



Data for Evidence Based Decision Making

As the role of technology continues to expand around the globe, we have greater opportunities to capture data from the field and shape it into timely, accurate and multidimensional information. This includes the use of tools, such as analytics and data visualization, that simplify complex data into practical information to support planning, coordination and decision making. Our advancement in evidence-based decision making will be enabled by deep skills in responsible data management, data science, and a culture of data use. We will use our proven skills in field data collection as a basis for leveraging data through innovative analytics to improve our programs.

Why it Matters

Using data for evidence-based decision-making matters because it provides an honest rationale behind any actions that are taken on the part of CRS. For instance, you wouldn't change a program without concrete reasons why. Data provides the *why* to the *what* of decision making.

Country Examples:

- **CRS Laos** has separated 'nice to know' from 'need to know' data to improve impact. In the first and second phases of the Learning and Engaging All in Primary School (LEAPS), a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded project as part of the McGovern-Dole (MGD) International Food for Education (FFE) and Child Nutrition Program, the program stripped the monitoring and evaluation system down to just 'need-to-know'. Even then, LEAPS is estimated to collect between 5-7.5million data points over 5 years. That means strong systems are needed to properly handle large volumes of data. Power BI is used for data visualizations to identify problems, gain deeper understanding of events, and inform decision making and planning. Because the dashboards update automatically with the newest available data as it comes in from the field, the time between data collection and action is reduced. For example, real-time data visualization has sped up responses

to reported commodity damage, tracks long-term indicator progress, helps identify sites for pilot projects, and more.



- The **Mawa project in Zambia** transitioned from paper to digital data collection and was able to make programmatic changes quickly. A DiNER fair evaluation revealed that community members wanted a variety of seeds. As a result, they changed the voucher system to give recipients flexibility. The results indicated that with multiple options and flexibility 90% of participants selected beans, 80% selected vegetables, and almost all bought maize seeds. This data influences future DiNER fairs, allowing for more flexibility. They found out that men selected more diverse crops than women, despite common perceptions of the reverse. Digital data matched with barcodes automatically registered pre-recorded participant information, including location. This information was able to tell the program that certain regions were more likely to plant ground nuts or soybeans. The program was able to promote crops that were more likely to be planted according to the region and target the right audience for behavior change.
- The **Iraq country program** set up a beneficiary accountability system and dashboard to enable adaptive management to improve programming. By reflecting on the feedback and dashboard, program teams can identify trends and revise activities to increase responsiveness to communities. For example, after a distribution, if they receive a lot of negative feedback on the quality of the items being distributed, it helps them decide if they need to identify another vendor or change an item that does not meet the family's needs or expectations. Another example, is that they have received feedback on beneficiary selection criteria for various programs. Program teams used that feedback to better communicate with the community to set a clear understanding of how the criteria have applied. Direct feedback from the field improves programming and having a dashboard helps them make the complex simple and see trends that help make informed decisions.

