Learnings from Remote Qualitative Interviews
Impact Evaluation of Select Justice Reform Programs

IPA Philippines
Supreme Court of the Philippines

Table of Contents

1. Overview of Supreme Court Project

In collaboration with the Supreme Court of the Philippines (SC) and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Philippines, through the guidance and support of the SC Program Management Office (PMO) and the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), is conducting a series of studies on the effect of judicial reforms on the efficiency of the lower trial courts. The three reforms under evaluation, Revised Guidelines for Continuous Trial of Criminal Cases, eCourts system, and Revised Rules of Procedures for Small Claims Cases, aim to reduce court case congestion through speedy and timely delivery of justice.

Using quasi-experimental methods in each study, this research uses court and case level administrative data from court databases and from paper records, which have been digitized by the team, to measure court efficiency. The two primary outcomes of interest are:

1. Duration of case disposition, and
2. Proportion of cases disposed for specific number of days, e.g. 60 days.

Duration of case disposition measures the speed at which a case is decided, while the proportion of cases disposed measures the volume of cases disposed. To compliment the quantitative methods, the team conducted qualitative interviews and an online survey with Judges and Clerks of Court.

In its strategic framework for socioeconomic development guiding the 2016-2022 administration, the Philippine government places high priority on "pursuing swift and fair administration of justice" (Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022). It targets an increase its ranking in global indices measuring justice and governance, including the World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index for which the Philippines has seen a steady decline, scoring below the global and regional average in the overall rule of law index, particularly on criminal justice and fundamental rights.

These studies will provide the Supreme Court with evidence generated by rigorous methods on the impact of the reforms on the courts and timely information needed for policymakers to make informed decisions on the current and future reforms.

2. Qualitative Study and Online Survey

2.1 Objectives of Qualitative Study & Online Survey

The research team conducted qualitative interviews and an online survey with Judges and Clerks of Court to provide further explanation on quantitative findings and to explore reasons for breaking chain of causation laid out in the theory of change of the reforms. Through this complimentary approach, the team sought to answer the following questions on the reforms of interest, The Revised Guidelines for Continuous Trial of Criminal Cases, Revised Rules of Procedures for Small Claims Cases, and eCourts:

1. How do court personnel and court stakeholders perceive the three judicial reforms of interest, and how have these reforms led to the desired outcomes?
2. How have the judicial reforms affected their work routines and efficiency?
3. What are the reasons for not achieving the desired outcomes?
4. How can these judicial reforms be improved?
5. How satisfied are the court personnel in these justice reforms?

2.2 Participants

The research team interviewed a total of 59 participants in three focus group discussions, seven in-depth dyads and 24 key-informant interviews. Through coordination with offices of the SC, the team interviewed Judges, Clerks of Court, Public Attorneys, Prosecutors, and Private Lawyers from the judicial regions of the National Capital Region (NCR), Cebu, and Davao. Table 1 shows the breakdown of participants by position and judicial region.

Table 1. Distribution of Interview Participants by Position and by Judicial Region

Position	Judicial Region			Total
	Cebu	Davao	NCR	
Judge				
Executive Judge	4	2	0	6
Judge	5	6	7	18
Branch Clerk of Court	9	9	5	23
Prosecutor	1	2	2	5
Lawyer				
Public Attorney	0	1	2	3
Private Lawyer	0	0	4	4
Total	**19**	**20**	**20**	**59**

2.3 Data Collection methods

Face-to-face interviews

The research team planned to conduct three in-person key-informant interviews with Executive Judges, four dyad interviews with Judge and Clerk of Court of the same branch and six focus group discussions of 9-10 participants in the three judicial regions. The team conducted pilot interviews with two Judges, two Clerks of Court, and one Public

Prosecutor from NCR in February 2020 and two focus group discussions with Judges and branch Clerks of Court in Cebu in March 2020. The interviews were facilitated by the team's Senior M&E Associate and Senior Research Associate along with one or two Principal Investigators. A documenter joined the team during the focus group discussions.

Remote interviews

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and global and Philippine government guidelines, the team adjusted the qualitative research approach in order to mitigate the impact on the ongoing research and engagement with the Supreme Court. In compliance with strict quarantine measures and restrictions on travel and in-person meetings, we used video calling technology to continue with qualitative data collection. The team also shifted from focus group discussions to single and dyad interviews. The same objectives of the qualitative component of the study were maintained. The interviews were facilitated by the team's Senior M&E Associate and Senior Research Associate along with one or two Principal Investigators and documented by the Data Management Associate. The full qualitative study protocol can be found in Annex 1.

3. Remote Data Collection experience

3.1 Anticipated Problems in Remote Interviews

Prior to shifting from in-person to remote qualitative data collection, the team brainstormed possible challenges and mitigation strategies.

Table 2 lists the anticipated problems and corresponding actions from the brainstorming exercise.

Table 2. Anticipated Problems and Actions in Conducting Remote Qualitative Interviews

Anticipated Problems	Actions
Participants are not familiar with video call platforms	• Coordinate with respective offices in the Supreme Court to endorse IPA study to each participant. • Obtain both email addresses and phone numbers of target participants. • Prepare call schedule, in coordination with Supreme Court offices. • Send electronic calendar meeting invitation at least 2 days before the interview containing information on study and instructions on how to join the call using the provided link. • Send text reminders at least one day before and on the day of interview with information on who to contact in case they have troubles logging into the meeting.

Anticipated Problems	Actions
	• Call participants on their mobile phone on the day of the interview, particularly those with connection issues, to give instructions.
Participants may be wary about emails and calls they receive from people they do not know	• Coordinate with respective offices in the Supreme Court to endorse IPA study to each participant. • Include Supreme Court focal person in email correspondence. • Provide a copy of the informed consent together with the electronic meeting invitation to ensure all relevant details of the study are disclosed. • Use official email addresses and signatures in communications.
Connectivity Issues	• Research team to ensure they have reliable internet connection. • Research team to connect to online meeting room at least 15 minutes prior to interview schedule. • Research team to find out connectivity status of participants through prior coordination with Supreme Court and each participant. • Keep the group small (ideally 1-2 participants only or maximum of 3). • Allot additional time for each interview to provide buffer time for parties to connect and reconnect in anticipation of network problems. Block 2 hours even if the interview is expected to run for only 1.5 hours. • Coordinate with participant (email, text reminder) prior to schedule to ensure they get the invitation and are informed of the instructions on how to join the online meeting room. • Research team to run internal trials on each platform. • Assign a secondary facilitator to manage the platform and address call issues and to act as interview facilitator if needed. • Ask only the main facilitator and participants to maintain video if connectivity issues occur and persist. • Prepare contingency and trouble-shooting plan for severe connectivity issues.
Absence of non-verbal communication	• Ask participants to maintain video for the duration of the interview in order to capture, to the extent possible, additional depth and meaning in responses as conveyed through non-verbal communication.
Absence of fillers and side conversations	• Facilitator to be mindful in asking each participant and summarizing parts of the conversation as needed, as fillers such as "yes," "uh-huh," and side agreements that provide information on thoughts of other non-speaking participants will be absent in remote interviews.
Overlapping speakers	• Assign one main facilitator to manage flow, structure, and time while providing space for other researchers to ask follow-up questions.

Anticipated Problems	Actions
	• Ask other research team members to mute microphone if not speaking. • Keep the group small. • Maintain video for all participants as much as possible.
Background noise/ distractions	• Remind participants to keep microphone on mute if not speaking. • Ask participants (and research team members) to find a quiet place to join the interview. • Ask other research team members to turn off video, especially if they are in a location with distractions. • Maintain video for participants so the interviewers can also assess their settings and possible sources of distraction.

3.2 Testing of Different Platforms for Qualitative Interviews

Prior to shifting to remote data collection methods, the team conducted desk-reviews of various online and mobile communication platforms. We also consulted partners from the Supreme Court on the platforms commonly used within their offices. For the research team, it was necessary for the platform to have video function and to support multiple participants, which eliminated the use of mobile calls. The team recognized that using video during the remote interviews could help establish rapport and connection with the participants, while simultaneously enabling the team to observe non-verbal communication. The team identified three platforms to explore: Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Zoom. Table 3 provides a description of the platforms and a comparison of features.

Table 3. Comparison of Platform Features

	Google Meet	MS Teams	Zoom
Description	Google Meet, formerly known as Hangouts, is a video-communication platform developed by Google. It is part of G Suite, Google's pool of cloud-based productivity and collaboration applications.	Microsoft teams (MS Teams), developed by Microsoft Corporation, is a cloud-based collaboration platform that offers videoconferencing features. It is integrated to MS Office 365 can be used for calls, file storage, file sharing, and team management. MS	Zoom is a cloud-based video-conferencing service that enables online hosting of meetings and webinars. It is developed by Zoom Video Corporation and has been regarded as the most popular tele-commuting platform during the pandemic.

|		Teams is intended to be an upgraded replacement of Skype, a pioneering video call platform acquired by Microsoft.	
Features			
Scheduling a meeting	Yes	Only for users with company subscriptions	Yes
Screen-sharing	One at a time	Multiple	Multiple
Integration	G Suite	Microsoft 365	
Video	Grid video view with speaker highlighted	Automatic selection of speakers/ participants only, no option for grid video view	Option for grid video view or speaker view
Initiating video calls	Free	Free plan can initiate on-the-spot calls but not scheduled calls	Limited free plan: only 1 host with max 40 min duration
Pricing	6 USD / user/ month for G Suite package subscription	5 -12 USD / user/ month for MS Teams package subscription	Min 14.99 USD per host/ month
Desktop app	None, browser-based	Yes, able to take calls via browser	Yes, able to take calls via browser
Waiting room	Yes	Yes	Yes
Meeting password	Yes	Yes	Yes
Join by domain only restriction	Yes	Yes	Yes
Encryption	Encrypts data in-transit, able to restrict within organization	Encrypts data in transit	Encryption upgrades are ongoing
Audio & Video recording	Free, with admin permission	Free, with admin permission	Free, with admin permission
Recording Storage	Google Drive	Cloud	Saved locally on computer
Participants	100-250 depending on account type	250	100, up to 500 with large meeting add-on

Time limit	None	None	40 mins for free plans, up to 24 hours

With a subscription or institutional account, all three platforms in terms of features met the needs of the research team. However, for some features on Microsoft Teams and Zoom, such as the automatic calendar function, the subscription or institutional account needs full access to the platform. In terms of performance, the team did not know how one platform might fare over others given the various participant locations and possible connectivity issues. After the team conducted internal runs with the platforms, we decided to conduct the interviews across the three platforms to obtain further understanding of platform performance. Additionally, in order to gain a better understanding of user experience on each technology platform, the team developed a short online feedback survey (Annex 2). Prior to ending the call with participants, we invited each of them to answer the short survey and sent the survey form link via email following the call. In total, we received 31 (71.6%) responses.

Findings from the online feedback survey
Figure 1 shows participants' prior experience using a video calling platform. It shows that 82.8% of the respondents have had prior experience in using a video calling platform. The platform with which participants had the most experience was Zoom (76.9%), followed by Microsoft Teams (61.5%). Only 7.7% reported having used Google Meet and Facebook Messenger for video calling.

Figure 1. Prior Use of Online Video Call Platforms
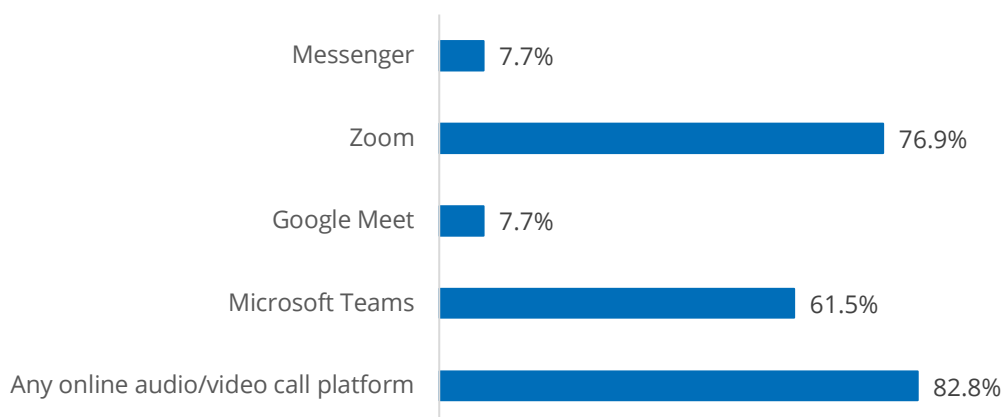
In our experience of facilitation, we observed that the audio and video quality of the call greatly affected the quality of the interviews. During stable connections, conversations flowed smoothly, and both the participants and researchers could delve deeper into responses and follow up questions. However, in cases of connectivity issues, this momentum of exchange between the participants and researchers was interrupted and

the focus became more on ensuring the understanding of the initial question and/or response. In the online feedback survey, the respondents shared a similar observation by rating their ability to express their views using the online platform similarly as to how they rated the audio and video quality (Figure 2 and

Figure 3).

Interview with Private Lawyer, July 7, 2020
Principal Investigator (PI): I think one of you or both of you handle labor cases, right? And so, my question— [audio interrupted]
Senior Research Associate (SRA): Sir [PI]?
PI: Can you hear me? Uh, anyway, never mind.
SRA: Uh, wait, I know your question, Sir. Is your question whether to put some cases in labor in the same rules of small claims?
PI: Yes, yes. That's my question.

Interview with PAO Lawyer, July 9, 2020
Senior M&E Associate (SMEA): Yes, Attorney. So, you're saying ... you've been practicing the components of continuous trial even before it was formally instituted. I'm wondering ... who spearheaded this change. Was it the judge? Was it the entire [City]? [inc. muffled recording] RTC and MTC, were they all implementing continuous trial even before the guidelines were implemented?
PAO: No, ma'am. It was [inc. unclear word] by the trial judge, very organized and very strict trials in the allocated schedule of hearings.
SMEA: I see. So, you're saying it was trial judge that contributed to the successful implementation of continuous trial?
PAO: Yes ma'am. That is what I am about to say that rules promulgated by the Supreme Court [inc. muffled recording] the implementation of [inc. muffled recording, 10 secs]
(silence)
SMEA: Attorney, your video is a bit frozen, but can you still hear me?
PAO: Yes, ma'am. Loud and clear.
SMEA: Can you try switching off you video for a moment since from my end it's also breaking [up]. Attorney, which part of the continuous trial guidelines do you find the most difficult to implement as a PAO lawyer here? Are there elements that you find difficult to catch up to, for example, as a PAO lawyer?
PAO: Yes, ma'am. During the conduct of pre-trial and when the court, under the rules conducted by the Chief Justice, told us and some of the trial court judge.

Figure 2. Audio Quality and Ability to Express Views

Star Rating of Audio Quality	Star Rating of Ability to Express Views				
	☆	☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
☆		👤			
☆☆			👤		
☆☆☆			👤👤👤	👤👤👤👤 👤	

★★★★			👤👤👤	👤👤👤👤 👤👤👤👤 👤👤👤👤	👤👤👤
★★★★★					👤👤👤

* 👤 *= one participant*

Figure 3. Video Quality and Ability to Express Views

Video Quality	Ability to Express Views				
	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
★					
★★		👤		👤👤	
★★★			👤👤👤 👤👤👤	👤👤👤👤 👤	
★★★★			👤	👤👤👤👤 👤👤👤👤	👤
★★★★★					👤👤👤 👤👤
No Video				👤👤	

* 👤 *= one participant*

In our experience conducting the remote online qualitative interviews, the platform that performed the best was Microsoft Teams. For the research team, it was the platform in which we experienced the least difficulties in establishing a connection and the least occurrences in disconnection. The participants, who responded in the online survey feedback, reported similarly. Only 15.8% of respondents using Microsoft Teams experienced disconnections, while 57.1% of respondents using Zoom and 100% of respondents using Google Meet experienced disconnections. Figure 4 shows participant experience with disconnections by the platform used in the video call.

Figure 4. Participants who experienced disconnection during the call
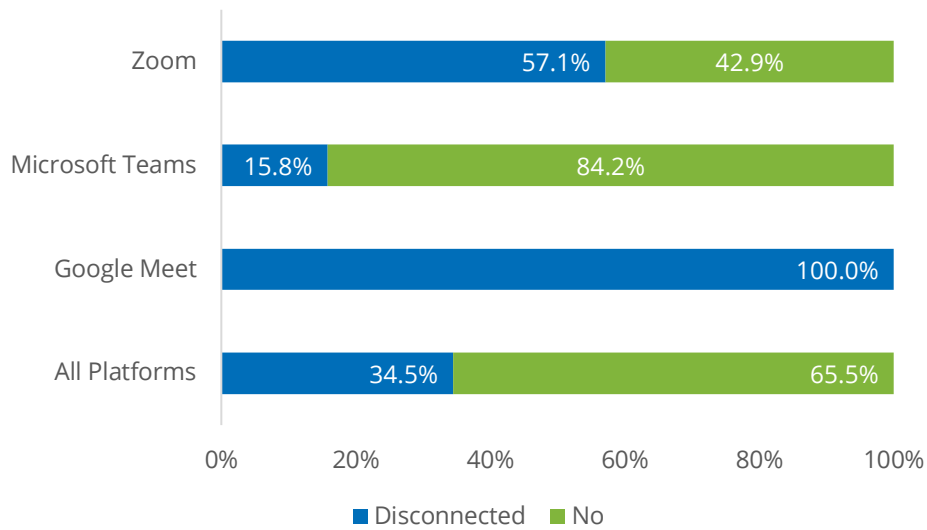
We should note that around the same time the research team was preparing to launch the remote online surveys, the Supreme Court provided Microsoft Team accounts to the courts for remote work during the pandemic. This was advantageous for the research team since the Judges and Clerks of Court may have had more familiarity in using the technology compared with the other platforms. After the first week of conducting the interviews with all three platforms, the research team decided to use Microsoft Teams for the remainder of the data collection primarily due to connectivity performance.

We highlight the importance in gathering information from partners, test-runs, and users in determining the optimal technology platform to use.

4. Lessons Learned in Conducting Remote Qualitative Interviews

After completing the remote qualitative interviews, the research team debriefed on lessons learned from using the online video technology platforms. Table 4 summarizes these lessons by themes of resources, documentation, safety, flow of conversation, privacy, and technology.

Table 4. Pros and cons of using remote qualitative interviews

Theme	Pros	Cons
Resources	- Timesaving - No travel time for interviewers and interviewees - Easy to shift to other meetings or tasks after the interview	- Problems starting on time - Participants may forget about the meeting - Problems in connection may delay the start of the interview

	• Money-saving ○ Costs for transportation and venue are avoided • Convenience ○ Both participants and facilitators have more flexibility to choose the convenient time and location (e.g. court or at home) ○ Research team can easily shift to debrief session anytime	• Participants use their own mobile data allocation
Documentation	• Clearer recordings ○ All participants are equally heard unlike in-person where the voices of persons far from the recorder are not captured well ○ Less background noises such as wind and rustling sounds • No difference whether transcriber/documenter is present during interview or listening to audio recording post-interview	• Documenter cannot capture the setting and not all non-verbal communication
Safety	• Ensures health safety and compliance to quarantine protocols	
Data Quality	• Participants who are familiar with video call platforms and have good internet connection can converse freely • No observed difference in participants' mood and tone between in-person and remote online interviews	• In some cases, we are unable to determine whether participants are influenced by other people present with them during the interview • Limited reach of participants— some participants initially selected were dropped because they do not have a reliable internet connection, appropriate device, or are apprehensive to use the technology platforms

Flow of conversation	• Easier to have a focused conversation in cases where there is a main facilitator • Avoids side conversations between participants and interviewers that may distract them from the interview • Side conversations are few, kept to relevant topics and are easily captured • Easier access to supporting data, hence more reliable information (e.g. case counts can be checked from computer files, physical records or by asking colleagues)—if in-person interview had been planned outside of participant office	• Distractions occur when the participant/interviewer is in home environment or shared office • Challenging to regulate conversations with multiple participants • Requires more focus for each participant to assure the other end of their participation • Participants consciously avoid distractions or side-glances while on video • Using video may be intimidating as other people focus on you due to closeness of the camera
Privacy		• Other people may be present in the same room as participants and interviewers (and out of camera sight)
Technology	• Tech-savvy participants can easily navigate the platform and troubleshoot issues	• Connection problems • Problems logging into the platform, when required • Technical or WIFI issues by other participants excluding the participant

4.1 Resources

Where and when appropriate and possible, we find that using remote qualitative data collection methods can save resources, particularly time, money, and effort spent in travel. Travel time and travel preparation time incur monetary and time opportunity costs. Using remote methods also opens the possibility for research team members, including Principal Investigators, in other locations to join the interviews. Using remote methods provides more flexibility in task management regarding time allocation since neither the research team members nor the participants are required to allocate time for travel. Research team members and participants can easily shift to/fromo other meetings or tasks before/after an interview. In our experience, research team members on several occasions had other meetings immediately following the interview while judges and

attorneys often had court hearings scheduled. Also, if a participant had an urgent meeting arise in the court, the team could easily reschedule the meeting without too much consideration on time and budget.

However, despite the reminders, on occasion interviews started late as participants either forgot about the interview schedule or it was a lower priority item in their day. Starting late meant that research team members waited "unseen" in the online meeting room until the participant joined, confirmed they were joining at some point, or cancelled/rescheduled the interview. Online interviews might be easier for participants to miss since the research team members are not waiting in a physical waiting room reminding participants of the schedule. It was also easier for participants to cancel/reschedule online interviews on short notice since (1) communication is not face-to- face and (2) they no longer need to consider the travel time of the research team going to the physical space. Additionally, internet connectivity and unfamiliarity with the technology platform may also cause delays.

In addition to time allocation costs outside of the interview proper, there are other areas in which conducting remote interviews may also save money. First, related to travel time, there are no ground transportation expenses and no other travel expenses (airfare, lodging, per diem, etc.) incurred. Second, expenses for meeting rooms are not incurred (if this would have been necessary to conduct the in-person interviews). Third, in the context of Filipino culture (and perhaps others), costs in providing light meals, which is customary for in-person visits, are not incurred by either the research team or the participants.

Online interviews require a stable internet connection. The research team members and participants may incur additional costs in ensuring a stable connection when connecting to personal mobile data due to poor (or lack of) connection in offices. Depending on the context, mobile data credit as a respondent token may offset unanticipated costs to the participant as well as increase the incentive to participate.

Lastly, remote interviews provide convenience and flexibility in scheduling time and venue choice (court/office, home, or other) for participants and the research team. In our experience, one participant scheduled his interview time during his commute to the office. This flexibility permitted the participant, who was in a private vehicle and not driving, to maximize otherwise idle time during a long commute. Additionally, the convenience of remote interviews also allows the research team to immediately shift from interviews to debriefing sessions and keep the interview fresh in mind.

4.2 Coordination and Preparation

In our experience, we coordinated both the planned in-person FGDs and the remote interviews through one of the Supreme Court offices. After sending our list of selected courts, the Supreme Court office sent out official communication inviting the Judges and Clerks of Court for the interviews. In comparing the level of preparation and coordination between the FGDs and the remote online interviews, the remote online interviews

required more involvement from the research team. However, this may have less to do with a difference between in-person and remote interviews and more with the engagement with our partner, the Supreme Court. For the FGDs, the Supreme Court handled the task of prior coordination and communication with the participants. For the remote interviews, the Supreme Court endorsed the research team and provided contact information (email and mobile numbers), and then we handled the task of coordination and communication with the participants most likely in part due to the number of interviews. We not only coordinated with the participants to confirm attendance but also to provide support, if needed, on the technology platform. Additionally, we received more questions on the study and methods during the remote online interviews. This may have been since an advance electronic copy of the consent form was sent to the participants directly by the research team, rather than a copy provided by the Supreme Court.

4.3 Safety

In consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the greatest advantage of remote qualitative interviews is the ability to collect data without the risk of exposing participants and research team members to communicable diseases. Conducting online remote interviews allowed the research to continue the research while complying with the government-mandated community quarantine measures.

4.4 Privacy and Confidentiality

It is difficult to ensure privacy and confidentiality in remote online interviews. While the research team asked participants to find a conducive location for participating in the interview and sharing confidential information, the researchers do not know what is beyond the video shown. It is important that this is adequately discussed in the informed consent. In terms of protection of privacy and confidential information, participants had minimal apprehension in participating in online interviews. In our experience, the usual clarification sought by participants about privacy was about who could access their data, to which the research team explained that only the research team has access to the audio and that neither transcripts nor reports would include individual names.

4.5 Technology

The use of technology enabled research efforts to continue during strict quarantine measures imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We find that tech-savvy participants express a preference for the use of technology and that they can easily navigate platforms and troubleshoot issues. They are more at ease during the interview. Some participants may need more assistance joining or troubleshooting issues during the call, and the research team needs to be prepared to take on not only navigating the technology but also participant reactions.

The greatest challenge with technology is unstable and unpredictable internet connection. Throughout out data collection period, both research team members and participants experienced connectivity issues at times. However, connectivity issues were

not so severe, except for one extreme situation in which the conversation abruptly cut due to power interruption at the court.

In preparation for the call, it is important for the research team to communicate expectations so participants can adequately prepare. This may include call guidelines as well as recommendations for a conducive call, including technology and physical settings. In our experience, most participants participated in the interviews from their offices, which contributed to the professionalism.

4.6 Documentation

In comparing in-person and remote online interview documentation, we did not find much difference in documentation protocols and methods and execution thereof. We maintained the same notetaking, audio-recording, and transcription protocols. An advantage of remote interviews is that note-taking from the facilitator(s) and presence of a dedicated documenter are less conspicuous and therefore less distracting and intimidating to participants. Another advantage of remote interviews is the clarity in the audio-recording and the subsequent transcription quality. In-person interview recordings often have imbalances in clarity of voices depending on proximity to the recorder/microphone and tend to pick up background noises such as wind, tapping, or rustling, which affect the transcription quality.

In our experience, we had the interviews transcribed and the clarity of voices (and lack of noise) allowed for fast and clear transcriptions. While we only audio recorded the interviews, video recordings for large groups or online focus group discussions may help in accurately attributing comments to respondents. Additionally, while the team had human note-takers and transcribers, research teams may be able to use additional technology applications (artificial intelligence note-takers) or online services offering instant artificial intelligence transcription given the clarity of the audio.

One disadvantage of documenting remote online interviews is the difficulty in capturing non-verbal communication. In remote interviews using video technology platforms, this can only be captured to a limited extent per individual. What will be missing from remote interviews is non-verbal communication and interactions between participants and between participants and facilitators that may have occurred in an in-person setting.

4.7 Facilitation

We find that remote online interviews work best when the facilitator knows the topic well and has strong facilitation skills. Techniques such as actively acknowledging the responses of the participant helps to ensure that the facilitator-participant conversation runs smoothly, and the participant is understood. It is important that rules are set with participants in the call, such as only one person speaks at a time. It is also helpful for the facilitator to address the participant by name before speaking to ensure that there are no overlaps. While participant rules and facilitation guidelines during remote interviews are similar to in-person interviews, facilitators need to engage more with verbal cues and

direction since neither the participants nor facilitators have non-verbal cues, such as eye contact or gestures, as a tool in guiding the conversation.

It is recommended that a third person acting as documenter and call monitor is present on each call so that the main facilitator is not distracted and can focus on the participant and interview. In cases in which the facilitator is dropped or cut from the conversation, the call monitor can temporarily take charge of continuing facilitation so that the conversation is kept running and the participant time is maximized. In our experience, the call monitor also monitored the chat function as it was used by PIs or other researcher members to raise questions during a conversation or by participants having audio issues.

While we find that remote online interviews are a convenient and resource-saving option, the researchers also observe that remote interviews seemed to be more exhausting than in-person interviews. The possible reasons could be that online interviews require more focus and more effort to give full hearing and visual attention to the speaker to understand the conversation. In addition, using a close-range video may be intimidating as other people could focus on the speaker due to the closeness of the camera. Also, being in front of the computer without interruptions could be exhausting on the eyes. It is essential to build in breaks in between interviews and debrief sessions to minimize exhaustion of the facilitator and other research team members. The ideal situation is to only have two interviews within a day (one in morning, one in afternoon) with each interview limited to no more than two hours.

4.8 Flow of conversation

Regarding the flow and feel of conversations, we experienced several differences between in-person and remote online interviews. We find that with remote online interviewing, there is less easing into the conversation and exchanging of small talk pleasantries, which is often found in in-person interviews and can help build genuineness and rapport. In our experience, the interview proper began after a short round of introductions with very little exchange in between.

In remote interviewing, the facilitator and participant(s) can have a focused, in-depth conversation despite the number of other research team members present since there is the option to turn off videos. During in-person qualitative interviews wherein several research team members join, the participant's attention is divided across all members of the team. This may also feel unnatural and intimidating to participants as it could appear like a panel interview. Additionally, with in-person interviews with several participants and/or research team members, rapport is established and there is a higher likelihood of tangents and side conversations. We find that side conversations are kept to a minimum during the online interviews. While side conversations can be helpful as it encourages participants to speak more and react to one another, they may also be detracting especially if the conversations are off topic and if they occur in parallel to the main conversations. In part, the lack of eye contact and non-verbal communication may be a contributing factor to fewer side conversations. However, the lack thereof in remote interviewing also makes it more challenging to regulate conversations with multiple

participants since it is easier to talk over one another. The absence of non-verbal communication and cues makes it difficult to interrupt or interject when someone is speaking.

4.9 Data Quality

We find that the quality of data gathered does not diminish with the shift to remote online interviews, except for in instances of severe connectivity issues. We find that the genuineness in response did not differ from in-person interviews because participants 1) readily answer questions without hesitation, 2) volunteer information even without prompting questions, 3) share, without reluctance, negative feedback on reforms and feedback about colleagues, 4) support responses with specific and detailed experiences, and 5) demonstrate a noticeable eagerness to share insights and contribute information. These observations also provide an indication of the participants' comfort with interacting through the online platform. While there are limitations regarding non-verbal communication, the remote interviewing still allows for the capture of adequate non-verbal indicators such as tone, laughter, and reservations.

It is important to note that in the experience of our sample and interview subject, it worked well if participants connected to the video call using individual devices rather than a shared device with a co-participant. In some cases, a Judge and a Clerk of Court from the same branch sometimes shared a device from their office. Use of shared devices may lead to one participant (in our case the judge) dominating the conversation given relationships as well as the need to share a smaller space to be visible in the video, but be close enough to the microphone of the device, especially if it is a phone or tablet. Use of a shared device also means that participants position themselves farther away from the camera and microphone. From the facilitator's perspective, it is more difficult to capture facial expressions and nuances in tones if participants share a device. Participants that shared a device also had less focused eye contact with the camera and screen. In cases where multiple participants each had their own line, it was easier to fully engage with each participant.

Internet connectivity issues are the main causes of disruption in the flow of conversation. Connectivity issues stall the conversation from moving forward at a natural pace and may prevent the conversations from going deeper on the subject matter. Delays in audio and video also contribute to overlaps in conversations. Additionally, issues with audio and video may interrupt thought processes and cause distractions. In our experience, participants remained patient while either the participants or the research team members checked with one another to confirm understanding. It is important to build in additional time in the interview schedule to account for connectivity issues and slower conversations, and it is also important for facilitators to remain calm and assure participants so they do not become overly frustrated, which can affect the rapport and data quality. Moreover, it is important for the research team members to be able to provide troubleshooting assistance and to have a contingency plan in cases of severe

connectivity issues, which can lead to frustration and lack of engagement which may affect the quality of the data gathered.

Conclusion

Overall, our experience shows that remote online video interviewing can be an efficient and effective method to conduct interviews and collect qualitative data. However, many considerations need to be taken, including sample, subject, and purpose, to determine whether remote interviews are an appropriate alternative to in-person interviews. In some cases, in-person interviews may still be the better method to collect qualitative data, as the quality of data may be enhanced by establishing rapport and capturing interview setting, tone, and non-verbal cues. However, with proper forethought and risk mitigation planning, the quality of the conversation and information gathered in remote interviews can be comparable with that of in-person interviews. While the research team initially planned to conduct in-person FGDs, the FGD format was not necessary for the purpose of our data collection. We chose to conduct one- and two-participant interviews since we thought a remote online FGD may not provide us with the same depth as an in-person FGD, and the overall outcome was not dependent on participant interactions.

Annex 1: Qualitative Protocol

Impact Assessment of Supreme Court Reform Programs
Qualitative Protocol

Overview of Changes to the Protocol

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and global and Philippine government guidelines, Innovations for Poverty Action will make changes to our qualitative research approach in order to mitigate the impact on our ongoing research and engagement with the Supreme Court. In compliance with strict quarantine measures and continued restrictions on travel and in-person meetings, we will use technology to proceed with collecting qualitative information rather than the previously planned in-person focus group discussions and interviews. We maintain the same objectives of the qualitative component of the study.

Changes to data collection method:
1. Face-to-face interviews will be shifted to remote data collection using online or mobile conferencing tools.
2. Focus group discussions will be shifted to one-on-one or paired interviews using online or mobile conferencing tools.
3. IPA will coordinate with the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) and participants on access and preference on the remote data collection method.

Changes to participant recruitment:
1. IPA will coordinate with OCA to schedule interviews and obtain contact information of the previously identified participants for the focus group discussions and interviews
2. IPA will coordinate with OCA to invite additional participants to (1) replace participants who cannot be accessed by remote data collection or (2) expound on the rolling findings of the study who are outside the areas previously identified in the qualitative component (Metro Manila, Cebu, and Davao).

Objectives

A qualitative study will be conducted to provide further explanation on quantitative findings and explore reasons for breaking chain of causation laid out in the theory of change using the experiences of the Judges and Clerks of Courts. This qualitative study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do the court personnel and court stakeholders perceive the three judicial reforms of interest, namely Continuous Trial Guidelines (CTG), Small Claims Procedure (SCP), and eCourts and how these would lead to desired outcomes?
2. How have the judicial reforms affected their work routines and efficiency?
3. What are the reasons for not achieving the desired outcomes?
4. How can these judicial reforms be improved?

5. How satisfied are the court personnel in these justice reforms?

Methodology

a. Participants

We will invite trial court Judges, Executive Judges, Branch Clerks of Court, and Officer of the Clerk of Court as primary participants in the qualitative component. Participants will come from Metro Manila, Cebu, Dumaguete, and Davao. Other judicial regions may be identified during data collection based on the findings and in consultation with OCA. Both first level and second level courts will be included to provide a mixture of experiences. In addition, experts in the legal system, particularly public and private litigators and prosecutors, will also be interviewed.

b. Participant Selection

The target participants will be purposively selected based on:

1. Area: there will be three clusters of FGDs to three geographic clusters of courts in NCR, Cebu City, and Davao City
2. Length of service: we aim to gather views from both new and long-term court personnel
3. Court duration: we aim to get new courts and old courts
4. Duration of implementation of judicial reforms: we aim to gather views from both long-term implementers and short-term implementers
5. Quantitative outcomes: we aim to gather views of personnel from courts that experienced the most positive change in outcomes and courts with least favourable outcomes
6. Court level: we aim to gather views from both first level and second level courts
7. Interesting findings: we aim to verify information gathered from qualitative data collection and new findings from quantitative analysis

c. Data Collection Method

There will be two main methods of data collection: in-person and remote data collection. For purposes of collecting high quality data, in-person data collection is preferred. However, if in-person interviews and focus group discussions cannot take place, such as in the implementation of strict community quarantine measures in response to COVID-19, remote data collection will be applied. The team will conduct remote interviews using online and/or mobile conferencing technology tools.

In-Person data collection

Data collection will be done through Focus Group Discussions (FGD), one-on-one, or dyad Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and online surveys. Below is a discussion on how each of the method will be administered:

1. Preparation
   - Prior coordination with the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) of the Supreme Court will be required to ensure the participants' availability.

- The researchers will arrange for the FGDs and KIIs to be conducted in a private and quiet room.
- The facilitator and documenter will prepare the following materials:
  o Two audio recorders with batteries and memory card
  o Name tags
  o Printed consent forms
  o Name tags
  o Tokens

2. Process
Focus Group Discussion
- Small groups (7-10) of court personnel will be gathered. Judges will be gathered separately from Clerks of Courts.
- FGDs will be facilitated by the Principal Investigator and/or Senior Associate(s).
- To ensure accuracy and completeness of documentation, a senior field officer (SFO) will be assigned as note taker.
- The participants will be asked to sit in a circle together with the moderator and documenter.
- The facilitator(s) will introduce IPA, SC engagement, and themselves. They will also explain the purpose of the study and why the participants were invited.
- A written informed consent will be secured individually from each participant. Only those who consented will participate in the FGD.
- The facilitator will provide the following ground rules for the FGD:
  o Confidentiality—ask everyone to keep the contents of the discussion private
  o Orderliness—explain the importance of having everyone contribute to the discussion, wait to be acknowledged before speaking, allow others to complete statement before speaking or starting another discussion
  o Moderation—explain that there might be pauses to allow the moderator to think about next questions and review notes, redirect the conversation and focus on the topic at hand, or move to the next topic depending on the time
  o Recording—explain the recording again and ask for permission before starting the recording
- The SFO will place the audio recorder in a strategic position in the middle of the room, visible to all participants. The SFO will ask for verbal consent to start the recording.
- Each participant will be asked to introduce themselves with their name and court. To aid in facilitation, the documenter will ask them to wear a name tag.
- Both the documenter and facilitator will carry a print-out of guide questions. The direction of the interview will be based on the guide questions. The facilitator will probe and ask related questions as necessary. All questions and discussion topics will be related to the evaluation questions.

- During the interview, the facilitator and documenter will write down keywords to help them steer the discussion and recall the important points in the discussion for documentation.
- The FGD will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.
- The facilitator will close the interview by thanking the participant and giving a small token for participation.
- Any person can opt out at any time for any reason. In case of dropouts, the FGD will still proceed with only the consenting participants. Any persons who opt out will be asked whether their previous responses may be retained. If any person changes their mind about participation, their responses will not be included in any written documentation and analysis.

Key Informant Interviews
- The KII will be administered by the Principal Investigator/s and Senior Associate supported by a documenter.
- The KII participants will be selected based on nuances in experiences they reported during the FGD.
- The KII will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.
- The KII will follow the same ground rules and protocols as the FGD.

3. Documentation
There will be two forms of documentation of each FGD and KII: (1) audio recording and (2) FGD summary.

- Audio Recordings
To ensure that all responses are captured in recording and a back-up is available in case of technical problems, two audio recordings will be obtained from each FGD. This will allow researchers to revisit the FGD for clarifications and pull-out direct quotes as necessary for substantiating the report.

- FGD Summaries
An FGD summary will be drafted by the documenter. A summary contains the general information about the FGD including the profile of participants, date of interview, setting and other notable occurrences during the interview. It should also contain the key findings and highlights of the focus group. The facilitator/s will add to or revise the draft as necessary.

Remote Data Collection
Interviews will be conducted using online (video or audio) and/or mobile conferencing technology tools. To minimize the complexities and make the calls more manageable, data collection will be limited to one-on-one interviews or paired interviews. The rules and protocols for in-person interviews will apply whenever possible. The research team recognizes that there are possible limitations in remote data collection, which include the depth of conversations and the reliability of network connections.

The following set of procedures will be observed:

1. Preparation
   - Prior coordination with OCA will be done to schedule the interviews and gather the contact information of participants, which will be treated as confidential.
   - The interviewer will coordinate with OCA in contacting the participant to schedule the interview.
   - Participants who cannot be accessed by remote data collection (i.e. no internet connection or poor mobile network) will be replaced by another participant jointly identified by IPA and OCA.
   - A copy of the informed consent may be sent electronically to the participant upon their request.

2. Process
   - One-on-one interview with selected Judge or Clerk of Court will be conducted. If possible, the pair of Judge and Clerk of Court in a branch will interviewed at the same time.
   - Interviews will be conducted by IPA's Senior Associates.
   - A documenter will be present in the call when possible.
   - The interviewer will introduce themself and obtain verbal informed consent.
   - Each interview will last 1.5 to 2 hours.
   - Video conferencing where participants and interviewers see each other is preferred as a visual connection adds to the depth of conversations and ensures that the participants are fully engaged in the interview.
   - If video conferencing is not possible due to connectivity issues, the interviewer will aim to have the video on during the consenting process.
   - If video conferencing is not at all possible, the interview will proceed without any video interaction, either through audio conferencing or mobile conferencing.
   - In cases of connectivity issues during or in preparation for a call with multiple participants, the interviewer may choose to conduct a one-on-one interview instead.

3. Documentation
   - Interview summaries will be written immediately after each interview by the documenter and/or interviewer.
   - Interviews will be audio recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure capture of entirety of responses.
   - If audio recording is not possible (i.e. mobile phone interview with poor connection), the interview summary will suffice.

Analysis Plan

We will use rapid thematic analysis to identify themes. The first round of analysis will be done through debriefing sessions that will be conducted at the end of each data collection day. These debriefing sessions will be conducted with facilitator/s and a documenter and

will be headed by the PI or Senior Associate. A second round of analysis will be done by conducting content analysis using the summaries after a cluster of FGDs in one area. The findings and learnings from rapid analysis of an FGD cluster will inform the next rounds of FGD to refine the interview questions and approaches.

Data Security

IPA employs strict data management protocols in order to ensure that our surveys are administered with complete transparency of purpose, and with an emphasis on maintaining the privacy of respondents. In compliance with the 2012 Data Privacy Act, IPA Philippines has registered with the National Privacy Commission and is currently finalizing its Data and Device Security Protocol Policy. Current standards of practice being implemented in light of the law are: (1) all staff sign a nondisclosure agreement (NDA); (2) use of a consent form that respondents must sign (or provide verbal consent) before beginning a survey or interview; (3) no one aside from the enumerator and respondent(s) should be present during administration of the survey; (4) enumerators are not allowed to ask questions outside of what is in the survey; and (5) removal of all Personally Identifiable Information in our data.

Audio recordings may unintentionally contain PII. The research team will employ additional security measures. Field staff will only use IPA-owned recording devices. Recordings will only be accessed through IPA computers and saved in an encrypted folder locally and in IPA's server. Audio files will be permanently deleted after the analysis is completed.

In cases of remote data collection, IPA will ensure the use of communication platforms that provide end-to-end encryption and comply with the organizational protocols for privacy and security.

Annex 2: Online Interview Feedback survey

Online Interview Feedback
* Required

1. Which platform did you use? *
   Please choose one.

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Microsoft Teams

   ◯ Google Meet

   ◯ Zoom

   ◯ Other: _____

2. Have you used other online platform for audio/video conferencing before this? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes   *Skip to question 3*

   ◯ No   *Skip to question 4*

3. Which platform/s have you used before? *
   Please check all that apply.

   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Microsoft Teams
   ☐ Google Meet
   ☐ Zoom
   Other: ☐ _____

4. How would you rate the following: *

Mark only one oval per row.

	☆	☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Audio quality during the call	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Video quality during the call	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Ability to express your views using the online platform	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. Were you ever disconnected during the call? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

6. What could be improved in conducting the online interview? *
Please exclude the content of the discussion.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____