

Value Chain Research Methods: An Introduction



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Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, you should be able to identify:

- Methodological options (quantitative versus qualitative) for value chain research



Common Research Methods

- Review of secondary data and documents

Qualitative

- Focus group discussions
- Semi-structured, key informant surveys
- Direct observation

Quantitative

- Structured questionnaire surveys



Review of Secondary Data

- Draws on existing statistics, surveys, academic papers, studies etc.
- Cost-effective way of accessing *quantitative* and *qualitative* data
- Scope for further analysis!
- Provides an understanding of research and data gaps
- Should inform the design of primary surveys



Qualitative Methods

Used for in-depth examination of underlying meanings and patterns of relationships using unstructured or semi-structured interviewing techniques (e.g. focus group discussions, key informant interviews)

Most commonly employed methods in value chain research

essential for understanding...

- chain conduct
- chain development constraints and opportunities
- chain intervention opportunities
- chain intervention strategies



Quantitative Methods

Used for explaining phenomena through collection of numerical data through structured interviewing techniques,
which are analyzed using mathematically-based methods
(e.g. statistics, econometrics)



Quantitative versus qualitative methods

Quantitative

- ❑ Formal
- ❑ Large samples
- ❑ Resource-intensive and time consuming
- ❑ Interviewer is an enumerator

Qualitative

- ❑ Informal
- ❑ Small samples
- ❑ Flexible, in-depth probing
- ❑ Interviewer is a researcher



Qualitative and quantitative research methods complement each other!

Quantitative

Measurement of key variables, relationships and impacts

How many? How much?
What percentage? How are different variables correlated?

Qualitative

Provide meaning to quantitative data

What? Where? When?
Who? How? Why?



Rapid Appraisal of Value Chains

Secondary data

- Govt. statistics
- Studies
- Reports
- News articles
- Academic papers

Qualitative methods

- FGD w/ farmers
- SSI w/ knowledgeable observers
- SSI w/ chain participants, support service providers
- Direct observation

Quantitative methods

- SI w/ chain actors (e.g. farm gross margins, marketing margins)
- Unrepresentative samples



Duration of Rapid Value Chain Appraisals

- ❑ Rapid appraisals of value chains typically vary between 2 and 5 weeks
- ❑ Duration of these appraisals depend on a number of factors...
 - ✓ Research focus (questions and objectives)
 - ✓ Resources available
 - ✓ Geographical scope
 - ✓ Complexity of the chain



In-depth Research of Value Chains

Secondary data

- Govt. statistics
- Studies
- Reports
- News articles
- Academic papers

Qualitative methods

- FGD w/ farmers
- SSI w/ knowledgeable observers
- SSI w/ chain participants, support service providers
- FG w/ consumers
- Direct observation

Quantitative methods

- Large structured surveys of chain actors
- Price surveys
- Quantitative consumer research

