

Sustainability Intelligence

WhatsApp Using Survey Lessons From The Field

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The Agile Data Approaches and Innovations for Monitoring (ADAIM) project explored the viability of instant messaging as a tool for monitoring and evaluation in agricultural development programs. Through a pilot implementation in Zimbabwe, ADAIM assessed WhatsApp's potential to collect timely, low-cost data directly from farmers. More specifically, it was used to measure the drivers and the barriers of farmer adoption of dual-purpose poultry within the World Poultry Foundation program.

In the first wave, the survey was sent via WhatsApp to all **24 Field Service Representatives (FSRs)**, and **12 of them completed it** for a response rate of 50%.

A second wave of WhatsApp surveys were conducted within the same project with the **255 Mother Units**, who are farmers receiving specialized training in raising chicks during their first months of life. In this case, **93 completed the survey** for a response rate of 36%.

The main challenges encountered were that overall **18%** of the farmers **received** the survey but **did not start it**, **16% refused to participate**, **8% started** the survey but **did not complete it**, and **2%** had an **incorrect phone number**. Therefore only **38% of the original sample responded to the survey**.

The pilot highlighted the importance of careful preparation before launching a WhatsApp survey. Providing the questions in farmers' preferred local languages (Shona and Ndebele) as well as English, made the survey more accessible and easier to understand. Informing farmers through local field agents also helped build awareness and trust before survey invitations were sent. In addition, a modest incentive (USD 2.50 per completed survey) was used to encourage participation.



Despite the challenges of non-response and survey completion, the pilot demonstrated that WhatsApp can generate useful programmatic insights at a fraction of the cost of traditional data collection. The survey provided actionable evidence on the drivers and barriers of farmer adoption of dual-purpose poultry, captured direct feedback from farmers, and enabled monitoring of key program outcomes such as dietary diversity, business profitability, and income inequality. These findings suggest that WhatsApp can be a valuable tool for rapid learning and adaptive program management, particularly when the objective is to track trends, gather beneficiary feedback, and inform implementation decisions in a timely and cost-effective manner.

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