

ABSTRACT

Data collection continues to be an integral part of the day to day practice of Monitoring and Evaluation in agricultural research. Data quality has a direct impact on the quality of a given M&E setup. For most projects however, there are always multiple needs competing for the same resources. This translates into various important components of a given project being less than optimally resourced, M&E included.

To overcome this handicap, researchers have been employing a number of ingenious ways to collect data for M&E with the use of minimal resources. The methods employed vary, and are informed by the research objectives. The use of ICTs in data collection for M&E functions is not new. This study evaluated the suitability of using Smartphones to collect M&E data for agricultural research.

A vine multiplication project for The International Potato Center was selected as a case for this research project. The project works with multiple vine multipliers who are supplied with disease free orange fleshed sweet potato vines for multiplication. These multiplied vines are then distributed to target beneficiaries.

A prototype based on Open data Kit was developed for this study. This app had three electronic data collection forms, modelled after paper based data collection tools which the project has used over time. A usability test with real world users was conducted. Users were exposed trained on how to use the prototype and then given time to test the application and give their feedback.

From the analysis of the results from the usability tests, the users are extremely impressed with the use of a smartphone based app for M&E data collection. They are impressed by the fact that smartphones are able to collect multiple data types and store the same in a single record e.g. form text, photos, location data, etc. they were however not receptive to the using smartphones when the data being entered is a lot because of the screen size.