

Collecting data with remote surveys

Practical steps learned by collecting Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) data during the COVID-19 pandemic



From face-to-face to telephone surveys

- The ideal approach of using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) to measure the
 prevalence of food insecurity is by implementing it within a face-to-face well-established, ongoing,
 government-administered survey, with the advantage of being more granular (representative at
 sub-national level), less costly and less time-consuming then creating an ad-hoc survey.
- The global COVID-19 crisis and the lockdown measures in place in many countries made impossible to implement face-to-face surveys, forcing institutions to find alternative ways for data collection.
- Despite the many options available nowadays (web-based, apps, social media, interactive voice response (IVR) surveys, short message service (SMS) surveys, etc.), computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) have proven to be the most common alternative.
- CATI is also the solution that has been adopted to collect FIES data remotely during the COVID-19
 pandemic with the objective of collecting nationally representative data.

Objectives of a telephone survey

- As in any other survey, a telephone survey has the main objective of producing valid and reliable conclusions about the targeted population on the basis of the answers of sampled respondents. To accomplish this task, telephone surveys should:
 - first correctly select participants from the target population; and
 - second obtain a valid information regarding the variable of interest.
- In CATI, these two aspects may be particularly challenging vis-à-vis face-toface surveys
- Special strategies should be adopted to avoid strong biases in the results

Selecting participants

Telephone coverage

• Assess mobile subscription, penetration and coverage, and identify isolated areas (e.g. conflict environments).

Response, participation rate and self-selection bias

- Establish sample quotas using the main socio-demographic available variables
- Attempt to overcome within household differences in ownership by asking to speak to a randomly chosen adult

Selecting participants...continued

Sampling

- Whenever available, use phone numbers from an existing baseline (possibly face-to-face) survey that had a representative frame and a high response rate. If not possible, use Random Digit Dialing (RDD) or other procedures to form random samples. As a last resource, use stratified phone numbers made available from telephone service providers or administrative registers
- Compare socio-demographic characteristics collected in the survey with the available information from a recently conducted survey

Selecting participants...continued

Sampling

 Compute design and post-stratification sampling weights. Design weights are computed to adjust for possible underepresented populations. Adjustments are typically done whenever possible by gender, education, age, household size and area of residence (urban/rural)

Obtain valid information

Privacy, confidentiality and sensitivity of the questions

 Make clear at the beginning of the questionnaire that the collected information will be used only for research purposes and disseminated only as aggregated statistics

Respondent burden and incentives

- Design a **short questionnaire** possibly not exceeding 15 minutes
- Provide a telephone credit recharge incentive when the call is completed

Language/dialect/cultural/sex/religion respondent-enumerator matching

 Establish clear rules and mechanisms with the service provider to guarantee a social and linguistic matching between respondents and enumerators

Obtain valid information...continued

Reporting bias

- **Train enumerators** on the purpose of the survey and the intended meaning of the questions.
- During (and after) data collection, run weekly data quality checks with the available information. Data quality checks by enumerator and subpopulation groups are run to spot possible issues in the data collection process. These include:
 - Internal consistency checks: for example, unexpected response patterns by enumerator
 - External consistency checks: for example, alignmenment of the distribution by education or wealth to the official statistics in the country

Operationalize the telephone survey

- Prepare and launch an expression of interest to assess the market
- Prepare and launch the tender for short or long term agreements
- Select the service provider
- Alternatively, already existing Long Term Agreement (LTA) between an UN agency and the service provider can be used to contract the company (within the terms defined by the LTA)

Select the service provider

Prepare the data collection

- Define the workplan
- Develop the questionnaire, translate it and script it
- Train enumerators
- Define the sample design and the interview protocol to be followed by the service provider
- Test the questionnaire

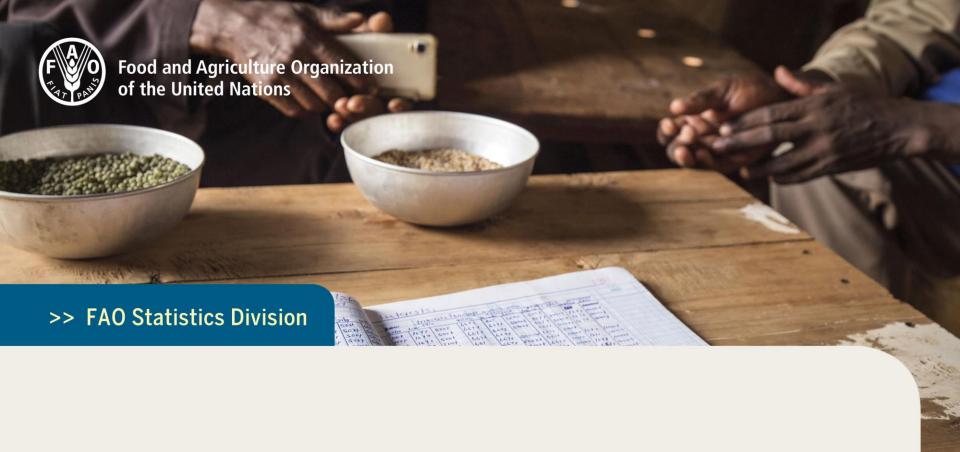
Operationalize the telephone survey



- Define a data quality check protocol
- Collect the data
- Implement on a regular (weekly) bases the data quality check protocol

Close the agreement

- · Clean the final dataset
- Possibly in collaboration with the service provider, develop design and post stratification sampling weights
- Perform the last data quality check and verify that all the established (geographic/social/linguistic etc.) quotas have been attended
- · Close the agreement



Thank you very much!

