

Conducting Surveys in Areas of Armed Conflict

Comparative Survey Design and Implementation
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Presentation Outline

1. Background

- Definition of surveys in armed conflict
- Unique dimensions of armed conflict settings

2. Overarching principles for surveys in conflict

3. Challenges and potential solutions

- Questionnaire design and pretesting
- Interviewer recruitment and training
- Data collection

4. Ethical considerations

5. Future directions



Definition of Armed Conflict

- We define armed conflict broadly as a situation in which governmental, local or external groups resort to violent confrontation causing aggression, social disruption, political upheaval, and casualties.
- Surveys have been conducted during various stages of conflict → Our focus is “active armed conflict”
- Lacunae of empirical evidence - We therefore draw on the research literature and our experiences

Dimensions of Armed Conflict

Violence and insecurity



National Turk 2/13/13

Political dynamics



Joseph Eid/AFP/Getty Images 10/22/13

Emotional stress



Reuters 12/30/12

Compromised infrastructure



Asmaa Waguih/Reuters 10/19/12

Urgency

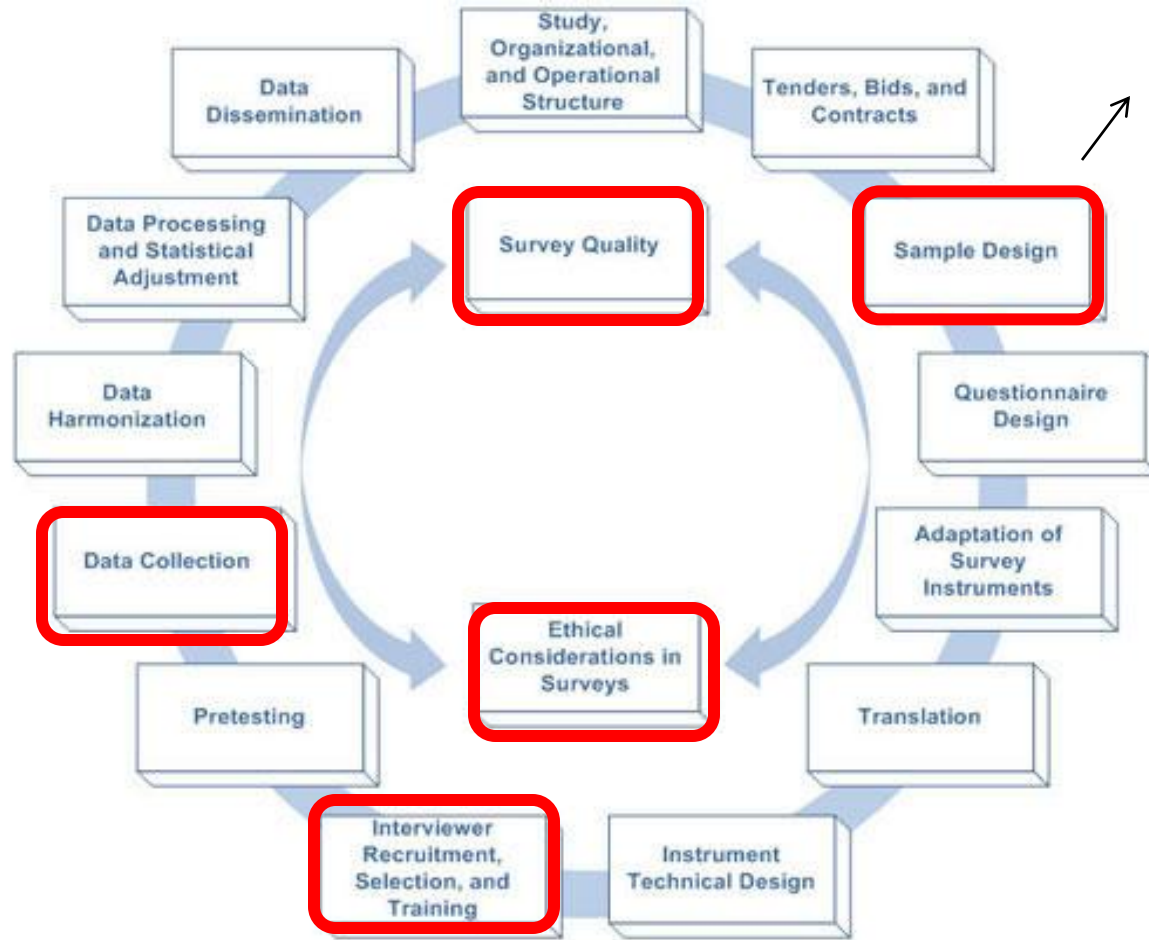


Muzaffar Salman/Reuters 2/20/13



Violence and Insecurity

- Unpredictable
- Varying types and levels of intensity
- Threat of violence

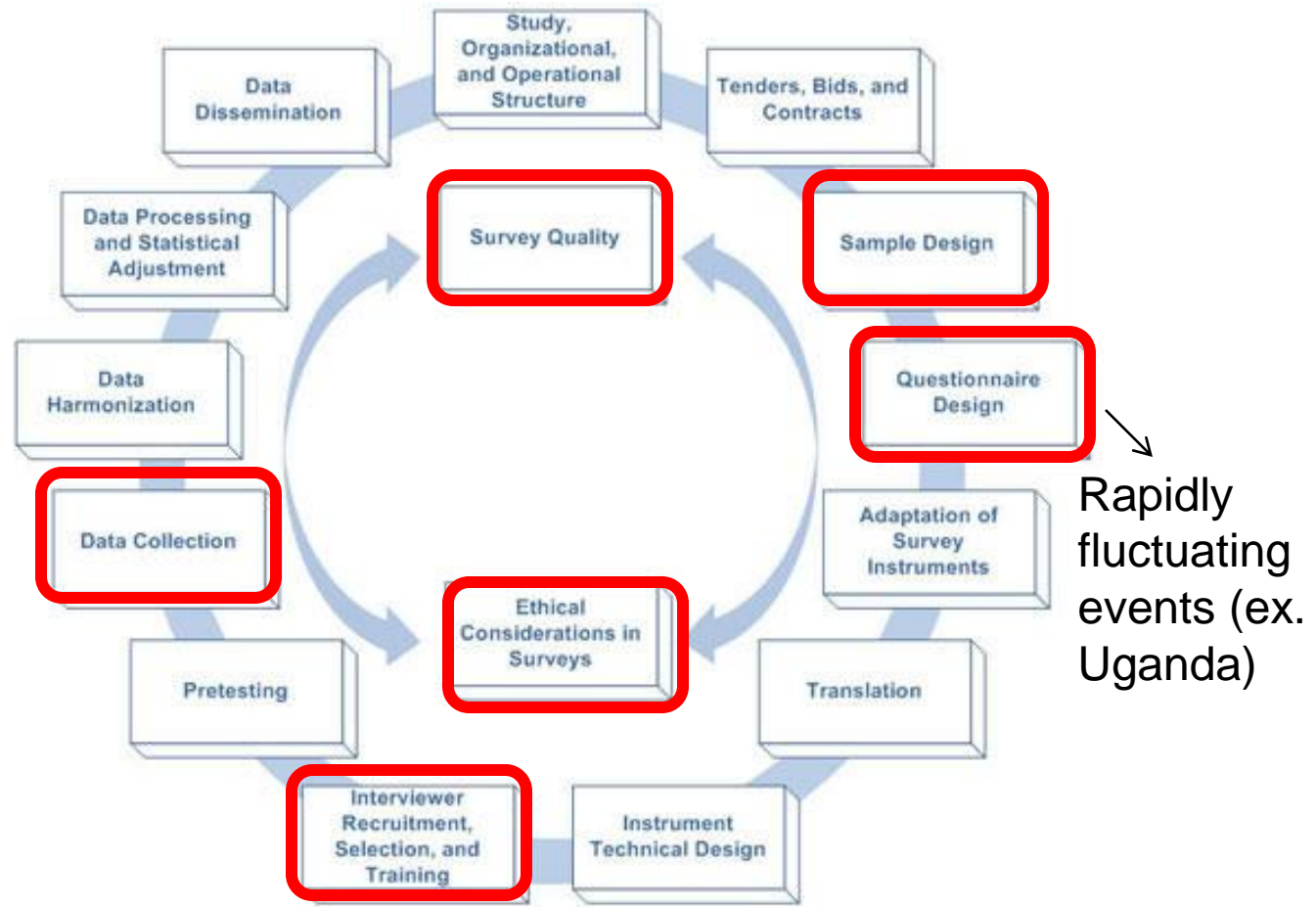


Population mobility and casualties, need to exclude areas, uncertainty



Political Dynamics

- Legal authority contested and changeable
- Break down of law and order
- Pressure and manipulation

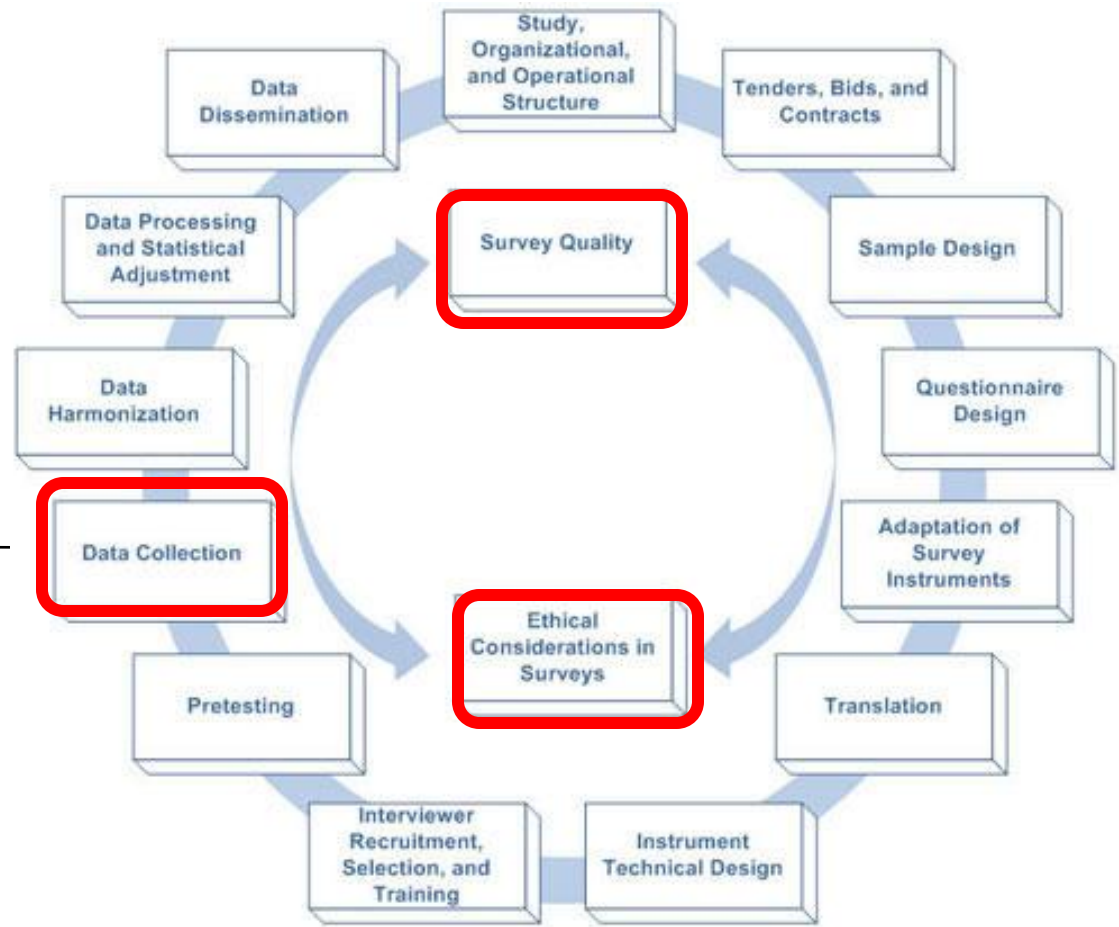




Emotional Stress

- Tense, emotionally charged atmosphere
- Preoccupations with basic needs, survival
- Traumatic events and loss

Retraumatization, stress for interviewers and the researcher ←

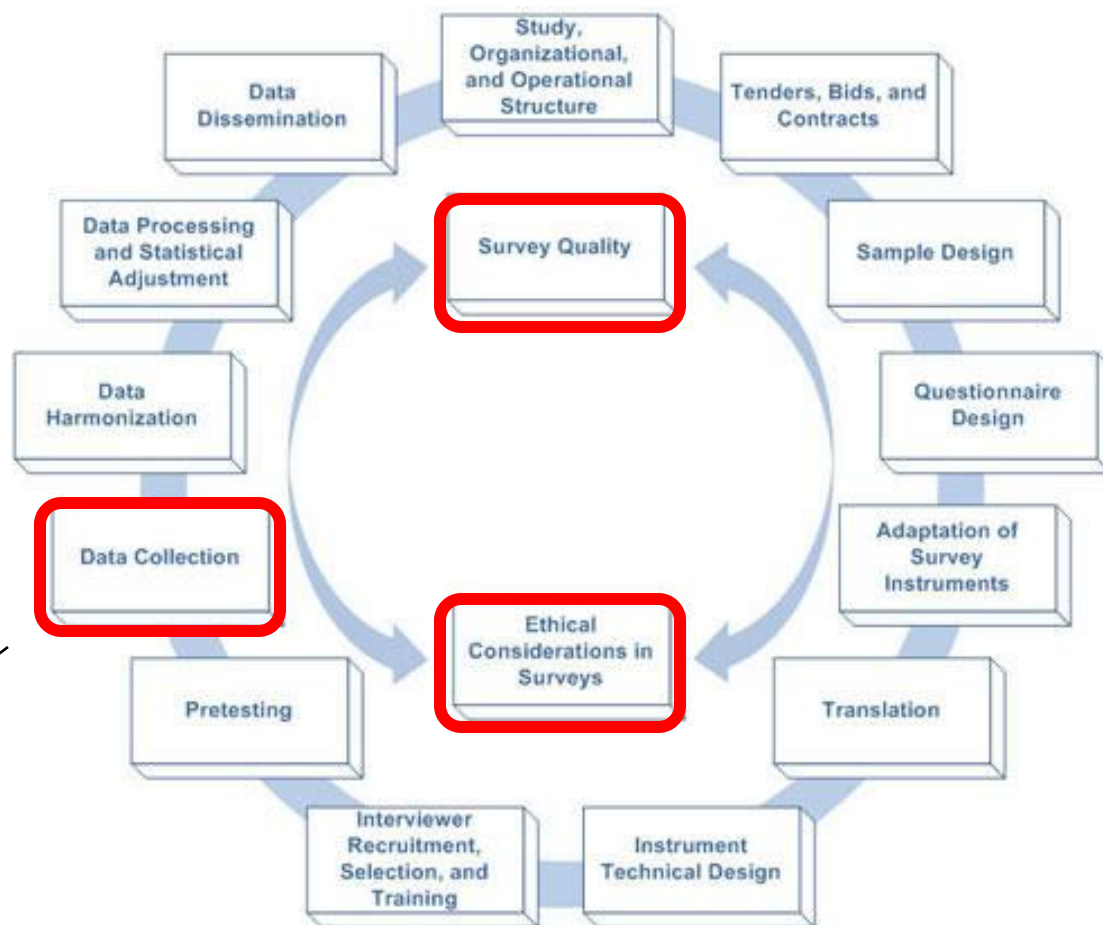




Compromised Infrastructure

- Essential infrastructure compromised or destroyed
- Limits to transportation, communication, goods and services

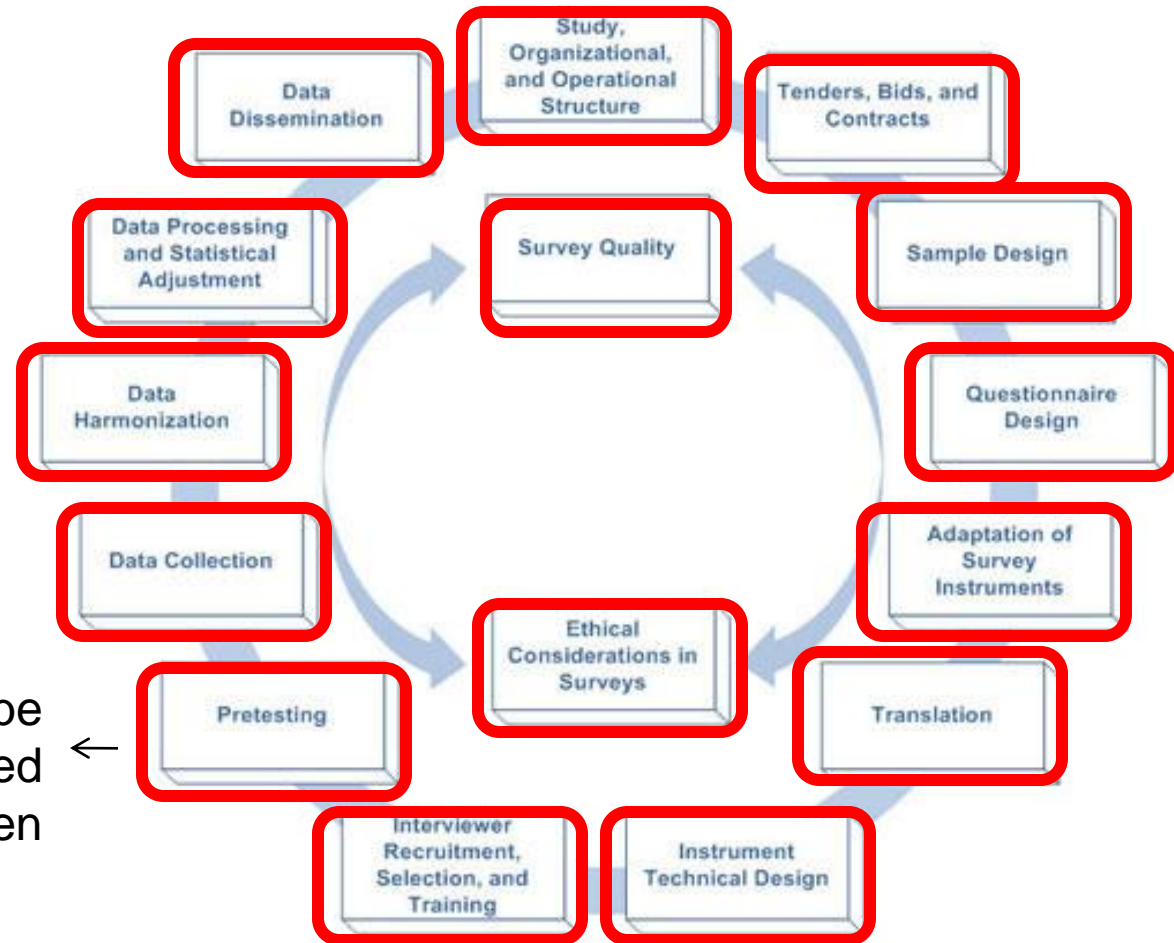
Remote areas may be difficult or impossible to reach, logistical challenges (ex. Burma)





Urgency

- Pressure for timely information and implementation
- Hard to foresee problems, plan contingencies



Pretesting can be seen as an added burden ←

Overarching Principles

- Adaptive/Flexible Design
- Mixed Methods
- Unconventional Approaches to Interviewer Recruitment and Training
- Data Collection Tailoring

Questionnaire Design and Pretesting

Overarching principles: **Adaptive/Flexible Design** and **Mixed Methods**

Dimensions	Challenge	Solutions
Urgency, Political Dynamics	Different culture/language, complexity, lack of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Translation and adaptation best practices- Use small, adaptive, sequential pretests (ex. Nepal)- Integration of qualitative methods (focus groups, in-depth interviews)
	Fluctuating events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collect supplementary data on conflict events (ex. Nepal)- Adjust questionnaire, redefine terms

Interviewer Recruitment

Overarching principle: Unconventional approaches

Dimensions	Challenge	Solutions
Violence and Insecurity, Political Dynamics	Limited human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Seek interviewers who are willing to work in difficult conditions, with local knowledge, trust and access to communities, seen as impartial- Recruit interviewers with complementary professional backgrounds (ex. Medical field, social work, midwives in Afghanistan)

Interviewer Training

Overarching principle: Unconventional approaches

Dimensions	Challenge	Solution
Violence and Insecurity, Political Dynamics	Interviewers inexperienced, may struggle with objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Highlight difference between surveys and previous work- How to process their own exposure- Special training if interviewing specific victims of violence (ex. Sierra Leone)

Data Collection (1)

Overarching principle: Data collection tailoring

Dimensions	Challenge	Solution
Violence and Insecurity, Political Dynamics, Urgency, Emotional Stress, and Compromised Infrastructure	Insecure conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adjust fieldwork operations, structure (ex. Lebanon)
	Noncontact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ask neighbors or other community members about respondent's whereabouts- Use GIS information to stratify based on mobility and sample within strata accordingly

Data Collection (2)

Overarching principle: Data collection tailoring

Dimensions	Challenge	Solution
Violence and Insecurity, Political Dynamics, Urgency, Emotional Stress, and Compromised Infrastructure	Refusals due to concerns related to conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Broadcast via neutral outlets (ex. Sierra Leone)- Be aware of likely concerns, train interviewers to address
	Lack of privacy in crowded households, shelters or camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conduct multiple interviews or conversations simultaneously (ex. Afghanistan)- Use neutral private sites such as a clinic or NGO office with a private space for interviews (if feasible)

Ethical Considerations

- Risks to respondents
 - Ensure data security and confidentiality; Limit personally identifying information; Avoid asking sensitive conflict-related information.
- Risks to interviewers and field staff
 - May need to accept higher rates of nonresponse, item missing data; Limit follow-up.
- Sensitivity of releasing results
 - Clearly address how and to whom findings will be disseminated and how they will be used.



Future Directions

Methodological Research

- Adaptive and mixed-method sample designs
 - Guidance on how to implement in conflict settings; assessing the quality of supplementary data
- Interviewer training
 - Effectiveness of unconventional training components

Future Directions

Practical Directions:

- Increase **transparency and documentation**
- Establish a **bank of tools** accessible for researchers to draw upon at the design stage of conflict area studies
- Create a **task force** of researchers and a team of people to maintain the bank of tools and provide guidance to researchers via an online forum, bulletin board, etc.

Thank you!

Queries or suggestions? -- Please contact
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