

Data Collection for the Philippines Secondary National Roads Development Project Evaluation

International Development Group LLC
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1. Introduction

As part of the Philippines Secondary National Roads Development Project Evaluation, IDG will conduct data collection in the Philippines which will include: Manual Traffic Count (MTC) survey, Origin-Destination (O-D) survey, Vehicle Operating Cost (VOC) survey, Road Roughness survey, Road Conditions study, Deflection study, Public Transport User (PTU) survey, Travel Time Study, and key informant interviews (KIIs). Data collection will occur sequentially over a period of twelve weeks across different locations/sections on the Samar road. This memo discusses the timeline for data collection, factors to be considered, and the IDG team's recommendation.

2. Background

The IDG team submitted the final Evaluation Design Report (EDR) to MCC in July 2020, which MCC approved in July 2020. At the start of Option Period 1, the IDG team scheduled data collection in the approved workplan for February 2021 (MTC, Road Roughness, Road Conditions survey, Travel Time Study, and VOC survey), March 2021 (O-D survey), and April 2021 (Deflection study, PTU survey, and KIIs). However, given the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic internationally and in the Philippines, as well as affiliated travel restrictions and challenges, data collection activities will be postponed to February 2022 at the earliest. IDG amended the EDR and the work plan in line with the delayed timeline of data collection, including changing the submission dates of pre-data collection deliverables such as questionnaires and manuals to be closer to the timing of data collection given the constantly evolving COVID-19 landscape.

3. Factors to Consider

- **COVID-19:** The number of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines remains high as of February 2021. Even with the use of personal protective equipment and social distancing measures, in-person data collection for this evaluation—which requires team members and data collection firms to travel to and within the Philippines and then conduct in-person interviews in vehicles and at bus stops—would present a significant risk for transmission. This risk will remain until a COVID-19 vaccination is readily available and widely distributed. COVID-19 restrictions in the Philippines such as lockdowns and travel restrictions spanning international, domestic and interurban transportation, might also have an impact on domestic and international travel on the Samar Road, the availability of data

collection firms to operate, and methods of data collection. Data collected amidst COVID-19 restrictions may not be representative of average traffic patterns and could potentially skew evaluation findings.

- ***Weather:*** The timing of data collection is critical given the high chance of typhoons in the Philippines including the Samar region. Adverse weather may affect road traffic for the MTC, O-D, and PTU surveys. Timing for engineering data collection, specifically the IRI study and deflection study is also critical because data collection cannot take place during the rain or when roads are wet. February through April present suitable weather conditions with the lowest chance of a typhoon taking place. Given the potential for inclement weather, it is difficult to measure road roughness during the rainy season from June to November.
- ***Travel Restrictions:*** All regions in the Philippines are under some level of quarantine ranging from General Community Quarantine (GCQ) to the strictest level of Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). Restrictions on intercity and interstate travel and curfews are in place and determined by the Local Government Units (LGUs)¹. For those entering the country internationally, a 14-day quarantine in a government-controlled hotel or facility and COVID-19 test are required. Northern Samar had enforced a GCQ until November 2020, the third strictest level of controls². Under GCQ, most work and public places can operate with distancing protocols, however, public transportation is operating at reduced capacity and nonessential mass gatherings are banned. Current restrictions could lead to skewed data collection given abnormal traffic conditions.

4. Recommendation.

On the basis of the above information, the IDG team will postpone data collection activities to February 2022 at the earliest. In November 2021, the IDG team will use updated information about the COVID-19 situation in the Philippines as well as information on traffic and road usage patterns to determine, through discussions with MCC, whether the data collection activities can proceed in February 2022 or should be further postponed.

To inform the data collection timeline in 2022, IDG will:

- Continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation in the Philippines and will propose any necessary changes in the data collection timeline according to its monitoring and in cooperation with MCC. On a weekly basis, IDG monitors the state of COVID-19 in the Philippines across several parameters including the number of confirmed cases, new cases, deaths, hospital occupancy rates, local and national travel restrictions, and government policy response.
- Continue to monitor local travel restrictions, curfews, and policy response in the Philippines to determine whether the traffic and road usage patterns have normalized.

¹ <https://ph.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>

² <https://www.worldaware.com/intelligence-alert-philippines-enacting-covid-19-curbs-varying-levels-nationwide-until-nov-30>

If conditions are determined to be suitable, IDG proposes to conduct the MTC, Road Roughness, Road Conditions survey, Travel Time Study, VOC survey, and a modified PTU and Origin-Destination survey in February 2022, while the Deflection Study and KIIs would be scheduled for a later date. Data collection would follow the same time pattern between February 2022 and April 2022.

By February 2022, there is a likelihood that a vaccination for COVID-19 will be readily available for public consumption. Widespread ability to get vaccinated in the Philippines may contribute to normalizing traffic and movement on the Samar road. This would facilitate the team's ability to travel and could result in increased participation of road users in the surveys, thereby leading to more robust data collection. The IDG team believes that 2022 remains in the acceptable time period after the completion of road works needed to accurately capture the economic rate of return on the Samar Road.