

FAO Project Voices of the Hungry: measuring people's experience with food insecurity

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Abstract

The purpose of the presentation is to describe the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) and its capability to characterize the profile of food insecurity separately for men and for women. The following will be covered:

- The FIES theoretical basis, its methodology, evolution and how the scale contributes to the measurement of food insecurity
- An overview of the implementation of the FIES in the 2013 and 2014 Gallup World Poll[®] (testing phase and global roll out)
- Preliminary results from selected countries, focusing on differences between men and women.

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale is survey-based measure of the severity of food insecurity. The methodology was adapted from earlier experiential food security measures by FAO and applied to nationally representative samples through the Voices of the Hungry (VoH) project."

The FIES relies on people's direct responses to a set of questions regarding their actual experiences in accessing food. While it builds upon established tools (the *U.S. Household Food Security Scale*, *USHFSSM*, and the *Escala Latino Americana y Caribena de Seguridad Alimentaria*, *ELCSA*) the FIES introduces some key innovative elements. The choice of using the individual as unit of analysis and making reference to individual experiences are some of those.

Since the information is collected from individuals' experiences rather than those of their households as a whole, proper investigation into possible gender disparities in food access in the population will be feasible. Indeed, VoH is the first project that will allow characterizing the profile of food security separately for men and for women in low-income and middle-income countries.

Pilot studies in four sub-Saharan countries (Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Niger) were carried out in 2013 and an extensive linguistic adaptation was done for the major national languages and dialects to ensure that translations of the FIES are culturally appropriate and well understood.

FAO has contracted Gallup, Inc. to include the FIES in their 2014 Gallup World Poll[®], with a view to extend the collaboration over at least five years. This will allow FAO to collect cross-culturally comparable, real time information on how individuals experience food insecurity at a relatively limited cost. The FIES data will be used to generate estimates of the prevalence of mild, moderate, and severe food insecurity in the population. The analytics for processing the data and computing the scores are based on Item Response Theory Models.

The first gender differentiated food security profiles from the FIES will be available in October 2014, followed by a global dataset for over 150 countries in March/April 2015.

In showing preliminary results from selected countries, the following will be covered:

1. Report on gender-based differences on item severity, in order to show the extent to which men and women attributed the same severity to the items of the scale.
2. Show the main differences in food insecurity prevalence between men and women in the same country.