**DATA COLLECTION GUIDELINES 2022**

This brief discusses principles that can be employed to ensure that your data collection is an appropriate high-yielding process. There is value in reflecting and referring to these principles regularly to avoid costly mistakes. The principles are divided into five thematic areas, and acronymised as ‘SCRAP’:

**Simplicity & Clarity**
Before collecting data, be clear about the process in its entirety and ensure you take a simplistic approach in order to mainstream operations.

**Relevence**
Less is more. Only collect data that is relevant to the specific topic.

**Accuracy**
Ensure integrity of the data being collected through systematic processes.

**Predictability**
Weigh the implications of each step to review your practical capacity based on existing M&E processes in the organisation.

**Important!**
Data collection is a ‘process’ and not an ‘event’. Before collecting data it is essential that one understands the process in its entirety.

**Predictability**
Some key questions to consider:
- Do I/we have the access and appropriate permissions for collection and use?
- Do I/we have the required financial resources to engage in the data collection?
- Is there organisational buy-in and support to carry out data collection?
- Are roles and responsibilities clear?
- Who is available to capture, monitor and process incoming data?

**Accuracy**
Data analysis is only as good as the quality of data obtained during the data collection process. Consider the following:
- Have precise definitions of gathered information and the appropriate method of collection.
- Use tools to measure precisely what they are intended to measure to ensure validity.
- Use the same tools consistently throughout the data collection process to ensure reliability of results.

Remember that data collection is a scientific procedure and, therefore, ought to be conducted systematically and methodically.

**Conclusion**
There is the temptation to over-complicate M&E and data collection. The reality is most of the activities can be designed and facilitated by non-experts. If well-planned and coordinated, data collection can be a profitable and effective element of an organisation’s operations.