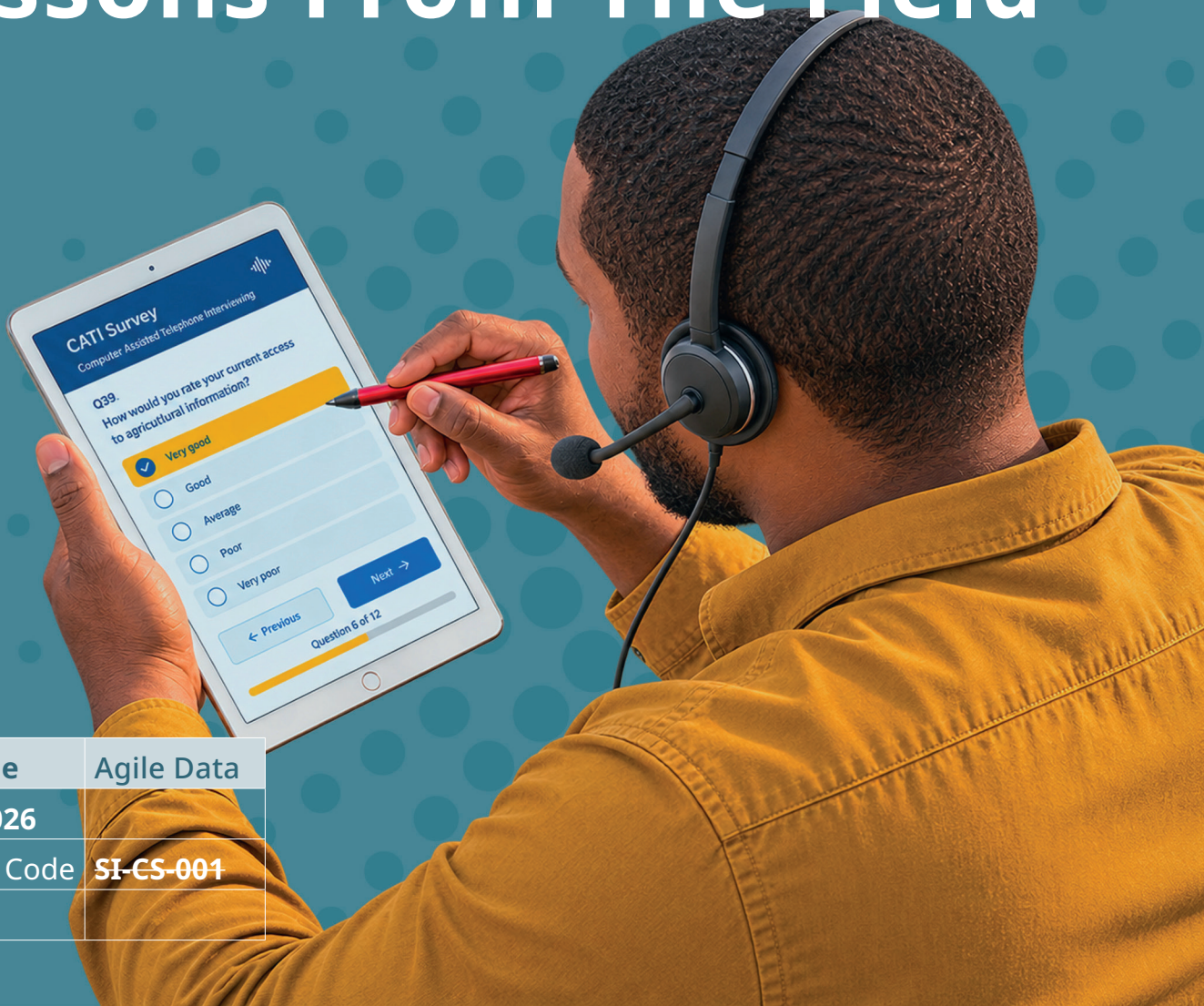
COSA Committee On Sustainability Assessment

Sustainability Intelligence

CATI Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing Survey

Lessons From The Field



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The Agile Data Approaches and Innovations for Monitoring (ADAIM) project evaluated the use of Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) technology across multiple country contexts to assess its suitability as a data collection modality and to compare its performance with Computer-Assisted in Person Interviews (CAPI) or other technologies such as Interactive Voice Responses (IVR) or App based technologies. The findings indicate that CATI offers considerable cost efficiencies and scalability relative to more traditional interviewer-administered approaches, while maintaining the validity of outcome measures. However, important challenges related to inclusivity and representativeness remain, particularly among populations with limited access to mobile phones. These considerations highlight the need to carefully assess the trade-offs between cost, data quality, response rates, and respondent coverage when selecting remote data collection methods.

Response rates to CATI surveys were influenced by several respondent characteristics, although the specific determinants varied across contexts. In Sudan, the analysis revealed significant differences in participation according to gender, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, male respondents were approximately six percentage points more likely to answer a CATI call than female respondents. Response rates were also higher among respondents residing in relatively safer areas and regions less affected by conflict. In particular, farmers in Butana exhibited a greater likelihood of participating than those in Kordofan and Sennar. Wealth was also positively associated with response rates, with wealthier respondents more likely to answer calls than poorer households. These findings suggest that gender, conflict exposure, and socioeconomic status may contribute to non-response bias in telephone-based surveys.

In India, non-response was primarily driven by operational constraints and respondent refusal. Among unsuccessful contact attempts, 45% were attributable to telephone numbers that were no longer in service, while 38% resulted from farmers declining to participate in the interview. Survey refusals were assessed to determine whether it varied according to respondent characteristics, including gender,

landholding size category, and state. The analysis found no significant differences in refusal rates by gender or farm size. However, state-level differences were observed, with farmers in Telangana significantly more likely to refuse participation than farmers in Karnataka. These results suggest that contextual factors may play a more important role than individual demographic characteristics in shaping participation in CATI surveys.

The evidence regarding the validity of measures collected through CATI is encouraging. In India, the accuracy of CATI-collected data was assessed by comparing farmers' responses on cotton area and production collected through telephone interviews (CATI) with data collected through in-person surveys (CAPI). As both datasets referred to the same farmers and the same production year (2023-2024), differences between the two measures can largely be attributed to the data collection approach.

The results indicate that respondents interviewed by telephone reported, on average, 16% more land allocated to cotton than respondents interviewed in person. Similarly, respondents reported yields that were, on average, 11% higher in the CATI interview than those reported through CAPI.

Despite these differences in magnitude, the overall patterns observed across the two survey approaches were broadly consistent, suggesting that CATI can generate valid estimates of key agricultural indicators.

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