

FOOD AND
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TECHNICAL
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**Measuring Household Food
Insecurity Workshop II Report**

October 19, 2005

Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project (FANTA)

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1. Summary

The Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop II was held by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) project on October 19, 2005. The workshop is the latest step in a process of participation, research and consensus building that has brought together academics, practitioners, governments and donors in an effort to better monitor and report the impact of programs on the access component of household food insecurity. Participants helped refine the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) questionnaire, suggested approaches for creating meaningful indicators from the HFIAS data, and discussed a process for continued feedback and collaborative field validation of the HFIAS tool.

2. Introduction

The report summarizes the activities and outcomes of the Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop II, held on October 19, 2005. Thirty-two representatives from Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs); U.S. government organizations (Centers for Disease Control – CDC, U.S. Agency for International Development – USAID, U.S. Department of Agriculture-USDA); international organizations (International Food Policy Research Institute – IFPRI, Food and Agriculture Organization); universities (Cornell, Tufts) and the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) Project at the Academy for Educational Development (AED) attended. The workshop is the latest step in a process to develop a user-friendly measure of the access component of household food insecurity (hereafter referred to as household food insecurity (access)) that is scientifically valid, easy to use, and whose results will be widely accepted. It continues the process of participation, research and consensus building that has brought together academics, practitioners, governments and donors in an effort to better monitor and report the impact of programs on household food insecurity (access).

During the past five years FANTA has undertaken a set of activities aimed at validating the US Household Food Security Survey Measure (US HFSSM) approach for use in developing countries and testing the usefulness of the resulting scales as impact indicators for the access component of household security in program evaluations. The underlying concept of the US HFSSM approach is that food insecurity in the United States is a measurable experience that can be described and analyzed to categorize households by level of food insecurity. The set of activities undertaken by FANTA were designed to answer whether there is a universal food insecurity experience that is measurable and to develop a generic food insecurity measurement tool for application in a range of country and cultural contexts.

In the first phase of the effort, two multi-year field validation studies were undertaken that used the US HFSSM approach to develop and validate experiential household food insecurity (access) scales. The studies were implemented by FANTA partners Cornell University in the Title II food security program areas of Africare in Burkina Faso and by Tufts University in the Title II food security program areas of World Vision in Bangladesh. FANTA also provided support to Freedom from Hunger (FFH) efforts to test whether the US HFSSM approach could be used as a low-cost and meaningful poverty measure that would be applicable in diverse settings. These studies were conducted in Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Ghana and the Philippines. In addition,

FANTA carried out a review of how the US HFFSM has been adapted and used to look at food insecurity in a variety of countries.

As the next step in the effort to develop an easy-to-use, valid measure of household food insecurity (access) for use in food security programs, FANTA held a two-day workshop on April 15-16 2004 to arrive at a consensus on the feasibility of developing a universally applicable Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) and to define the domains and questions that would form part of a standardized questionnaire.

Based on the results of that workshop, as well as ongoing research at Tufts and Cornell Universities, a draft guide with a standardized questionnaire and data collection and analysis instructions was written and shared with programmers, academics and other interested stakeholders in June 2005. Feedback on the draft guide has been received from a range of potential users. (see 4.3) [0]

3. Objectives of the workshop

The goal of the October 19, 2005 workshop was to arrive at a consensus on the appropriateness of the HFIAS and the guide in their current form. In particular, the workshop aimed at arriving at consensus on the questions that make up the HFIAS and on a transparent method to create continuous and categorical indicators based on the HFIAS.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Review proposed revisions to the standardized questionnaire to determine if the goal of a universally applicable model questionnaire has been met and, if not, what additional changes might be required;
- Arrive at a consensus on an approach for creating a categorical variable of food insecurity from individual HFIAS scores;
- Define a process for continued feedback and collaborative field validation of the HFIAS tool.

4. Structure of the workshop

The workshop commenced with presentations on recent work of the U.S. National Committee of Statistics related to the US HFFSM, decisions regarding questions on coping strategies in the HFIAS, and a summary of the process of developing the HFIAS and changes to the model questionnaire and guide in response to the feedback received. In preparation for group work on a process for calculating categorical indicators of household food insecurity (access) from HFIAS data, assumptions about the HFIAS were presented along with criteria to be considered in determining the “best” process for calculating indicators and some possible options. A closing plenary session allowed each group to present their findings, following by discussion and conclusions.

5. Presentations

5.1. Work of the US National Committee of Statistics on the US HFSSM

As background for the continuing work on the HFIAS, the participants were provided with an update on the work of the National Committee of Statistics related to the US HFSSM. The panel was charged with determining the appropriateness of the following:

- A household survey as a vehicle for monitoring prevalence of food insecurity including frequency and duration
- Identifying hunger as a severe range of food insecurity in such a survey-based measurement method
- Item Response Theory (IRT) and Rasch model as a statistical basis for creating the scale and indicators
- Threshold scores that demarcate categories, particularly the “hunger” categories, and the labeling and interpretation of each category
- Applicability of current measure for assessing the effectiveness of USDA food assistance programs
- Future directions to consider for strengthening the US measure of food insecurity and hunger prevalence for monitoring, evaluation, and related research purposes

The panel's preliminary conclusions include:

- The concept and definition of hunger in the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, and how they relate to food insecurity, are not clear.
- It is not clear whether hunger is appropriately identified as the extreme end of food insecurity scale.
- Food insecurity is important to measure.
- Food insecurity is a multifaceted concept, each facet of which is appropriate to consider as latent and continuous. That is, it is possible to consider each facet of food insecurity as potentially distinctly measurable on a continuous scale.
- It is appropriate to use IRT models to measure food insecurity.
- Use of the Rasch, a particular IRT model, and using the sum of items affirmed to create a score is only appropriate if the facets of food insecurity measured can be reasonably represented a single statistical dimension.
- Threshold scores can be used to categorize households into levels of food insecurity.
- Appropriate categories and labels need to be examined further.
- A household interview survey is one appropriate vehicle to query households about food insecurity experiences and to measure prevalence of food insecurity.
- National prevalence estimates of food insecurity as currently obtained are not well suited for evaluation of effectiveness of food assistance programs.
- Monitoring prevalence of food insecurity at national and sub-national levels may not be suitable for evaluation of programs because, depending on the context, other factors besides program performance and effectiveness may influence national and sub-national trends in food insecurity.

5.2. Coping strategies in the context of measuring household food insecurity

In the first iteration of the scale, a wide range of coping strategy questions were included. Further discussion led to the decision that coping strategies that relate to a reduction, redistribution, or reconfiguration of food consumption (e.g. reduce meals, adult eats less, buys and eats inferior foods) should continue to be included in the HFIAS. However, coping strategies that relate to a means of augmenting the household resource base (e.g. taking cash loans, finding a second job, or accepting food aid) probably represent a separate statistical dimension of food insecurity from that which the HFIAS measures and should be excluded from the HFIAS for the following reasons:

- They represent a distinct statistical dimension of household food insecurity (access) from the dimension measured by the domains in the HFAIS.
- Not all of these strategies are accessible or available to all households. This makes it difficult to interpret the meaning of a household engaged in a given coping strategy. For example, a household may not have taken out a loan because it did not need one, or because it is too poor and too much of a risk to qualify for one. The former may indicate a food secure household, while the latter a very insecure one.
- These strategies do not always represent the same level of household food access insecurity across cultures.
- The Coping Strategies Index (CSI) is a common instrument used by many PVOs to measure food insecurity-related coping strategies.
- Key similarities and differences between the two tools include:

Coping Strategies Index (CSI)	Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Captures <u>behavioral</u> responses to food insecurity or perceived food insecurity. ◆ Includes both classes (consumption and resource augmentation) of coping strategies. ◆ Uses a participatory method to generate and weight strategies. Potentially new questions in each context. ◆ Frequency and severity are combined together in the final score. ◆ Does not produce a categorical variable. Only a continuous score ◆ Less statistically defensible but has face validity and buy-in. ◆ Can be applied for population level monitoring, evaluating, targeting, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Captures <u>behavioral and psychological</u> responses to FI or perceived FI. ◆ Includes only consumption-related strategies ◆ Has developed a generic set of questions based on research in several countries. Prescribes a method to adapt them to context, but the underlying questions are the same in all contexts ◆ HFIAS scoring TBD ◆ FANTA is working to develop consensus regarding categorization. ◆ Benefits from statistical tools and lessons learned from large USDA effort. ◆ Potential applications of HFIAS are similar to CSI.

Many of the potential uses of the HFIAS are similar to current uses of the CSI. As a measure of household food insecurity (access) status, the HFIAS may be preferable because it is:

- More generic
- More conceptually and statistically grounded
- Possibly more comparable across settings

However, CSI and HFIAS do not need to be mutually exclusive. They can be complementary, and further refinements to each can draw from the strengths of the other.

5.3. Development of the HFIAS - a recap of efforts to date

The key steps to date in the development of the HFIAS include:

- Field validation studies (Cornell in Burkina Faso with Africare, Tufts in Bangladesh with World Vision, and Freedom from Hunger in Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Ghana, and the Philippines)
- Review of other studies of the experience of food insecurity to determine commonalities
- Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop I in April 15-16, 2004
- Development of the scale and guide
- Feedback on the scale and guide
- Partial revision of the scale and guide

Feedback on the draft guide (June 2005) was received from a range of stakeholders, including:

- PVOs – SAVE, Africare, Land O Lakes, World Vision, CRS, Freedom from Hunger, FHI
- US Government – USDA, CDC
- Multi-lateral – FAO
- Academic – Cornell and Tufts Universities

The most significant revisions to the model questionnaire and draft guide include (see Appendix 1 for the revised model questionnaire, October 2005.)

- New or reworded questions
- Response options that collect frequency of behavior
- Dropping the interviewer rating question and questions related to coping strategies having to do with a means of augmenting the household resource base

The next steps include:

- This workshop: Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop II (October 19 2005) – focus on options for analyzing the data to create useful indicators
- Final revision of the scale and guide
- Field testing of the scale and guide

6. Creating indicators based on the HFIAS

The goal for the afternoon session of the workshop was to reach a consensus on a definition of a continuous (average HFIAS Score) and a categorical indicator (Household Food Insecurity (Access) Status) that provides the most useful information that can be extracted based on the

HFIAS. The following information and suggestions were provided to the group to guide the small group discussions.

6.1. Criteria to be considered in determining the “best” process for calculating indicators

- Universality
- Comparability across cultures
- Transparency of calculation process
- Ease of use

6.2. Categorical Variable: Levels of Severity

The HFIAS approach assumes the following: 1) the questions have an inherent meaning, 2) the questions reflect differing levels of severity, and 3) severity is linked to frequency of experience for any question and across questions. To determine a transparent method of calculating an indicator, however, several other assumptions need to be discussed and a consensus reached. One assumption is that the questions in the HFIAS are arrayed in order of increasing severity. Agreement on assumptions about how likely it is that there will be consistent patterns in respondent answers also needs to be reached. Are respondents likely to affirm some but not all of the questions reflecting different domains of the or experience, or will respondent not affirm questions reflecting a more severe experience if s/he hasn't affirmed most/all lower severity questions and will not report more frequent occurrence of more severe experience than the frequency of occurrence of less severe experiences?

6.3. Categorical Variable: Weighting

Related to the issue of accurately depicting severity is whether or not to weight the questions by externally assigned weights. If questions are not assigned weights, some domains will have greater weight in a summary score simply by virtue of the number of questions in the scale that refer to that domain, as demonstrated below:

Domain	Number of Questions in Scale
Anxiety/Uncertainty	1
Insufficient Quality	3
Insufficient Quantity/Physical Consequences	5
Shame/Social Unacceptability	1

In the absence of external weights, the domain of insufficient quantity/physical consequences will contribute five times as much to the total scale score than does anxiety/uncertainty or shame/social unacceptability

The following questions must be answered in the process of deciding how to calculate a summary score:

- Should all domains have the same weight OR particular domains have a greater weight?
- Should all questions have the same weight OR particular questions have a greater weight?

6.4. Continuous Variable

The process of calculating a continuous variable to create an Average HFIAS Score Indicator needs to take into account the following considerations:

- How to assign a value to the response to each question
- How to sum these values to create score for each household
- How to use the respondent-provided information of frequency (0–never, 1–rarely, 2–sometimes, 3–often) of the experience
- If and how to weight to reflect severity or importance of particular questions

Some possibilities for a continuous variable and a categorical variable are presented in the following table:

	Question #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
HFIAS score	Response (Freq)	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	
	Yes/no	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	
	Severity weight	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	
Household Food Insecurity Status	1. \sum yes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	7
	2. \sum freq	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	14
	3. \sum severity weight	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	0	0	0	14
	4. \sum Q#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0	0	0	28
	5. \sum Q# * freq	3	6	6	8	10	6	7	0	0	0	46
	6. \sum severity weight * freq	3	6	4	4	4	2	3	0	0	0	26

7. Individual group conclusions on defining and calculating a categorical variable

The participants were divided into three groups with the following charge - to arrive at consensus on how to create a categorical variable from the information that is provided from the 10 questions that make up the HFIAS.

The groups were asked to consider several elements in order to create the categorical variable. In most cases, the questions must be “scored”, that is, a value assigned to every possible response to the question. Some manner of disaggregating the scores (“cut offs”) and/or creating meaningful categories must be determined. Those *categories* need *labels* (e.g., moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure) that assist in the ultimate use of the scale as an indicator of the prevalence of food insecurity in a population.

The groups arrived at varying degrees of consensus on a process for creating a categorical variable of household food insecurity (access). Each groups' conclusions are described below.

7.1. Group #1 conclusions

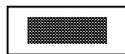
Create four categories:

- Food Secure - 0 or 0 + worry (rarely)
- Mildly Food Insecure (programmatically not so important) - ± worry (sometimes or often) and 0 for Q5- Q9 or rarely Q3/Q4 or any response to Q2
- Moderately Food Insecure – 0 for Q7-Q9 and rarely/sometimes for Q5-Q6 or sometimes/often for Q3-Q4
- Severely Food Insecure - ≥ rarely for Q7-Q9 (any of them) or ≥ often for either Q5 or Q6

An affirmative response to Q10 (shameful behavior) might bump a household up one level of severity.

The group presented the table below as a demonstration of their categorical approach.

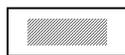
Question	Frequency			
	Never 0	Rarely 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				



- food secure



- moderately food insecure



- mildly food insecure



- severely food insecure

7.2. Group #2 conclusions

Q1 and Q10 are not useful questions. They are questions of perception. In addition, they present difficulties in use in a questionnaire in that they will be harder “to sell” and harder to ask and elicit a response.

Q10 – still “looks” like a coping strategy. The use of the word “shame” creates a harsh characterization.

Suggested reordering of the questions

- Switch Q3 and Q4 because lack of variety is less severe than eating a non-preferred food
- Switch order: Q8, Q9, Q7 because running out of food is most severe

Create four categories:

- Q2,Q3,Q4 – Quality compromised with assets
- Q4 bridges both quality and quantity
- Q4,Q5,Q6 – Quantity compromised with compromised assets
- Q7,Q8,Q9 – Food asset depleted

The assumption is that even with a decrease in quality the household may still have assets. A decrease in quantity indicates the point when the household begins to resort to using assets. A household won't do "x" until they have used up assets.

- These categories imply that the scale somehow measures assets.
- No consensus on how to place households in a category
- Households could be in more than one category
- Frequency is important as it relates to severity. Weighting is different depending on severity.

7.3. Group #3 conclusions

- Frequency is important but need to test the added value of obtaining this information
- Q1 is not really relevant for program information.
- Questions are correctly ordered and will be relatively consistent within the population. When you get to the household level there will be a lot of variability
- To classify a household as "severe", they must reply affirmatively to more than just one question
- For items that occur less often, "rarely" and "often" may indicate a real difference.
- Are four levels of frequency too many?
- Consider changing the name of the scale to reflect the focus on just access
- Shame is not a coping strategy, it refers to human dignity
- Need to test the relevance of worry empirically

Group 3 arrived at consensus in the following areas:

1. Relative importance of items

- Construct of quantity is most important, and that is half the items
- Some feel uncertain as to the programmatic relevance of item 1 (worry)
- Item 3 is something you would rather not eat, item 10 is doing something reprehensible
- What are we expecting from item 10? This is about human dignity. Will need to express in local context and local language

2. Assumption of the appropriate ordering of items

- It is not necessary that a household reporting indications of severe items to affirm all prior items

- But some attention to having to affirming at least some prior item is important

3. How often must an experience occur to be evidence of food insecurity?

- Even if an item is answered “rarely”, that may be meaningful, especially for the least-often affirmed and most severe items
- Mark Nord reports that people hardly give the “rarely” answer
- It is fine to ask about “rarely” and we will have to see later if this is informative
- Asking about “rarely” yields four possible responses, which makes it less manageable to work with the responses

4. Alternative methods for creating measures

- Idea of using “never” vs. any to get one measure and using often vs. other to get second measure, then cross-classify
- Borrowing idea from coping strategies work. Ten items, not graded in severity, asked yes or no. Got number of coping strategies
- Plotted % households vs. item number

7.4. Comments during group report out

- Q4 needs a better phrase than “day after day”
- Need to provide information or help on analyzing the data as a pre/post test
- Q3 needs to be clarified with prompts so that it indicates a low level of severity or else it would have to be moved up in severity (if it means, for example, famine foods)
- Q10 could be changed to ask about foods that you would not eat under any circumstance but the most dire food shortage

8. Conclusions of the workshop

8.1. The questions that make up the scale

- Although consensus on the usefulness of Q1 and Q10 was not reached, it was decided that the questions should remain in the scale in order to test their appropriateness empirically.
- Q3 and Q4 wording will be revised to increase the clarity of the questions.
- The current ordering of questions appears to be appropriate, particularly when looking at responses across a population.

8.2. Use of the HFIAS

- There remains a concern about the sensitivity of the scale in chronic food insecurity situations, although the field validation studies using the US HFFSM approach were undertaken in two countries with significant chronic food insecurity - - Bangladesh and Burkina Faso.
- The indicators created out of the scale can be very important from an advocacy point of view.

- The most important use of the scale is as an “easy” and transparent measure of the impact of PVO food security programs on the access component of household food insecurity.

8.3. Defining a Continuous Variable

- It is important to keep the continuous variable for two reasons: 1) it is a powerful way to make a comparison, and 2) it provides the ability to detect smaller degrees of change, in comparison to the categorical variable.
- Discussions indicate that the most appropriate way of creating a continuous variable is by summing the coded frequency of experience of each question (e.g. never = 0, rarely = 1, sometimes = 2, often = 3.) This method captures the importance of frequency but may underestimate severity in households that are experiencing the most severe manifestations of food insecurity.

8.4. Defining a Categorical Variable

- There was no clear consensus on which strategy was the most appropriate, however, the approaches presented by each group provided validation of the direction that the process has been going.
- It appears that there is consensus on the ordering of questions and that the order indicates an increasing level of severity, however, the decision that remains is where to draw cut-off lines between questions. This will also need to be empirically tested.
- The question of whether a household would have to affirm lower levels of severity before being categorized as severely food insecure is still undetermined.

8.5. How to continue feedback and testing of the HFIAS

- Within a country, all PVOs need to share the same definition of the indicators and all should be applying the measure in the same way.
- Scale should be tested along with other questions (i.e., in a standard baseline questionnaire)
- [0]Questions that make up the scale need to be asked together (i.e., it is not advisable to separate the questions and place among other questions)
- PVOs will look at their current and planned programs for opportunities to test the HFIAS.
- The final set of questions in the HFIAS still need to be tested and validated as a set. FANTA will develop protocols for validation of the HFIAS to provide to the PVOs and to be applied to datasets shared with FANTA by the PVOs.

9. Next steps

- The guide will be revised to reflect the workshop conclusions
- PVOs will be contacted to identify opportunities to incorporate the HFIAS in planned surveys and asked to share the data with FANTA
- A protocol for validating the HFIAS will be developed

Appendix 1. Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) Generic Questions discussed in October 2005 workshop

(These questions have been revised based on workshop conclusions. See Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) for Measurement of Food Access: Indicator Guide, January 2006 at www.fantaproject.org.)

No.	Question
	For each of the following questions, consider what has happened in the past 30 days. Please answer whether this happened never, rarely (once or twice), sometimes (3-10 times), or often (more than 10 times) in the past 30 days?
1.	Did you worry that your household would not have enough food?
2.	Were you or any household member not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of a lack of resources?
3.	Did you or any household member eat food that you preferred not to eat because a lack of resources to obtain other types of food?
4.	Did you or any household member eat just a few kinds of food day after day due to a lack of resources?
5.	Did you or any household member eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?
6.	Did you or any other household member eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?
7.	Was there ever no food at all in your household because there were not resources to get more?
8.	Did you or any household member go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?
9.	Did you or any household member go a whole day without eating anything because there was not enough food?
10.	Did you or any household member have to do something that made you feel ashamed because there was not enough food?

Appendix 2. Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop II, October 19, 2005 - Agenda

9:00 - 9:15	Welcome
9:15 – 9:30	Introduction to the tasks for the day
9:30 – 9:45	Recap of efforts so far
9:45 – 10:00	Report on work of National Committee of Statistics on US measure of food insecurity
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15- 10:45	Review of the guide: Highlighting changes based on feedback
10:45 – 11:15	Coping Strategies in the context of measuring food insecurity
11:15 – 12:15	Creating Indicators Based on the HFIAS: Calculating a continuous variable and a categorical variable
12:15 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:45	Group work: Definition and calculation of a categorical variable
2:45 – 3:00	Break
3:00 – 3:45	Presentation by small groups of each option
3:45 – 4:45	Consensus building on process to calculate a categorical variable 4:45 –
5:00	Next steps: Continued feedback and collaboration on field testing

Appendix 3. Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop II Participant List

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