

# COVID-19 - Impacts on LFS and responses by NSOs

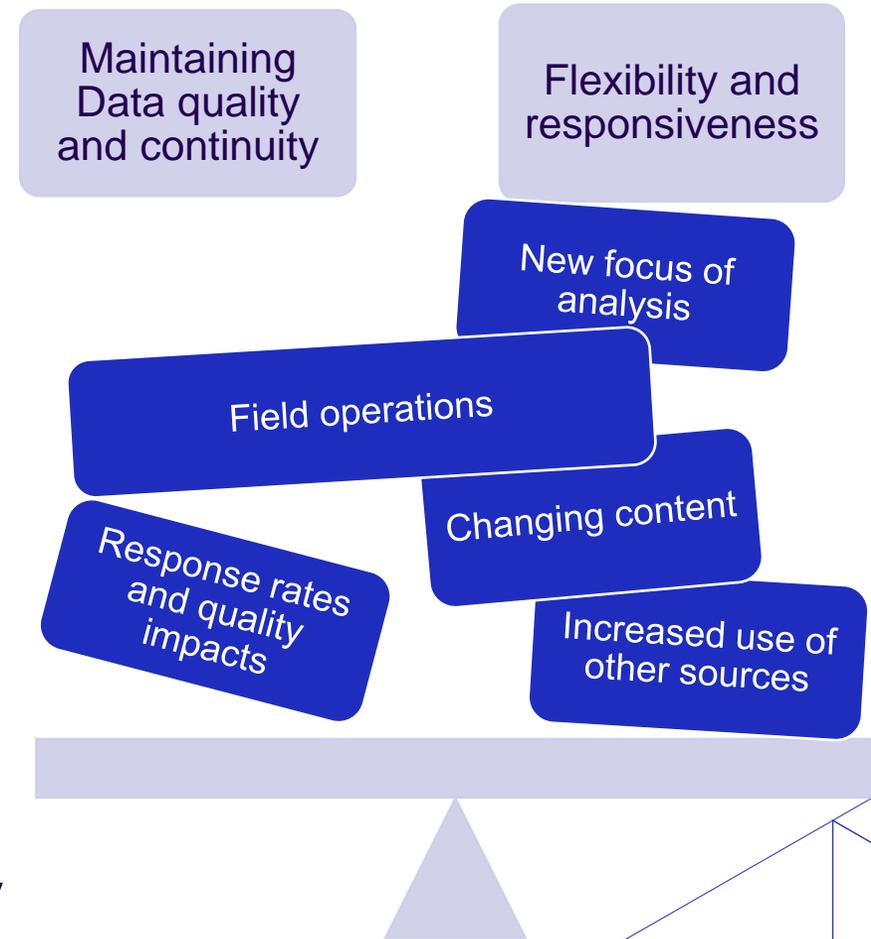
## An early overview

Kieran Walsh – Senior Statistician



## Background

- ILO has gathered information from more than 70 countries about impacts of COVID-19 on their labour market statistics operations (not data) and responses to the challenge
- Impacts and responses vary substantially with country context, systems, capacities and infrastructure
- Difficult balance to maintain between continuity, quality and responsiveness
- However, there are patterns and commonalities which can be identified



# ► Impact on field operations

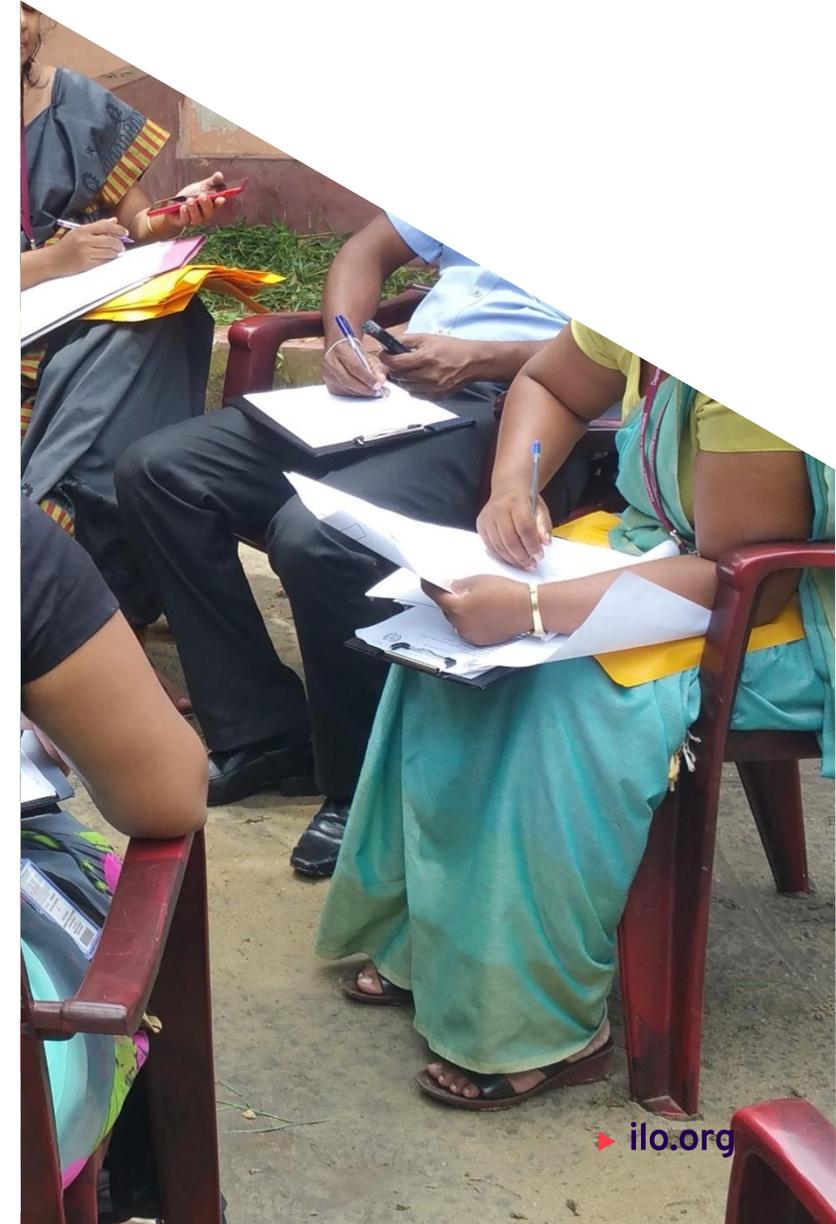


## ▶ Impact on field operations

### Mode of data collection

Mode of data collection used largely determines impact

- ▶ Face-to-face interviewing (PAPI and CAPI) suspended by most
  - ▶ 80% of respondents to an ILO survey in 2018 use these as main mode
- ▶ Some suspending collection until later date (particularly if periodic survey)
- ▶ Those with regular collection generally trying to move collection to telephone interviewing (CATI or PAPI by telephone)
- ▶ Challenge depends on existing systems, infrastructure and availability of contact details (e.g. published telephone numbers)



## ▶ Level of impact by mode

### Currently using PAPI (if continuing)

- ▶ Attempts to quickly moving to telephone interviewing with existing interviewers
- ▶ Potentially major difficulties with contact information (e.g. published telephone numbers)
- ▶ Also difficulties with recruiting households (lack of face-to-face contact, listing operations no longer possible etc)
- ▶ Systems/processes not established so many challenges such as data entry tools and processing

### Currently using CAPI

- Many of the same challenges as those with PAPI
- At least systems for transmission and processing of data exist

## ▶ **Level of impact by mode - contd**

### Currently using CATI (and CAWI for some)

- ▶ Relatively lower impact but still problems
- ▶ Restrictions still having some practical impacts but operations are able to continue
- ▶ Some fully using these modes already and report little impact (especially if interviewers working from home)
- ▶ CATI sometimes having to move location (e.g. call centres shutting) creating some logistical and technological challenges (e.g. ability to interview from home)
- ▶ Where 1<sup>st</sup> interview normally face-to-face – concerns about co-operation rates and obtaining contact information for subsequent interviews

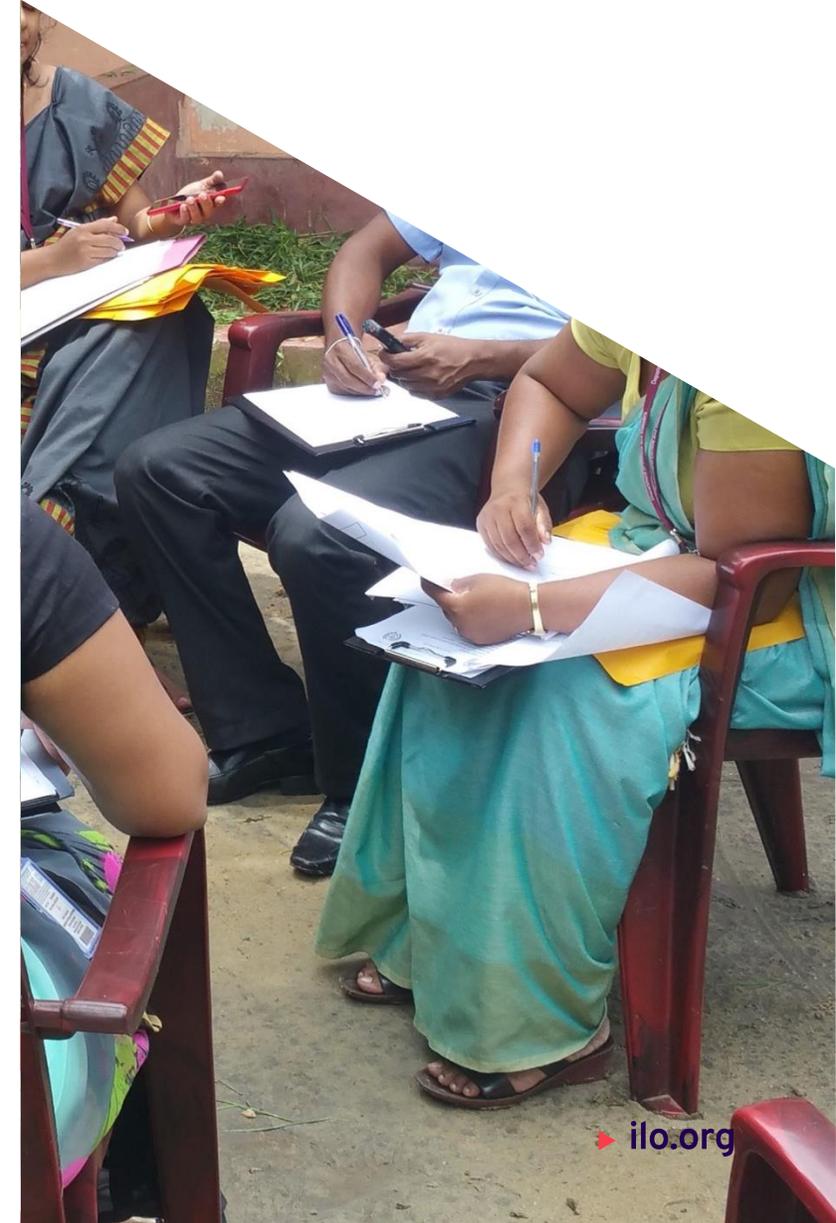
## **COMMON ISSUES FOR ALL:**

- **Major disruption in normal working arrangements, technological challenges for remote working, co-ordination challenges etc**
- **Nearly all concerned with impact on response rates**
  - **May be easier to contact some, but others may be less available (e.g. health workers, police etc.)**
- **All have to adjust working practices, and potentially retraining for interviewers if mode is changing**
- **Some attempting to implement CAWI but development required (or were already starting) and care needed on representativity etc.**

## ▶ Treatment of different situations reported by respondents

Countries asking about how to treat cases of people on temporary layoff or others impacted

- ▶ ILO developing some guidance on this
- ▶ Core definitions/standards will not change but clarifications can be provided, for example:
  - ▶ People on undetermined duration of lay off, possibly receiving benefits from a different government scheme.
  - ▶ People not seeking because of restrictions
- ▶ Additional indicators and analysis critical
- ▶ Countries also giving updated instructions and training to interviewers



## Change in data analysis – existing data

### Additional data analysis

Major concern about possible impacts of lower response rates on data analysis – loss in data quality, breaks in series etc.

- ▶ Also demands to produce data which shows labour market impacts
- ▶ Many countries supplementing existing analysis of dimensions likely to show changes or of increased interest/relevance, for example:
  - ▶ Reasons for absence (lay off), duration of absence, continued receipt of income, working arrangements, working time, reasons for changes in situation, reasons for not seeking work, informality
- ▶ Need to review existing questionnaire content and identify useful information already available which may show impacts below level of headline indicators
- ▶ E.g. Australia – February 2020 detailed Labour Force release  
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6291.0.55.001Main%20Features3Feb%202020?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6291.0.55.001&issue=Feb%202020&num=&view=>

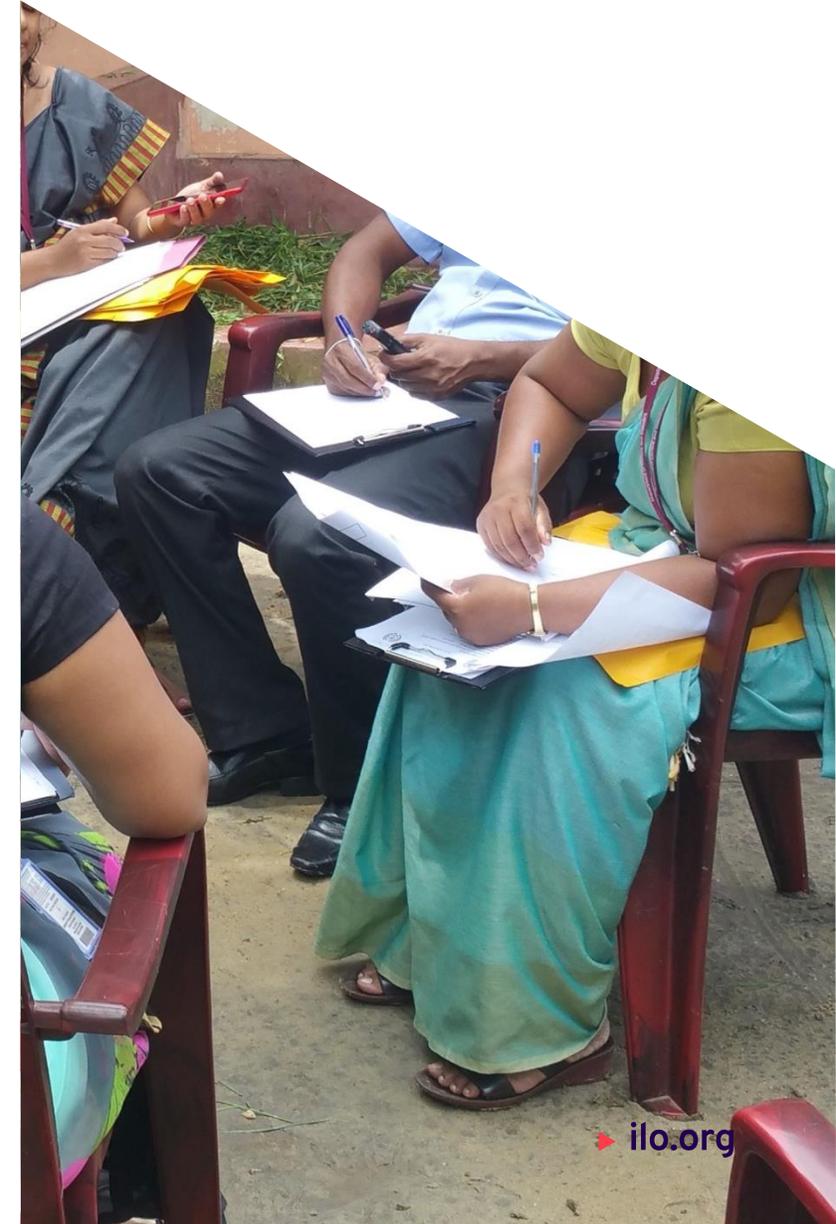


## ► Change in data analysis – possible changes in questionnaire content

Some countries planning to cut content to maintain response levels (if changing mode in particular)

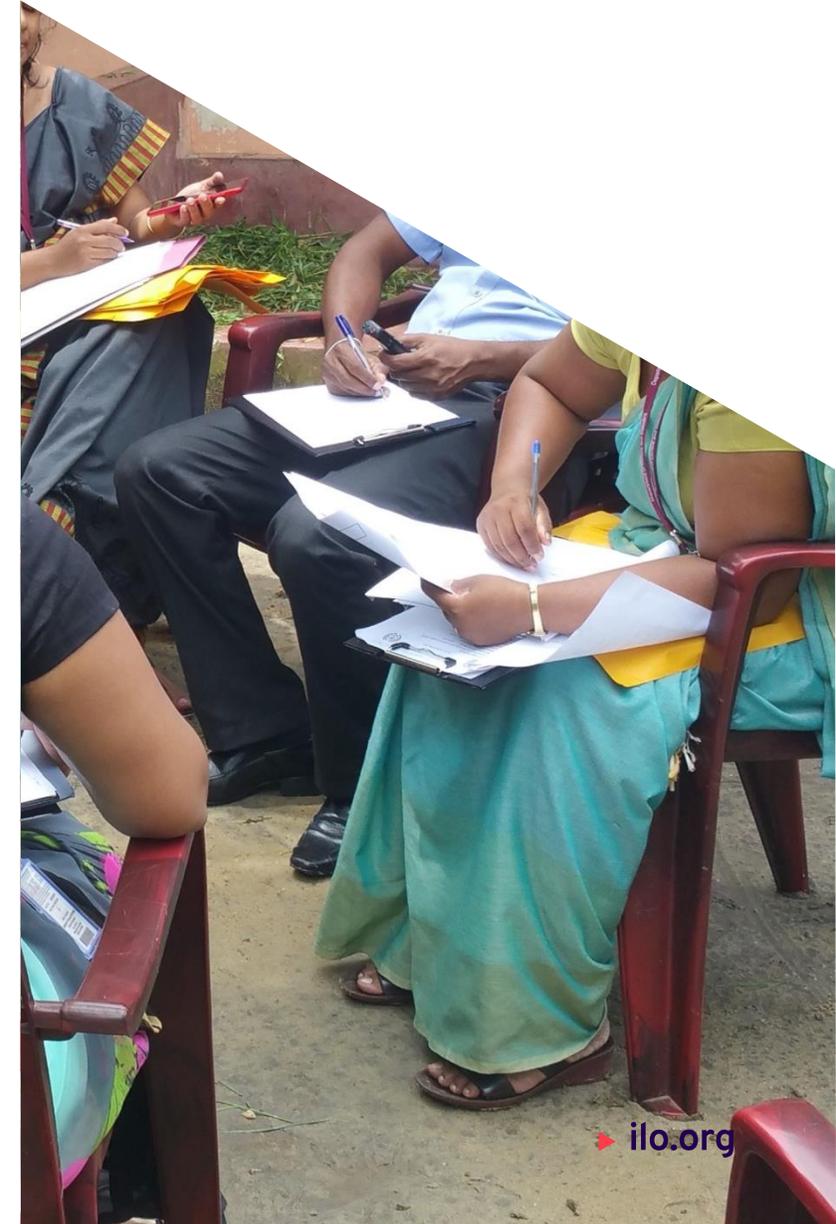
Others planning to introduce new content of relevance

- ILO developing some guidance on this
- While additional analysis of existing data will be valuable it may not directly capture COVID-19 related impacts
- Some additional questions of different types can be valuable (e.g. additional information on absences, changes in work arrangements, working time etc.)
- Also possible need for retrospective questions if interviewing disrupted – needs to be done carefully



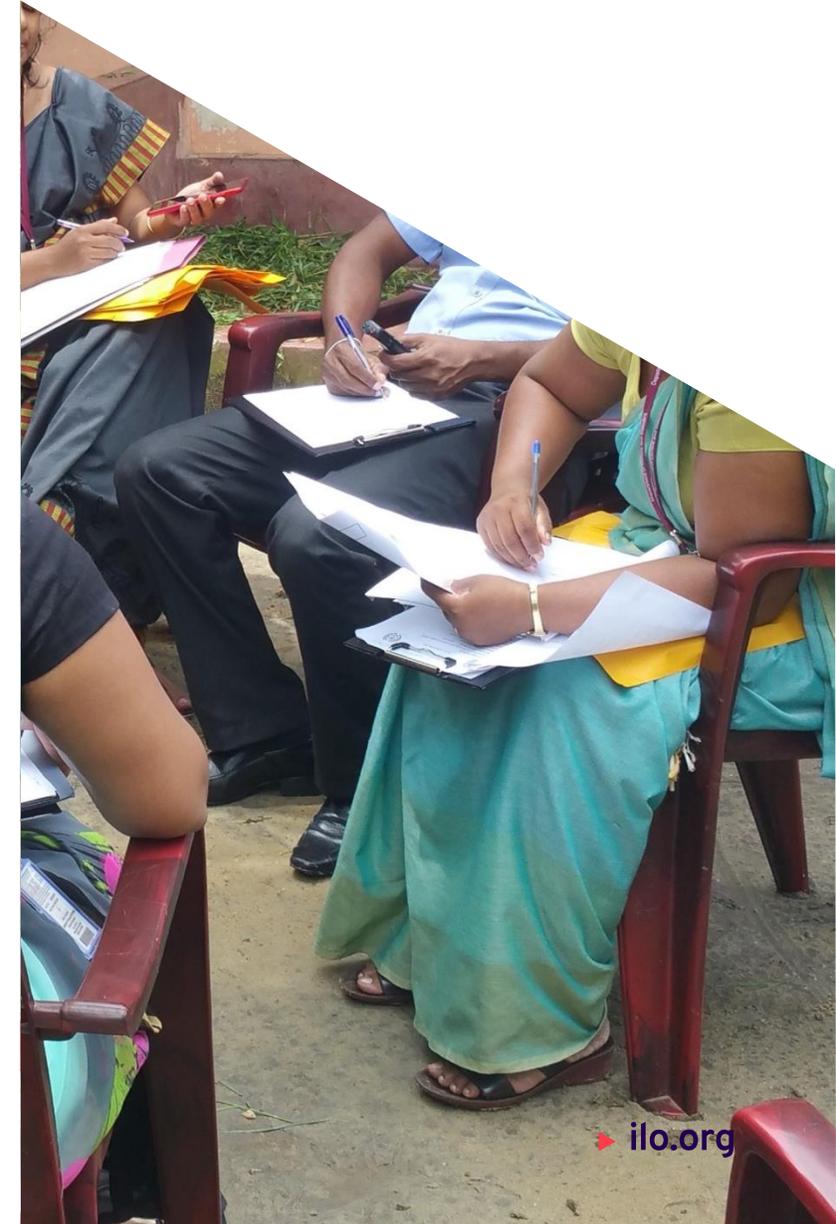
## Other issues

- ▶ Additional focus on administrative data where available and relevant
    - Any new Government schemes will be relevant to track
    - Existing admin data can be very useful but clear reporting needed on interpretation (possible differences to LFS)
    - Can be highly valuable – high frequency, detailed etc. However may be difficulty with access due to restrictions in some contexts
  - ▶ Some countries planning supplementary data collection
- EXAMPLES:**
- Parallel survey when fieldwork restarts – retrospective questions – in addition to normal LFS
  - CAWI only survey alongside LFS to provide more summary and supplementary data (care needed in design and interpretation)



## Some general conclusions

- ▶ Impact is heavily dependent on mode of data collection, current resources, and capacities, plus country context
- ▶ Lesser impact where CATI/CAWI being used (subject to available telephone numbers) and where design of questionnaire is more flexible (modular)
  - ▶ perhaps a long term lesson of need to move to these modes, panel designs also helpful in delaying some impacts
- ▶ However, LFS not designed to be rapid reaction source of information in general
- ▶ Given the challenges it will be an important (and perhaps impossible) achievement to maintain operations, with data continuity and quality
- ▶ Any additional analysis of existing data will be an important contribution
- ▶ Additional content, retrospective questions and/or parallel surveys could be useful but need to be done carefully
- ▶ Also - major communications challenge, data may not move as generally anticipated – how to deal with this?



## ▶ ILO support

- ▶ ILO clearly recognises the unprecedented challenge being faced by countries
- ▶ Working on sharing of practices and responses – will continue this
- ▶ Working to clarify interpretation of standards, specific cases and analytical approach using existing data, along with communications
- ▶ Developing guidance on possible additional questionnaire content/supplementary approaches
- ▶ Providing support directly to countries as possible/requested



# THANK YOU

