Challenges and Opportunities of Using e-Data Collection in Household Nutrition Surveys

Andrew Seal
UCL Institute for Global Health
NOMAD, May 2013, Paris
(1) Survey Contexts

• In partnership with FAO, MSF-B, WFP and UNHCR, UCL has conducted nutrition surveys in a range of contexts including Angola, Algeria, Kenya (Dadaab & Kakuma refugee camps), and Somalia

• Started with e-data collection in 2011 when adopted by UNHCR, with technical support from CartONG

• Initially, we were reluctant users due to concerns re the state of technology and software development, and issues of security, scalability, and sustainability

• Some doubts still remain
(2) Challenges and advantages of e-data collection in routine management of surveys

• Challenges:
  – Limited number of IT competent people in the field and at HQ level
  – High staff turnover
  – Places additional burdens on health and nutrition staff technical and makes recruitment of fully competent people (even) more challenging
  – Increases need for external technical assistance
  – Requires programme rather than project funding!
(2) Challenges and advantages of e-data collection in routine management of surveys

• Advantages:
  – No more data entry!
  – Better data quality (probably)
  – Daily data downloading and analysis of data quality indicators allows real time feedback to survey teams and correction of errors during the survey
  – Enhanced survey team job satisfaction
(2) Use of technology to improve remote management of surveys

• Additional challenges of remote management:
  – Lack of senior managers/technical advisors in the field
  – Risk of errors, misunderstanding, reduced diligence, data manipulation and fraud
  – Increased risk of stakeholders doubting the quality of data, even if it is satisfactory
Use of technology to improve remote management of surveys

• Potential technological assistance:
  – Location verification (GPS and/or photographs)
  – Time per interview estimates and thresholds
  – Data validation at point of entry becomes even more important
  – Possibilities for real time data and geographical visualisation
Dadaab Refugee Camps, NE Kenya
Conclusion

• Lots of challenges and lots of opportunities!
• For our work, an integrated solution with survey focussed functionality for remote management is (still) required
• Longevity of solution suppliers in a very fast changing market place?
• Outside of the research world; ability of organisations to adopt, maintain, and sustain e-data collection systems?
• KISS