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Methodological adaptations and strategies for remote collection of FIES

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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).

- 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 estimates about the targeted population** on the basis of the answers of sampled respondents. To accomplish this task, telephone surveys should:

  - correctly **select respondents** from the target population; and
  - **obtain a valid information** regarding the variable of interest.

- In CATI, these two aspects may be **particularly challenging** vis-à-vis face-to-face surveys

- Special strategies should be adopted to avoid **strong biases** in the results

Challenges and possible strategies to control for biases in telephone surveys

Selecting respondents

- 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

Challenges and possible strategies to control for biases in telephone surveys

Selecting respondents ... contiuned

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 draw 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/census

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

Challenges and possible strategies to control for biases in telephone surveys

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

Challenges and possible strategies to control for biases in telephone surveys

Obtain valid information ... continued

- **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 sub-population 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, **alignment of the distribution by education or wealth etc to the official statistics in the country**

Operationalize the telephone survey

Select the service provider

- Select the services provider to collect the data, either launching a tender for short- or long-term agreements or using already existing Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with 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

Contnied ....

Data collection and Quality checks

• Define a data quality check protocol and implment those protocls on a regualr (daily/weekly) bases to check the data qaility

• 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

Remote FIES data Collection

FAO, through the services providers, collected the FIES data using CATI approach during the pandemic;

- Initiatives during 2019 and 2020
  - In **110** countries collected the data to inform the global SDG database and report upon at country, regional and global levels, the food insecurity estimates (SDG indicator 2.1.2), in the SOFI report 2021
  - In **20** food crisis countries including **Afghanistan** and **Myanmar** for Asia
  - Office of Emergency and Resilience of the FAO, collected the data in number of countries including **Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Philippines, Pakistan** and **Myanmar** from Asia.
- On going initiatives
  - In **20** LDCs/LLDCs/SIDS that include, **Fiji, Laos** and **Maldives** from Asia and Pacific
  - In **142** countries, that will be used to inform the next round of SOFI report 2022

Other UN agencies collected the FIES data remotely in Asia (few examples)
  - UNICEF in MICS plus survey in **Mongolia**
  - The World Bank in high frequency telephone survey in **Cambodia**

Other UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs, academic and research institutes collected the FIES data remotely all over the world to assess the impact of COVID-19.

Proposed recommendations

- Besides the linguistic and cultural adaptation of the FIES, as usual, there is a need to carefully plan the surveys to avoid any potential bias due to remote data collection

- The FAO's Food Security and Nutrition Statistics would be happy to share its experience of remote data collection and would provide the needed technical assistance in analyzing the data. It is suggested to consult the team for the FIES data collection before and after implementation of the survey.

- As the FIES has proven to be the cost-effective measurement tool to measure the food insecurity remotely as well as face-to-face. It is suggested to promote a broader use of the FIES in different contexts.

Thank you!

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