaire by your previously interviewed key players.
  2. Interview a couple of farmers using your questionnaire and check for clarity and understanding.
  3. Make changes as necessary.
- 5) **Select who to interview.**
  1. Completely randomized: random selection from a list of farmers.
  2. Stratification: random selection from exclusive groups. Ex: Large, medium and small-scale farmers.
  3. Snow ball: when a list of farmers is not available, start with one farmer and ask him/her to refer one or two other farmers to contact to.
- 6) **Performing the survey**
  1. Train the interviewers to ensure uniform implementation.
  2. Use local language or an interpreter if necessary.
  3. Tell those being interviewed the purpose of the survey, and ensure confidentiality of responses and personal information. Always indicate that they may choose to not be interviewed or not respond to certain questions.
  4. Be respectful of the time of those being interviewed. Choose a comfortable setting; provide water and food if necessary; provide a thank-you incentive, if appropriate.