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United Nations



OFFICE OF EVALUATION

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# Evaluation of the Project "Voices of the Hungry"



March 2018



**PROJECT EVALUATION SERIES**

# **Evaluation of the Project “Voices of the Hungry”**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF EVALUATION**

**March 2018**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

EBIA	Escala Brasileira de Insegurança Alimentar
ELCSA	Escala Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Seguridad Alimentaria
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom Cooperation)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FIRST	Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (an EU-FAO policy support facility)
FMM	FAO Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism
FNS	Food and Nutrition Security
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Cooperation)
GWP	Gallup World Poll
PoU	Prevalence of Undernourishment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SO	Strategic Objective
SOFI	State of Food Insecurity in the World
SP	Strategic Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
US HFSSM	United States Household Food Security Survey Module
VoH	Voices of the Hungry



## Executive summary

### Introduction

1. One in eight people in the world (870 million) suffered from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012. Assessing the levels of hunger and food insecurity is essential for developing and monitoring policies aimed at addressing this issue. Because no single indicator can account for the many dimensions of food and nutrition security (FNS), efforts to measure FNS have progressively led to the development of a variety of different indicators. As the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ (FAO’s) new Strategic Framework was being introduced in 2013, work began on the “Voices of the Hungry” (VoH) project as an effort to develop a global FNS indicator that could be implemented by all member countries.
2. The main purpose of this evaluation was to assess the quality and relevance of the VoH project design and progress towards results, in order to i) provide accountability to FAO, its members, donors and other stakeholders; and ii) provide evidence-based recommendations for improving project implementation. In keeping with the evaluation purpose, the two main evaluation objectives were: i) assess the relevance, soundness and effectiveness of project interventions; and ii) identify opportunities and challenges for its continuation.
3. The results of this assessment contributed to and benefited from Strategic Objective 1 (SO1 - Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition), which has been conducted in parallel. The evaluation was conducted by staff of the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), assisted by an external technical adviser. The evaluation process was conducted in parallel and linked with the evaluation of Strategic Objective 1. Some of the country case studies for the SO1 evaluation informed the VoH evaluation as well.

### Findings

#### Evaluation Question 1: To what extent is FIES relevant in measuring food insecurity?

**Finding 1:** The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) is a robust and cost-effective indicator to measure people’s access to food. It is considered to be more cost-effective and easier to include in national household surveys than other FNS indicators. The capacity for data disaggregation is also perceived as a strong advantage.

**Finding 2:** FEIS is a household (ideally individual) level indicator for monitoring access to food based on people’s experience. It is aligned with countries’ global commitment to the second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) in terms of “leaving no one behind”.

**Finding 3:** Discrepancies between FIES and Prevalence of Undernourishment require clarification, and questions remain about what the moderate end of the scale actually measures in some countries. Response biases are hard to rule out for some FIES questions, which attempt to capture the experiential dimension of hunger.

**Evaluation Question 2: To what extent has the project been effective in achieving its desired results?**

**Finding 4:** VoH has been very effective in achieving its desired results, especially at the output and outcome levels: a global standard for measuring people's experience with food security was established; FIES was endorsed as the official indicator to monitor SGD2 - Target 2.1; FAO contracted the Gallup World Poll to collect FIES data in some 145 countries in 2014, 2015 and 2016; FAO owns the methodology and all the datasets processed to date; national counterparts have had their capacities developed to implement and analyse FIES; and as of 2017, 58 countries have authorized FAO to publish national FIES data in the State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI) 2017. Twenty-two countries have already incorporated FIES into their national household surveys.

**Finding 5:** Misunderstandings about what FIES is really measuring are preventing some countries from adopting the scale and/or publishing the data. While Output 1 – “a global standard for measuring people's experience with food security is established” – has been much advanced with the inclusion of FIES as an SDG indicator, the status of a global standard to measure FNS in a comparable manner across countries is so far only acknowledged by some stakeholders.

**Finding 6:** The synergies between the different funding components (i.e. GCP/GLO/450/UK, FMM/GLO/106/MUL, MTF/GLO/707/BMG and FMM/GLO/120/MUL) contributed directly to the positive results.

**Evaluation Question 3: To what extent has the project built effective partnerships consistent with the goals and principles of the FAO partnership policy?**

**Finding 7:** Partnerships were essential for validating and disseminating FIES, as well as for exploring different forms of utilization of this new scale (i.e. UNICEF). The project involved partners from the design stage (i.e. donors and academia) to the implementation. Different actors used FIES to different purposes (e.g. to monitor projects; to conduct research; and to monitor policies).

**Finding 8:** The endorsement of FIES as part of the SDG monitoring framework for SDG 2.1 is expected to increase the number of partnerships in the future.

**Evaluation Question 4: To what extent is VoH contributing to FAO's Strategic Objective 1?**

**Finding 9:** FIES has been selected as an official indicator to monitor progress towards FAO's SO1. However, other forms of synergies and complementarities between the VoH and Strategic Programme (SP) 1 teams should be explored.

**Evaluation Question 5: How has FAO communicated the benefits and limitations of FIES, including links to policy, advocating for the hungry and the utility for SDG monitoring and reporting?**

**Finding 10:** Communicating the benefits and limitations on FIES, as well as advocating for its policy uptake, were identified as areas of weakness in the VoH project, starting from design to implementation.

**Finding 11:** To improve FIES's adoption and policy uptake, communication needs to go beyond the technical level and reach the political level. FAO could help VoH to develop a communication strategy to engage national stakeholders over and beyond National Statistics Offices.

**Evaluation Question 6: To what extent is the FIES Project making use of available resources in fulfilling its objectives?**

**Finding 12:** VoH made cost-effective use of resources to develop FIES and endorse it as an official SDG indicator, to collect data for about 145 countries every year and to capacitate different countries to collect their own data.

**Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the project design and implementation mainstreamed gender?**

**Finding 13:** Permitting sex-disaggregated data analysis was at the core of the project’s design and implementation, and it is considered one of the main project achievements. In line with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, FIES has potential to orientate policies, programmes and projects aimed at addressing gender equality.

**Evaluation Question 8: To what extent has there been increased demand for FIES at the national level and to what extent is FAO prepared to meet this demand?**

**Finding 14:** Support for incorporating FIES at the national level has increased over the years and is expected to increase further due to its endorsement as one of the progress indicators for SDG2.

**Finding 15:** The VoH team is planning a new strategy to address the increasing demand (e.g. nominating focal points in FAO regional offices), but more resources may be needed in the long-term.

**Evaluation Question 9: To what extent has the project improved national capacities of technical/statistics professionals?**

**Finding 16:** The project has successfully increased capacities of technical and statistics professionals to collect and analyse FIES data. However, more support is needed to adjust the raw data and weight the results.

**Finding 17:** Capacities to interpret FIES data are still insufficient, and the learning curve for using the “R” software is too steep. Only some technical professionals feel comfortable using it for FIES analysis.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

**Conclusion 1. The Voices of the Hungry project has achieved much progress towards its objective by developing the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) as a global standard for measuring people’s food security. The methodology has been successfully tested worldwide and some of the results published. Since the endorsement of FIES as an official indicator for target 2.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 2, there is growing demand for FAO to support national capacities for data collection, and much need for assistance on data analysis.**

4. The project has achieved remarkable results. Data has been collected by Gallup in some 145 countries during three consecutive years. In July 2017, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the global SDG indicator framework, including FIES as indicator 2.1.2 to monitor SDG2 – End Hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. In September 2017, the Gallup FIES data were published in the State of Food Security in the World (SOFI) for 58 countries who validated them. To date, the project team has

provided support on FIES to around 60 countries – far more than the number originally planned. Twenty-three countries have requested further support from FAO to include FIES in their national survey, and this demand is growing. In addition, some development partners such as GAFSP, Feed the Future and GIZ are already using FIES to monitor the impact of their projects.

**Conclusion 2. FIES is considered a technically solid and cost-effective tool to measure access to food, and adds value to the existent suite of indicators developed to this end. However, doubts about the international comparability of FIES have affected its uptake at national level, and scarce dissemination of microdata have hindered an independent scientific validation of the indicator.**

5. FIES was found to be a robust and cost-effective indicator for measuring people’s access to food. As such, it adds value to the existent set of indicators meant to measure different components of food security. The FIES methodology was tested and validated across different countries and languages. Similar perception-based indicators such as EBIA and ELCSA also attest for the validity of this type of scale.
6. However, questions remain about what the moderate end of the scale actually measures in some countries, and discrepancies between FIES and the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) still require clarification. Some within the statistics profession still question whether an experience-based indicator can offer a global monitoring yardstick.
7. The evaluation notes that no indicator is beyond reproach; that the FIES is still very young and understudied; and that its methodology could well continue to evolve and become progressively more robust. The research conducted so far by VoH and selected partners to test the robustness of FIES is perceived as useful but insufficient. So far, FAO has opted to limit the planned broad dissemination of FIES’s microdata to a small number of social scientists, but this restricts the capacity of external researchers to thoroughly review the data and methodology. The risk for FAO is to find itself unable to address legitimate technical concerns about an SDG indicator it is custodian for.

**Conclusion 3. Insufficient communication, especially with non-statisticians, limits broad political acceptance and policy uptake.**

8. Communication and advocacy efforts to promote FIES among non-statisticians, especially at the political level, were not adequately planned and budgeted for during the evaluated period, and are rapidly proving a limiting factor for FIES adoption. The VoH team has seldom engaged directly with policy makers. Their advocacy efforts are mainly targeting statisticians and other partners working with statistics. The network of FAO Decentralized Offices could be used to a greater extent to make the case for FIES in national policy circles.

**Conclusion 4. The ability of FIES to provide disaggregated data is a key advantage of the indicator, particularly for guiding policies and programmes addressing equity and the requirement to “leave no one behind”. This potential for disaggregation was only partially utilized to date: most FIES data is collected at household rather than individual level, which means that disparities in access to food within the same household cannot be assessed.**

9. One of the main advantages of FIES is its ability to generate disaggregated data, for instance by income quantiles, geographic area, gender, age, education level, or any other potential explanatory factor. This is a key feature for guiding policies and programmes addressing equity

and the commitment to “leave no one behind” contained in the 2030 development agenda. Moreover, the commitment to support governments in collecting sex-disaggregated data is part of FAO’s mandate and it is reflected in the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.

10. However, most countries incorporating the FIES module in their national data collection instruments do so within household-level surveys. The same applies to development partners adopting FIES for project monitoring purposes. It is usually cheaper and easier to collect data at household level than at individual level. While the household level supports some types of disaggregation (e.g. per income group or geographic area, or between male- and female-headed households), only data collected at the individual level would be able to reveal potential gender differences in access to food and to the resources necessary to produce or purchase it.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1. The VoH team should strengthen its support of national capacities to collect and analyze FIES data, while gradually phasing out the Gallup World Poll. South-south cooperation offers an opportunity in this regard. The use of another, more user-friendly software for data analysis may improve uptake and reduce the need for individual coaching.**

11. Appropriately, the VoH team has already planned a progressive phase-out of the Gallup World Poll as national data collection picks up in more and more countries. This is consistent with the central role afforded to national data in the monitoring of the 2030 agenda.
12. Beyond the regional focal points and online training already being deployed, FAO should seek to leverage the collaboration of regional statistics institutions and south-south cooperation between countries where capacities have already been developed and countries where capacities still require further support.
13. The VoH project may also consider using different statistical platforms for FIES analysis than the “R” software.

**Recommendation 2. FIES microdata should be widely shared and disseminated within the scientific community and among development partners, as a way to promote more independent research and validation of this new measurement tool.**

14. FAO should officially launch the web-based portal for microdata dissemination, offer restricted access to it by selected researchers and development partners, and communicate more openly about the potential advantages and disadvantages of the new indicator, as a way to promote the studies in need without inciting opposition from some governments.

**Recommendation 3. FAO should adopt a corporate communication strategy to better communicate FIES in policy circles and among the general public. Strategic Programme 1, the programme FIRST, and Country Offices could serve as entry points to work with policy-makers at national level.**

15. The communication strategy should explain FIES’s strengths and limitations to a broad audience, and promote a better understanding of the different types of phenomena identified by the severe and moderate levels of the scale. The moderate end of the scale does not relate to behaviors typically associated with “hunger” in common language, and this point needs to be carefully communicated. FIES aims to measure access to food, and the moderate end of the

scale refers not to an absolute lack of food, but to circumstances where this access is constrained in terms of the diversity and quality of food people can afford.

16. This strategy would highly benefit from OCC support, as well as from greater collaboration with FAO’s Strategic Programme 1 – help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. SP1 also manages the FIRST programme, which could use FIES as a tool to promote evidence-based policies. Country Offices and FAO Representatives also offer some capacity to advocate for FIES and explain its advantages and limitations at country level, a capacity that has remained largely untapped so far.

**Recommendation 4. The VoH project should advocate for the benefits of collecting data at the individual level to support better data disaggregation by age and sex.**

17. The implications of collecting FIES at the household vs the individual level should be further investigated with regard to cost, questionnaire design, and methodological and communications material.



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

1. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the quality and relevance of the project design and progress towards results, in order to i) provide accountability to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), its members, donors and other stakeholders; and ii) provide evidence-based recommendations for improving project implementation.
2. Due to the links between the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) and FAO’s work under Strategic Objective 1 (SO1 - Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition), the results of this assessment contributed to — and benefited from — the SO1 evaluation, which has been conducted in parallel.

### 1.2 Intended users

3. The main audiences of the evaluation are: i) FAO staff involved in the implementation of the project — especially from the Voices of the Hungry (VoH) team, Country Offices, the Strategic Programme (SP) 1 team, and the Office for Corporate Communication (OCC); ii) Governments, in particular national statistical offices in countries targeted by the project; and iii) the three main donors – the Department for International Development (DFID), the FAO Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM)<sup>1</sup> and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

### 1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

4. In keeping with the evaluation purpose, the two main evaluation objectives were to: i) assess the relevance, soundness and effectiveness of the project interventions; and ii) identify opportunities and challenges for its continuation.
5. The evaluation covered FAO’s work planned and delivered from November 2013 to November 2017. It focused mainly on the progress against the project’s intended objectives and planned outputs, as well as on possible contributions to FAO’s SO1. The evaluation assessed the strengths and weaknesses of FIES-derived indicators in comparison with the pre-existing FAO indicator on Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU), considering the need for a variety of indicators to measure food insecurity. The evaluation team also looked into capacity development at national level, gender mainstreaming, partnerships, communication and sustainability. Finally, the evaluation briefly assessed complementarities and synergies between the components funded by DFID (GCP/GLO/450/UK), the FAO Multi-Partner Support Mechanism (FMM/GLO/106/MUL and part of FMM/GLO/120/MUL) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (a component of MTF/GLO/707/BMG).

### 1.4 Methodology

6. The evaluation was conducted by staff of the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), assisted by an external technical adviser. The evaluation process was conducted in parallel and linked with the

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<sup>1</sup> The FAO Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM) is a flexible multi-donor trust fund that support the delivery of FAO’s approved Programme of Work and Budget. It has so far been funded by Belgium, the Netherlands, the International Flanders Cooperation Agency, Sweden and Switzerland.

evaluation of Strategic Objective 1. In particular, some of the country case studies for the SO1 evaluation<sup>2</sup> informed the VoH evaluation as well.

7. The methodological approach was aimed at addressing the main evaluation questions, as follows:

**Evaluation Question 1:** To what extent is FIES relevant in measuring food insecurity?

**Evaluation Question 2:** To what extent has the project been effective in achieving its desired results?

**Evaluation Question 3:** To what extent has the project built effective partnerships consistent with the goals and principles of the FAO partnership policy?

**Evaluation Question 4:** To what extent is the VoH contributing to FAO’s Strategic Objective 1?

**Evaluation Question 5:** How has FAO communicated the benefits and limitations of FIES, including links to policy, advocating for the hungry and the utility for SDG monitoring and reporting?

**Evaluation Question 6:** To what extent is the FIES Project making use of available resources in fulfilling its objectives?

**Evaluation Question 7:** To what extent has the project design and implementation mainstreamed gender?

**Evaluation Question 8:** To what extent has there been increased demand for FIES at the national level and to what extent is FAO prepared to meet this demand?

**Evaluation Question 9:** To what extent has the project improved national capacities of technical/ statistics professionals?

8. Based on a stakeholder mapping carried out with the Statistics Division (ESS) support, the evaluation team identified key informants at global and country levels. Semi-structured in-person and remote interviews were conducted with representatives from project managers, project team, communication team, identified partners, donors, national counterparts and other stakeholders at global and national level.
9. A desk-review of existing project documents and reports (e.g. progress reports, mid-term review, and CPEs carried out in countries where the FIES capacity development was conducted) provided relevant information on the context and structure of the project, as well as on the main project achievements and shortcoming. A literature review on technical and academic papers was also conducted to inform questions on relevance and effectiveness. Where relevant, reference was made to the SO1 evaluation that was running in parallel. Both evaluations benefitted from each other.
10. Due to the importance of the capacity development component, and as a way to gauge capacities and interest in member countries, selected national counterparts were consulted through in-person interviews during the country case studies undertaken for the SO1 evaluation (i.e. in Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Nepal). In addition, stakeholders in Indonesia were consulted by phone, and a web-based questionnaire targeted at 60 individuals in more

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<sup>2</sup> Brazil, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nepal and Nigeria.

than 30 countries that had participated in the capacity development activities. There were 58 responses to the survey, which represents a high completion rate (91 percent). Thirty respondents worked in national statistical departments.<sup>3</sup> The survey used a self-assessment scale to compare knowledge of food and nutrition security concepts before and after training. A simple weighting system was assigned to depth of knowledge following the well-known Bloom’s taxonomy of learning objectives. For example, being able to teach someone else a subject is weighted heavier than only being able to describe the basic concept.<sup>4</sup>

11. The evaluation adopted a consultative and transparent approach with all relevant stakeholders throughout the entire evaluation process, in consistency with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards,<sup>5</sup> and was in line with the Office of Evaluation (OED) Manual and FAO policies such as the Policy on Gender Equality.

### **1.5 Limitations**

12. Due to budget and time constraints, it was not possible to set-up specific country case studies for the VoH evaluation. The evaluation relied instead on a limited number of country case studies undertaken as part of the SO1 evaluation. However, the large number of survey respondents from national statistical offices helped offset this weakness.
13. The global publication of the data is too recent (September 2017) to conduct an in-depth analysis on the policy uptake of FIES at this stage.
14. The section devoted to financial resources and efficiency (see Evaluation Question 6: To what extent is the FIES Project making use of available resources that are relevant in fulfilling the project objectives?) is based on expenditure data from corporate databases as of date. It does not represent an official statement of expenditures.

### **1.6 Structure of the report**

15. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the background of the Project; evaluation questions are presented and discussed in Chapter 3; and Chapter 4 presents conclusions and recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> From Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Gambia, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, State of Palestine, Swaziland, Turkey, Uganda, Comoros, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>4</sup> For more information see Krathwohl’s “A revision of Bloom’s taxonomy: An overview” - Theory into practice 41.4 (2002): 212-218.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>

## 2. Background: The Voices of the Hungry Project

16. One in eight people in the world (870 million) suffered from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012.<sup>6</sup> Assessing the level of hunger and food insecurity is essential for developing and monitoring policies aimed at tackling this issue. Because no single indicator can account for the many dimensions of food and nutrition security (FNS), efforts to measure FNS have progressively led to the development of a variety of different indicators.<sup>7</sup>
17. Monitoring food and nutrition security has been an FAO core function since its foundation. FAO has produced estimates of the Prevalence of Undernourishment and of the Number of Undernourished since 1974, when a first global and regional assessment was published with the fifth World Food Survey presented at the World Food Conference held in Rome in November 1974. Since then, the PoU has been used to monitor the long-term global evolution of chronic food deprivation. It was for instance used to monitor progress against Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1, target 1C: “Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger”.
18. Improved monitoring and reporting on FNS is a major focus of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Following the food price crisis of 2007/08, the CFS began a reform process in 2009 and the PoU subsequently underwent a revision to improve the accuracy of its consumption and demographic adjustments. However, the PoU only estimates the share of the population below a certain food security threshold; it cannot measure the severity of hunger for those people suffering from it. And as other similar indicators,<sup>8</sup> it is based on dietary energy intake and misses the more qualitative aspects of hunger, such as nutrient deficiency that stems from a lack of diet diversity.
19. In the 1990’s, research in the United States of America revealed that the experience of food insecurity is characterized initially by uncertainty and anxiety regarding food access, followed by changes in the quality of the diet as the situation worsens, such as a less balanced, more monotonous diet. With increasing severity, the quantity of food consumed decreases as portion sizes are reduced or meals are skipped. These findings formed the basis for the United States Household Food Security Survey Module (US HFSSM) which has been applied annually in the United States since 1995 to monitor the food security situation.<sup>9</sup> The US HFSSM has served as a model for other experience-based food insecurity scales, in particular the Latin American and Caribbean Food Security Scale (Escala Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Seguridad Alimentaria - ELCSA) and the Brazilian Food Insecurity Scale (Escala Brasileira de Insegurança Alimentar – EBIA).
20. As FAO’s new Strategic Framework was being introduced in 2013, work began on the “Voices of the Hungry” project as a further effort to develop a global FNS indicator that could be implemented by all member countries to address some of the shortcomings of the PoU.

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<sup>6</sup> State of Food Insecurity in the World, IFAD/FAO/WFP 2012 (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3027e/i3027e.pdf>).

<sup>7</sup> Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, First Version. Committee on World Food Security, Thirty-ninth Session, Rome, Italy, 15-20 October 2012 (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/026/ME498E.pdf>).

<sup>8</sup> Such as the Global Hunger Index of IFPRI and the Food Consumption Score of WFP.

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton et al.: *Household food security in the United States in 1995*. Summary Report of the Food Security Measurement Project. USDA 1997 (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/FoodSecurity/SUMRPT.PDF>)

21. Building on the United States Household Food Security Survey Module (US HFSSM), the Latin American Escala Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Seguridad Alimentaria (ELCSA) and the Brazilian Escala Brasileira de Insegurança Alimentar (EBIA), FAO developed an experience-based food insecurity measurement tool, called the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. The FIES offers an experience-based measurement of the severity of food insecurity that relies on people’s direct responses to a series of questions regarding their access to adequate food. It represents a significant change in approach to food insecurity measurement compared to traditional ways of assessing it indirectly, either through the determinants (such as food availability) or the consequences (such as stunted growth and other signs of malnutrition). Consisting of a set of eight questions (see Table 1), the FIES is intended to be reliable, cost-effective and generate disaggregated information to help identify population groups most affected by food insecurity in a given country or geographic area. It is expected to make an important contribution to the FAO suite of food and nutrition security indicators.

**Table 1:** Questions that compose FIES

<i>During the last 12 months, was there a time when:</i>
1. You were worried you would run out of food because of a lack of money or other resources?
2. You were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food because of a lack of money or other resources?
3. You ate only a few kinds of foods because of a lack of money?
4. You had to skip a meal because there was not enough money or other resources to get food?
5. You ate less than you thought you should because of a lack of money or other resources?
6. Your household ran out of food because of a lack of money or other resources?
7. You were hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money or other resources for food?
8. You went without eating for a whole day because of a lack of money or other resources?

22. The Voices of the Hungry project (umbrella programme code: PGM/MUL/2013) was officially launched in November 2013. Funded by DFID and coordinated by the FAO Statistics Division (ESS), the VoH has supported the testing and validation of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale on a global scale. DFID provided a total of USD 4 994 017 (project code: GCP/GLO/450/UK), complemented by a financial support of USD 2.4 million from the Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism (project code: FMM/GLO/106/MUL), and by USD 4 451 054 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (project code: MTF/GLO/707/BMG). The VoH project has also benefited from FMM support through another allocation: FMM/GLO/120/MUL – “FMM support to SO1, OO 103 - Food Security Monitoring for SDGs”. Half of its budget of USD 1 497 250 was allocated to FIES. Finally, FAO supported the project through corporate resources, as follows:
- USD 1 943 594 for data-collection in 140 countries in 2016;
  - USD 100 000 from FAO’s multidisciplinary fund allocated by the Office of the Director-General (ODG) dedicated for the development of the e-learning course on FIES and other capacity development activities; and
  - USD 150 000 from the Office of Chief Statistician (OCS) intended to be used for FIES

implementation and capacity development activities in 2018.

The overall goal of the VoH is to improve policy and programme response to food insecurity through an improved monitoring on food insecurity by i) establishing a global standard for measuring the severity of food insecurity based on people’s self-reported experiences; and ii) applying the FIES at national level to produce comparable indicators on the prevalence of food insecurity.

23. To achieve this goal, the project was organized along five main outputs:
  1. A global standard for measuring people’s experience with food security is established.
  2. Datasets of experienced food insecurity as collected by Gallup World Poll in 150 countries annually are owned by FAO.
  3. A new set of indicators on the extent of experienced food insecurity at different level of severity based on the FIES is produced, and the linkages with Policies on Food Security are demonstrated.
  4. The technical and functional capacities at individual and organizational level are reinforced to improve the ability of the Governments in the targeted countries and of their development partners to monitor trends in food insecurity and hunger and to assess impact of relevant policies, based on the application of the FIES.
  5. The use of the FIES is promoted worldwide through advocacy, communication and partnership initiatives.
24. The project name (“Voices of the Hungry”) points to the FIES methodology of asking directly for people’s own assessment of their food security, but may also hint at the advocacy dimension of giving the food insecure a voice, rather than treating them as mere percentages.
25. The main direct beneficiaries of the projects are the National Statistical Offices,<sup>10</sup> policymakers and other development partners in the targeted countries. A set of activities aimed at improving their abilities to timely and reliably monitor the state of food insecurity at subnational and national levels were put in place.
26. However, since developing capacities is a long-term process, the project contracted Gallup Inc. to apply the FIES survey module to a “nationally representative samples of the adult populations in at least 140 countries” in 2014, 2015 and 2016, as a way to test the robustness of the FIES in different cultures, languages and livelihood conditions, as well as to ensure the availability of data until National Statistical Offices own the method.

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<sup>10</sup> Project document.

### 3. Evaluation findings

#### 3.1 Evaluation Question 1: To what extent is FIES relevant in measuring food insecurity?

**Finding 1:** FIES is a robust and cost-effective indicator to measure people’s access to food. It is considered to be more cost-effective and easier to include in national household surveys than other FNS indicators. The capacity for data disaggregation is also perceived as a strong advantage.

**Finding 2:** As a household- or ideally individual-level indicator to monitor access to food that is based on people’s experience, FIES is aligned with countries’ global commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 2 in terms of “leaving no one behind”.

**Finding 3:** However, discrepancies between FIES and PoU still require clarification, and questions remain about what the moderate end of the scale actually measures in some countries. Response biases are hard to rule out at least for some FIES questions, which attempt to capture the experiential dimension of hunger.

##### a) What are the main advantages and disadvantages of FIES when compared to the existing indicators for FNS?

27. As defined by the member countries at the 1996 World Food Summit, “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.<sup>11</sup> Based on this concept, food security is said to have three main dimensions: physical availability, economic access to food, and food utilization.<sup>12</sup> A fourth dimension refers to the stability of the three other dimensions over time, to take into account the dynamic nature of FNS (e.g. seasonal lean periods).
28. The evaluation confirms that FIES, as other similar scales such as HFSSM and EBIA, is indeed a robust tool to measure access to food, as the second dimension of food insecurity, and that it adds value to the set of existing indicators on food security. This is why the “prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)” has been included by the United Nation Statistical Commission’s Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDG) as Indicator 2.1.2 to monitor SDG2 (End Hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).<sup>13</sup>
29. Among the different dimensions of food and nutrition security, the area of access to food has not been apprehended well and at a reasonable cost in previous instruments and indicators. FIES was conceived to fill this gap. Income indicators, for example, do not show how the household money is being spent, so it is not possible to assess whether people choose to pay for other needs such as rent and electric power rather than food.<sup>14</sup> Household expenditure surveys can estimate food consumption rather precisely but at a very high cost. Within the set of indicators currently supported by FAO, the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) offers a

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<sup>11</sup> Policy Brief: Food Security; FAO June 2006.

(<http://www.fao.org/forestry/13128-0e6f36f27e0091055bec28ebe830f46b3.pdf>)

<sup>12</sup> FAO. 2008. An introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security.

<sup>13</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/?area=PRY>

<sup>14</sup> See: *Insegurança alimentar medida a partir da percepção das pessoas*, by Ana Maria Segall Corrêa, Estudos Avançados vol.21 no.60, May/Aug. 2007 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-40142007000200012>).

measure of absolute undernourishment at the national level. It attempts to measure the number of people in the entire population (i.e. of all ages) of a country for whom caloric intake is below a certain threshold, called the minimum dietary energy requirement. It is underpinned by Food Balance Sheets that capture domestic food supply of the commodities in terms of production, imports and stock changes. Another FAO indicator, the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women, aims at measuring nutritional aspects related to consumption and diet diversity, covering the dimension on food utilization. And in the health sector, most indicators are about nutritional outcomes in terms of body growth or weight as compared to age.

30. While FIES is not supposed to replace other FNS indicators, it presents some methodological advantages, as well as disadvantages, when compared to them. The first advantage identified by most stakeholders is that it is short and easy to include as a module in any survey or ongoing data collection system. As some stakeholders who are already using FIES in-countries remarked, “it only takes three minutes to answer”, which represented neither a burden to either enumerators or respondents nor a cost to the overall survey. Additionally, most interviewees felt it was easy to translate and intuitive for training enumerators. Data collection is straightforward and questions intuitive.
31. Being at its core an experienced-based scale, FIES is an inexpensive indicator with relatively straightforward data collection, processing, analysis and interpretation of results. The experience of FIES precursors such as ELCSA and HFSSM shows that this type of indicator provides benefits in monitoring policies related to food security, and at a very low cost.<sup>15</sup> Perez-Escamilla<sup>16</sup> et al, in their assessment of the usefulness of diverse food insecurity indicators for policymakers based on the SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable/attainable, relevant, and time bound), recommended experienced-based food insecurity scales as their top choice for assessing the impact of a food assistance programme on household food insecurity, as well as for national food insecurity assessments.<sup>17</sup> The FIES module is considered more cost-effective than the Food Consumption Score,<sup>18</sup> for instance. It is estimated that the World Food Programme (WFP) spends USD 30 per one face-to-face data collection interview, while Gallup World Poll spent about USD 12.5 per FIES interview.<sup>19</sup>
32. Beyond collection, the data is also easier and faster to analyse than, for example, converting amounts of food consumed into calories. FIES is thus seen to be both timely and responsive to inform policy and programmes in near to real time when other FNS indicators can have a longer lag time.

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<sup>15</sup> In Brazil, EBIA was adopted as one of the key indicators to monitoring progress towards food security, as well as to define the government’s priorities in terms of policy targeting under the Fome Zero Programme.

<sup>16</sup> Pérez-Escamilla R., Gubert M.B., Rogesrs B. and Hromi-Fiedler A. Food security measurement and governance: Assessment of the usefulness of diverse food insecurity indicators for policymakers. Elsevier, *Global Food Security* 14 (2017) 96-104.

<sup>17</sup> A ‘SMART score’ was applied to a total of 12 FS indicators.

<sup>18</sup> The Food Consumption Score is an index developed by the World Food Programme in 1996. It aggregates household-level data on food diversity and frequency of consumption over the previous seven days, weighted according to the relative nutritional value of the consumed food groups.

<sup>19</sup> IAEG-SDGs (2015). Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators. *Compilation of Metadata Received on Indicators for Global Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets*, October 2015.



33. The fact that FAO is providing capacity development free of charge evidently contributes to the low cost of implementing FIES in countries.
34. Ease of data collection is particularly precious within the context of the SDG monitoring framework. The ambitious SDG agenda includes 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators. While estimates for the cost of monitoring the SDGs range widely, from USD 1 billion per annum<sup>20</sup> to USD 17 billion per annum,<sup>21</sup> there is no doubt that SDG monitoring will prove a significant financial burden on developing countries. In this context, “simple, cheap indicators such as FIES have advantages”, as one stakeholder noted.
35. By collecting data at individual or household level, FIES allows several types of disaggregation such as by age, gender, rural vs urban areas, etc. This contributes to identifying discrepancies and vulnerable groups or individuals at country, local, community and even household levels. Such an indicator, based on people’s experience and relatively easy to disaggregate, is aligned with countries’ global commitment to the SDGs in terms of “leaving no one behind”. In contrast, the PoU has almost no capacity for disaggregation below the national level.
36. Another feature of the FIES indicators is that they “give voice” to those who are experiencing food insecurity – hence the project name: “Voices of the Hungry”, which signals the accountability dimension of FIES as a channel for food insecure people to raise their concerns.
37. There is also a human experience dimension to this: food insecurity is not just the absence of certain physical assets, but also involves an anxiety about whether the family will have enough food in the future. This aspect is reflected in Question 1 of the scale: “During the last 12 months, was there a time when you were worried you would run out of food because of a lack of money or other resources?” (emphasis added)
38. FIES has been described as an “experience-based indicator”. Instead of measuring people’s weight, height or income, FIES simply asks them if they worried about lack of food, whether they had to reduce their food intake or content themselves with cheap, monotonous food, etc. In doing so, FIES treats its respondents as decision makers and breadwinners, rather than as patients; it approaches them as subjects rather than as objects. This is a positive feature, stressing the importance of human agency and the fact that hunger is primarily an experience.
39. This generally positive feature of giving voice to society may also present a downside, in that it necessarily introduces a dose of subjectivity in the collected data. Because it is experience-based, it may inherently be more subjective than direct anthropometric measurements such as those underpinning the stunting and wasting prevalence indicators, or estimates of the availability of staple food at national level, which underwrite the PoU.
40. It is important to note here that most FIES questions are about objective and factual events, and hence probably quite robust: e.g. questions on whether one had to “skip a meal” or “went without eating for a whole day” are about objective and somewhat painful events, which the respondent is likely to remember and report accurately even after a significant recall period.

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<sup>20</sup> Data for Development: A Needs Assessment for SDG Monitoring and Statistical Capacity Development, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, April 2015. (<http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Data-for-Development-Full-Report.pdf>).

<sup>21</sup> Benefits and Costs of the Data for Development Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, by Morten Jerven Simon, Copenhagen Consensus Center, September 2014. ([http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/data\\_assessment\\_-\\_jerven.pdf](http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/data_assessment_-_jerven.pdf))

41. However, a degree of subjectivity, some difficulties in recalling and potentially some introduction of bias therein are hard to rule out in the case of Question 1, which is inherently subjective. In including this question as the first echelon in a global food insecurity scale, FAO followed in the footsteps of the US HFSSM, the ELCSA and EBIA. The evaluation recognizes the importance of capturing perceptions and apprehensions, but notes that from a questionnaire design perspective Question 1 is probably more prone to introducing context-specific biases than the other questions in the scale. Different cultures and different people worry about food in different ways, whereas skipping a meal or not eating for a day are more objective events, the interpretation of which depends less on cultural context.
42. Discrepancies between FIES and PoU have been noted.<sup>22</sup> Using results for the 129 countries for which both estimates were available for 2014-16, SOFI 2017 made a comparison of the prevalence of undernourishment based on the PoU and the prevalence of severe food insecurity based on the FIES. It found that the two indicators were closely aligned, but a few anomalies appeared. Some Eastern and Southern African countries displayed higher estimates of the prevalence of severe food insecurity for 2014-16 than the PoU indicated, something which may reflect an improved ability of the FIES-based indicator to reflect in real time on the impact of three consecutive years of drought in these countries linked to the El Niño effect (the PoU takes more time to estimate). Meanwhile, some Asian countries displayed the opposite discrepancy: a low prevalence of food insecurity as measured by the FIES combined with a higher prevalence of undernourishment as measured by PoU, a discrepancy which leads SOFI authors to envisage a possible under-reporting of food hardship by survey respondents in some Asian countries.<sup>23</sup>
43. While these discrepancies between severe food insecurity as measured by FIES and the PoU are somewhat uncommon, the FIES moderate food insecurity data seem harder to reconcile with the PoU. The moderate end of the FIES scale is primarily geared at measuring poor diet diversity due to a lack of resources and researchers have stressed that poor diet diversity is linked to obesity in certain contexts. Therefore, a high prevalence of obesity can potentially coexist with a situation of moderate food insecurity measured by FIES, as seems to be the case in the Dominican Republic. In technical terms, it is possible for an individual to be experiencing hunger at times, and to be obese (e.g. hunger-obesity paradox).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, multiple forms of malnutrition now coexist in the developing world, with countries experiencing simultaneously high rates of undernutrition, micro-nutrient deficiency and obesity. Childhood overweight and obesity are increasing in most world regions, and in all regions for adults.<sup>25</sup> However, most decision makers would not intuitively associate “obesity” with “food insecurity”, and thus the very name of the FIES may be counter-intuitive to some, especially towards the moderate end of the scale.

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<sup>22</sup> The PoU itself, as any methodology for constructing global estimates of socioeconomic variables, has been subject to many criticisms published in the literature, and its methodology has evolved, in part as a response to such criticism, the last time in 2012. See for instance: Peter Svedberg, 1999, *841 million undernourished?*, World Development 27 (12): 2081-98.

<sup>23</sup> The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017 - Building resilience for peace and food security, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-l7695e.pdf>).

<sup>24</sup> What Is the Hunger-Obesity Paradox? by Lee M. Scheier, Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Volume 105 Number 6, June 2005 ([http://jandonline.org/article/S0002-8223\(05\)00490-6/abstract](http://jandonline.org/article/S0002-8223(05)00490-6/abstract)).

<sup>25</sup> The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017 - Building resilience for peace and food security, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-l7695e.pdf>).

**b) How aligned is the FIES to the plans and priorities of the countries in fighting hunger and food insecurity?**

44. In 2000, 189 countries signed the Millennium Declaration and subsequent Millennium Development Goals to address what they identified to be the main national and global issues for human development. Reducing hunger and extreme poverty constituted MDG 1. Under MDG1, Target 1C (Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger), developing countries managed to decrease the number of undernourished people by almost half between 1990 and 2015. However, about 795 million people were still estimated to be undernourished by then.<sup>26</sup> In September 2015, the same countries set the Sustainable Development Goals, in which “end hunger and malnutrition once and for all”<sup>27</sup> is highly prioritized as part of SDG2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).
45. Under this new global commitment, the development of innovative indicators able to monitor progress towards the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, as well as to orientate national and global actions in the development of better interventions, was deemed imperative. FIES is one of these renewed efforts to support countries in their strategies to end hunger and malnutrition. As explained above, some of the characteristics of FIES (easy disaggregation based on people’s voices) render it particularly desirable for SDG monitoring. While it is too early to tell how many countries will actually use the FIES to monitor SDG2 in their own national reporting to the High Level Panel of Experts, the adoption of FIES as an official SDG2 indicator at global level augurs well of the continued relevance of the new scale.

**3.2 Evaluation Question 2: To what extent has the project been effective in achieving its desired results?**

**Finding 4:** VoH has been very effective in achieving its desired results, especially at the output and outcome levels: a global standard for measuring people’s experience with food security was established; FIES was endorsed as the official indicator to monitor SGD2 - Target 2.1; FAO contracted the Gallup World Poll to collect FIES data in some 145 countries in 2014, 2015 and 2016; FAO owns the methodology and all the datasets processed to date; national counterparts have had their capacities developed to implement and analyse FIES; and as of 2017, 58 countries have authorized FAO to publish national FIES data in SOFI 2017. Twenty-two countries have already incorporated FIES into their national household surveys.

**Finding 5:** Nevertheless, misunderstandings about what FIES is really measuring are preventing some countries to adopt the scale and/or publish the data. While Output 1 (a global standard for measuring people’s experience with food security is established) has been much advanced with the inclusion of FIES as an SDG indicator, the status of global standard to measure FNS in a comparable manner across countries is so far only acknowledged by some stakeholders.

**Finding 6:** The synergies between the different funding components (i.e. GCP/GLO/450/UK, FMM/GLO/106/MUL, MTF/GLO/707/BMG and FMM/GLO/120/MUL and FAO’s own funding support) contributed directly to the positive results.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/brochure/SDGs\\_Booklet\\_Web\\_En.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/brochure/SDGs_Booklet_Web_En.pdf)

**a) What are the planned results from the project interventions?**

46. At the impact level, VoH project intended to contribute to improve policy and programme responses to global food insecurity. Based on the premise that knowledge and information lead to better decisions, the project aimed at providing governments, institutions and organizations with timely, reliable and consistent data on food security.
47. Building on the experience of experience-based scales such as HFSSM, ELCSA and EBIA, the VoH had as ultimate outcome the establishment of “comparable annual global data capable of measuring people’s conditions of food insecurity at different levels of severity, based on their reported experiences, and improved methods and tools for data collection and analysis”.<sup>28</sup>
48. To reach this goal, the major outputs of the programme document were the following:
  - Output 1:** A global standard for measuring people’s experience with food security is established.
  - Output 2:** Datasets of experienced food insecurity as collected by Gallup World Poll in 150 countries annually are owned by FAO.
  - Output 3:** A new set of indicators of the extent of experienced food insecurity at different level of severity based on the FIES is produced, and the linkages with policies on food security are demonstrated.
  - Output 4:** Strengthened capacity of Governments and development partners to monitor and analyse food insecurity and hunger and to assess impact of relevant policies, based on the application of the FIES
  - Output 5:** The use of the FIES is promoted worldwide through advocacy, communication and partnership initiatives.
49. As a result of the implementation of these outputs, it was also planned that national and international stakeholders would make use of the FIES for policy and programme formulation and monitoring, and that the indicator would be used in flagship publications such as SOFI. It was also expected that civil society organization would use FIES to both increase general awareness on food insecurity and Governments’ accountability, as well as to better understand the causal relationship between determinants and impacts of food insecurity in its various dimensions.
50. Promoting this new indicator to become one of the indicators for measuring progress in the Post-2015 Development Agenda was considered as a potential achievement during programme formulation and included in the programme document for the “umbrella programme” PGM/MUL/2013-2018/VOH as an outcome indicator. This objective was progressively included more prominently in project design, i.e. reflected in the project document for the FMM component in the output section.

**b) Has the VoH made progress towards its intended outputs?**

51. **Output 1:** Initially, the VoH project team focused on elaborating a solid and robust methodology to launch a new indicator to becoming a global standard for measuring people’s experience with food security. FIES was developed and pilot tested in Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi

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<sup>28</sup> Project Document.

- and Niger already in 2013. Adjustments to the scale were made after this testing phase in order to improve its ability to capture severe levels of food insecurity.
52. Following the publication of the initial Gallup World Poll results in 2014 (see Output 2), in 2015, an expert consultation was launched to attest for the external robustness and validity of the scale. A document containing details on the technical and methodological aspects of FIES, which was titled “Methods for Estimating Comparable Prevalence Rates of Food Insecurity Experienced by Adults in 150 Countries”, was distributed to international experts for comments. Written inputs were provided and later discussed during a special meeting organized for external validation. The same year, the United Nations Statistical Commission’s Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators identified FIES as a key indicator to measure SDG2, Target 2.1, which was later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2017. Therefore, the VoH achieved one of its planned outcomes: promoting FIES as an official SDG indicator.
  53. Internal and external processes to verify that the conceptual premise of the index was valid across different countries, geographies and languages count as one of the greatest accomplishments of the VoH. The 20-years of use and research in the United States of a similar indicator and the application of a similar scale in some countries in Latin America also increased confidence in the approach. The VoH project has worked in tandem with the countries and across the regions to ensure that these pre-existing scales were compatible and comparable to FIES.
  54. While Output 1 (“a global standard for measuring people’s experience with food security is established”) has been much advanced with the inclusion of FIES as an SDG indicator, some experts still doubt that FIES can yield comparable results across countries. Most precursors of the FIES have been used at national level, a scale that can reflect local cultural context, as well as the national policy environment and objectives. A few countries have found it difficult to adjust their raw data to the global scale; the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), for example, highlighted this as a main challenge of using FIES in practice. Several statisticians interviewed identified the selection of cut-off points that would be relevant and comparable across countries as a significant problem. In Brazil, for example, the scale contains 14 questions, and tests with a shorter questionnaire have already presented some inconsistencies in the country.<sup>29</sup>
  55. **Output 2:** In 2014, the Gallup World Poll was contracted to test FIES in 150 countries around the world. Gallup Inc. translated and adapted the FIES questionnaire into 200 languages to ensure the consistency and comparability of the scale. The order of questions in the FIES questionnaire was confirmed in 147 countries that participated in the poll.<sup>30</sup> The results were published in Cafiero, C., Melgar-Quiñonez, H. R., Ballard, T. J., & Kepple, A. W. (2014). Validity and reliability of food security measures. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1331(1), 230-248.
  56. By March 2015, Gallup was expected to deliver to the VoH a minimum of 140 datasets; 146 were received. Considering that Gallup World Poll is present in 150 countries and that in a few of them it is not always possible to collect data due to social and political issues, the number of datasets received every year represents a great accomplishment towards Output 2. FAO owns the methodology and all the datasets processed to date.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/csc/v19n1/1413-8123-csc-19-01-00279.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Only Azerbaijan, Bhutan and China departed from the global scale.

57. The uptake of a new indicator by countries is a long-term process that goes beyond the project cycle, and it is not possible to guarantee that the same 145 or so countries will be interested in collecting this data on their own. However, the VoH team is engaged in finding solutions to sustainably own datasets in the future, as follows:
- as further discussed under Output 4, VoH continues to support countries to develop their own capacities to collect and analyse FIES data;
  - use of already existent national data whenever possible;
  - from 2018, contract with Gallup will be reduced to one quarter of previously spent resources on data collection (USD 500 000 as oppose to USD 2 million). Data will be collected in 48 selected countries. Priority is given to the most populous countries in each region, in which no national data will be available, as a way to get sufficient data for FAO to compile the main regional aggregates, albeit with lower reliability than in previous years when country coverage was much higher.
58. Whereas a transition to national data collection is consistent with the central role afforded to national data in the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, it must be noted that the research community is very supportive of the continuation of the world poll approach, which they see as offering better chances of getting comparable data at a global scale.
59. The periodicity for collecting and publishing the data could be reconsidered on a case by case basis. Some of the countries where the national statistics office currently collects FIES or another food security experience scale have opted for lesser periodicity than the recommended annual collection. E.g. in Brazil, the EBIA is collected every three years; and the *Oficina Nacional de Estadística* of the Dominican Republic intends to collect FIES every two years.
60. **Output 3:** As planned, a new set of indicators of the extent of experienced food insecurity at different level of severity based on the FIES was produced and published on the United Nations Statistical Division’s global database for SDG indicators, as well as in SOFI 2017, which is the leading global publication on food and nutrition security. However, only 58 out of over 140 countries authorized the publication of their data and linkages with policies on food security are yet to be demonstrated.
61. The FIES web-based portal allowing free access to the data, which was one of the important deliveries under Output 3, has not been put online yet, and the broad dissemination of FIES’s microdata has not been authorized to date. This reflects a deliberately cautious corporate communication policy in the face of reservations expressed by some Member Nations about the new indicator, as will be further detailed under Evaluation Question 5.
62. However, data was shared with some partner organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank. VoH also launched a competitive proposal-based process in which eight researchers were selected to receive the data in order to further develop research on the use of FIES. Biographies of the eight license holders and details on their intended research are available on the VoH website.<sup>31</sup> It is too early to assess progress in terms of validation by the broader scientific community or policy uptake, since data publication and dissemination was delayed and not fully delivered.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bl331e.pdf>

63. **Output 4:** Developing capacities of government and development partners on the application, analysis and interpretation of FIES was one of the key deliverables to ensure ownership and sustainability. To reach this goal, numerous workshops and trainings were organized at global, regional and national level (see Table 2).
64. A total of 60 countries and six regional institutions (African Union, Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), East African Community, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)) are listed in Table 2 below and were reached by some form of capacity development on FIES. The project team claims to have reached 72 countries with their capacity development activities. In any case, it is obvious that the project team provided capacity development to many more institutions than originally planned.<sup>32</sup>
65. An e-learning course is expected to be launched in early 2018 to provide supplementary support for those who have already received trainings, as well as to serve as a mechanism of self-learning for additional country officers interested in the FIES methodology.
66. The evaluation found very positive results towards strengthening capacities of national counterparts to monitor and analyse food insecurity and hunger based on the application of the FIES. National Statistical Offices personnel reported through the survey undertaken as part of this evaluation that they feel comfortable to implement, analyse and interpret FIES. However, many technical staff at country level do not yet feel comfortable using the “R” statistical package for conducting data analysis. The impact of capacity building activities is analysed further under Evaluation Question 9.

**Table 2:** Capacity development activities, by year

<b>2014</b>
<p>In Rome, training on methods for analysing food insecurity experience-based scales was given to 16 people from ministries of agriculture, social and agricultural statistics division, and national statistics offices and WFP. The following countries were represented: Angola, Cameroon, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Niger, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.</p> <p>Training on data collection and use of food security information was held in both Niger and Malawi for national statistics offices. In total, four people attended the training.</p> <p>A workshop to support strengthening the measurement and monitoring of FNS in the Latin American and Caribbean countries was held in Bogota. It was attended by 50 people from 16 countries. Participants included high level representatives from national and regional institutions involved in FNS measurement, monitoring and policy making.</p>
<b>2015</b>
<p>Training on data collection and use of food security information was held in Burkina Faso for the National Statistics Office. Two people attended it.</p> <p>Training on FIES data collection and analysis was conducted for 46 people from the <i>Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire</i> in Mauritania.</p> <p>Training on data collection and use of food security information was held in Rome for five participants representing the Ethiopian Public Health Institute, the Ethiopian Statistical Agency, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and Lebanese academia.</p>

<sup>32</sup> The target in the project document was: “25 institutions with an average of 2 professionals in each institution” having received trainings and/or remote coaching.

<p>In South Africa, a workshop on food security analysis using experience scales was conducted to representatives of 16 Southern African governmental and academic institutions. In total, it was attended by 30 people from Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC), the East Africa Statistical Training Centre, Makerere University (Uganda), Pretoria University, Kwa-Zulu-Natal University.</p> <p>One professional from Japan, Laos and Nepal each were trained on FIES.</p> <p>Latin American leaders of 20 indigenous organizations as well as project managers who are engaged in data collection and population survey work received training on FIES.</p>
<p><b>2016</b></p>
<p>Technical training on FIES to improve capacities of 25 people was conducted for the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the German Development Institute (DIE), with participants from Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan and the UK.</p> <p>Participation in the workshop “<i>Taller de apoyo a la implementación de la agenda de monitoreo de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en los países de América Latina</i>” in Panama, organized in support of the implementation of the monitoring framework for the SDGs in 18 Latin American countries.</p> <p>Intensive remote technical assistance training on FIES was given to three people from the National Statistics Office in Seychelles.</p> <p>Participation in the scientific workshop “<i>The Measurement of Hunger and Food Insecurity</i>” organized by the Indian Authorities in New Delhi, attended by 35 professionals from various institutions in India. Methodologies for both indicators, Prevalence of Undernourishment and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, were discussed.</p> <p>FAO led a national seminar, training and workshop on methods to compute food security indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 2.1 in Djakarta, Indonesia, attended by 75 participants from four organizing Governmental Institutions, related Ministries, Philanthropy and Business organizations, Civil Society Organization, United Nations Agencies, non-governmental organizations, Research Institutions, Professional Organizations, Experts and Academia.</p> <p>Short Training provided in Pakistan on methods to compute food security indicators for SDG 2, including a comprehensive presentation of the FIES to participants from the government of Pakistan (the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, the National Agricultural Research Centre, the Planning Commission and the National Food Security Assessment Task Force).</p> <p>Two presentations delivered during the technical seminar on monitoring food insecurity in the context of SDG 2 and the 2030 Agenda organized in Mexico by FAO and the Government of Mexico with participants from the Mexican Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) and the Mexican Secretariat for Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fishery and Food (SAGARPA).</p>
<p><b>2017 (until November)</b></p>
<p>Experts from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program of the World Bank (GAFSP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Food Security were trained in Rome during a two-days workshop on the “Operationalization of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) for Program Monitoring and Evaluation”. Participants were the GAFSP supervisors (including programme officers from supervising entity partners) and Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers of the USAID Bureau for Food Security.</p> <p>A workshop on monitoring food security in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda was held in Ankara, Turkey in February with the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRI) Organisation. It was attended by 14 people representing national statistics offices from the following countries or territories: Albania, Azerbaijan, Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestine, Tajikistan and Turkey. A second workshop was conducted in November in Ankara to the attention of 17 participants from 16 French speaking member countries of the SESRI (Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia).</p> <p>Participation in the First Consultative Meeting on Food Security Assessment and Monitoring in the Arab Region in Beirut (Lebanon) organized and hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia at the United Nations House, in the capacity of the focal point for food security monitoring in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The meeting was attended by the food security focal points appointed by Ministries of Agriculture in ESCWA member countries, members of the academia and individual experts.</p>



FIES methodology and implementation training was delivered to three officers from the National Statistics Office of Dominican Republic (*la Oficina Nacional de Estadística*).

The VoH team led a workshop in Managua, Nicaragua, to reinforce the national capacities on the FIES. 14 people from the National Institute of Development Information (INIDE) and three people from the Central Bank of Nicaragua (BCN) participated.

Participation in a regional workshop dedicated to monitoring SDGs related to food and agriculture organized in Bangkok, Thailand, and attended by participants from National Statistical Offices, ministries and governmental entities from all countries of the region. The VoH team member gave two presentations, leading the discussions on the SDG Indicators 2.1.1 (PoU) and 2.1.2 (FIES), focusing on aspects related to the implementation of the data collection and analysis methods needed for countries to be able to compile these indicators. 75-80 participants and FAO staff attended the workshop.

The VoH team organized and led two workshops in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia to advocate with leaders from National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Agriculture of Sub-Saharan Africa on the inclusion of the FIES and food consumption modules in national surveys for monitoring SDG Target 2.1. The workshop in English was attended by 16 participants from Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The workshop in French was attended by 18 participants from Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo,

The VoH team organized and led a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda, to advocate with leaders from National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Agriculture of other Sub-Saharan Africa countries, on the inclusion of the FIES and food consumption modules in national surveys for monitoring SDG Target 2.1. The workshop was attended by eight country participants from Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe and by the representatives of the Resilience Hubs, the East African Community and the SADC.

The VoH team led a five-days training workshop on FIES to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel in Addis-Ababa.

67. **Output 5:** Since FIES is a new monitoring instrument for FNS, it was envisaged that it would require substantial promotion through advocacy, communication and partnership initiatives.
68. Regarding communication, one key achievement was the recent publication of FIES in SOFI 2017. As FAO’s main flagship on food and nutrition security, this publication has the potential to reach many individuals and organizations. SOFI 2015 was downloaded more than 330 000 times between September 2015 and December 2016.<sup>33</sup> The evaluation of FAO’s contribution to knowledge on food and agriculture conducted in 2015 found that in general terms SOFI had a significant audience and contributed to “increasing technical knowledge, raising the awareness about hunger in the world, enhancing the quality of analyses, research and advocacy works, and supporting policy dialogue on food security and nutrition”.<sup>34</sup>
69. The VoH team has also participated in various international fora, including different workshops and conferences to present FIES, with around 20 participations between 2015 and mid-2016 (see Table 3).

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<sup>33</sup> Information provided by the Internet and Internal Communication Branch (OCCI).

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd471e.pdf>, page 102.

**Table 3:** VoH participation in national and international workshops and conferences

Year	Location	Purpose
2014	Brazil	Workshop Food Security and Nutrition: concepts, measurement and new agendas - Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger - Secretariat for Evaluation and 29/32 Information Management - Department of Evaluation. Participants: FAO, IBGE, IPEA, MS, MPOG, MDS and invited lecturers/researchers.
2014	Canada	Foster collaboration with the McGill Institute for Global Food Security to develop and carry out a research programme within the VOH project; to make several presentations to the Faculties of Agriculture and Nutrition on FAO work.
2014	USA	Participation in WDDP-II meeting in Washington D.C. and meeting in connection with “Voices of the Hungry”.
2014	South Africa	Presented: “International perspectives and best practice on FNS Policy Implementation with focus on FNS monitoring and reference to the Brazilian experience”.
2014	UK	Participation as a contributor in the Nourish Scotland conference in Glasgow, 16-17 October 2014, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.
2014	Canada	Participation (Keynote) in the McGill Institute for Global Food Security conference on Monitoring Food Security in Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.
2014	Colombia	Regional Conference on measuring food security - Seminario Regional de Expertos: “Importancia de la medición del Estado de la Seguridad y soberanía alimentaria y el monitoreo de políticas destinadas a su mejoramiento en América Latina y el Caribe”.
2014	USA	Co-organization of a session on youth and child food insecurity, entitled “Experiences of food insecurity of children and youth in multiple countries” at the occasion of the 142nd Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association.
2014	UK	Presentation VoH methodology at University Seminar on FS - Southampton Statistical Sciences Research Institute - S3RI.
2015	UK	Presentation of “The Food Insecurity Experience Scale – a new tool for valid and comparable measurement of food insecurity” at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The presentation focused on introducing a paper on gender differences in food insecurity.
2015	Brazil	60th Session of the ISI World Statistics. Presentations in a session entitled “International Statistics: Statistical Indicators for Monitoring and Achieving the SDGs”.
2015	Panama	VoH co-organized a workshop with FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) entitled “Indicadores para la Medición de la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional Como Apoyo a Políticas Públicas en América Latina y el Caribe, Panama City, Panama”.
2015	USA	Presentation of researches involving use of the FIES in the second International Conference on Global Food Security at Cornell University.
2015	Nicaragua	Presentation of VoH Project at the Central Bank of Nicaragua, and participation in a workshop in Managua on the subject of “Experience sharing on the use and implementation of official Food Security Monitoring surveys, and data analysis”.
2016	UK	FIES was presented at the “Mapping the way forward on food poverty” expert meeting hosted by the Food Research Collaboration, at the London City University.
2016	India	Scientific workshop in New Delhi on “Measurement of Hunger and Food Insecurity”.
2016	India	Seminar on the “FAO method to estimate the Prevalence of Undernourishment at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning of the School of Social Sciences”.
2016	UK	Panel session at the APPAM International Conference at the London School of Economics. Francesca Battistin, from the American University of Beirut, presented the ongoing research conducted by Hala Ghattas (Gallup World Poll licensee) on the “Differentials in Food Insecurity Experience and its Determinants in the Arab Region”. The panel discussion was entitled “Food Insecurity around the Globe: A First Look at the Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Insecurity Experience Scale Data”.
2017	Morocco	A presentation of the food insecurity indicators to monitor SDG Target 2.1 was delivered at the 2017 World Statistics Congress in Marrakech.

70. Global partnerships were key to impulse FIES. Beyond the inclusion of FIES as an SDG indicator, important institutions such as UNICEF, the World Bank, the Global Agriculture and Food Security

Program of the World Bank (GAFSP) and the McGill Institute for Global Food Security were essential to implement FIES and discover new possibilities for using the scale.

71. In the 43rd session of the Committee on World Food Security held in October 2016 in Rome, the VoH team organized a side event entitled “The challenges of monitoring hunger and food insecurity in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda”. During the 44th CFS in October 2017, another side event shared the experience of the GAFSP in its adoption of the FIES as a project level indicator that measures food insecurity and monitors progress towards achieving SDG 2. The discussion focused on the potential for indicators to serve as an accountability mechanism.
72. Many technical and scientific publications to disseminate FIES were also produced by the VoH team or development partners. Table 4 below lists a few examples.

**Table 4:** Relevant technical and scientific publications on FIES

Year	Publication
2013	Article by Terri J. Ballard, Anne W. Kepple and Carlo Cafiero: 'The food insecurity experience scale. Development of a global standard for monitoring hunger worldwide. Posted at VoH website.
2014	Article by Terri J. Ballard, Anne W. Kepple, Carlo Cafiero, Josef Schmidhuber: Better measurement of food insecurity in the context of enhancing nutrition. Published in Ernährungsumschau (German Nutrition Magazine).
	Technical Paper by Hala Ghattas: Food Security and nutrition in the context of the global nutrition transition.
	Article by Mark Nord: The Item Response Theory. Published on FAO webpage.
	Article by the Voices of the Hungry team: Piloting the Food Insecurity Experience Scale in Sub-Saharan Africa: Assessing food insecurity severity to Nature & Faune.
	Validity and reliability of food security measures, co-signed by Carlo Cafiero, Hugo R. Melgar-Quinonez (leading the VoH partnership in Global Institute of Food Security at McGill), Terri J. Ballard, and Anne W. Kepple. Published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences.
2015	A global standard for measuring food insecurity in the era of sustainable development goals. Published in Nourish Scotland Magazine, Issue #4.

**c) Is the project likely to achieve its overall objective?**

73. The project has made credible progress towards achieving its planned outcome of establishing a comparable annual global data capable of measuring people’s conditions of food insecurity at different levels of severity, based on their reported experiences, as well as providing improved methods and tools for data collection and analysis.
74. For four consecutive years, VoH has been collecting this global data through Gallup while capacitating countries to include FIES into their own national household surveys. Twenty-two national institutions to date have inserted FIES in a national survey and collected the data, which they are in the process of analysing and publishing. With the endorsement of FIES as one of the SDG indicators, an increase on the number of countries using the scale to measure progress towards reducing food insecurity is to be expected (see Table 5).

**Table 5:** Summary of FIES adoption by countries

Stage of FIES adoption	Number of countries	Countries
Already using their own national Experience-Based Food Security Scale	6	USA, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico
FIES already included in national surveys	22	Botswana, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Palestine, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Korea, St. Lucia, Sudan and Swaziland
Plans in place to include FIES in national surveys	13	Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali Mauritania, Nicaragua, Niger, Samoa, Senegal and Togo
Requested support from FAO to include FIES in national survey	24	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belize, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, Ghana, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, Viet Nam, Zambia

75. The stated desired impact was to improve policy and programme responses to global food insecurity. So far, the project has focused on the roll-out of the new instrument, and it is too early to tell how it will be used at policy level. It has been reported that FIES may have more potential to monitor policies that promote poverty reduction through employment creation and productivity growth among the poor than direct feeding programmes.<sup>35</sup> But there is still a lack of understanding in policy circles about what the measure represents, pointing to insufficient communication and advocacy at national level.

**d) What are the main challenges and opportunities to achieve results?**

76. Some of the issues explored under Evaluation Questions 1 and 2 constitute a challenge for the complete success of the VoH Project. For example: i) many technical stakeholders are still unfamiliar with the scale, its theoretical statistical basis or the mathematical formulas used to produce and adjust the scale data; ii) there are still doubts about whether the indicator can be more prone to subjectivity and bias than other FNS indicators; and iii) FIES is processed on an unfamiliar software package.
77. FIES and previous research have shown that FNS experience scales correlate to other economic indicators related to FNS such as changes in food prices, cash transfers and unemployment. The contextual factors influencing the relation of FIES to other nutritional indicators (e.g. health outcomes and drivers of food insecurity) remain understudied outside of the United States and may have considerable implications for capturing the real, intended and unintended FNS outcomes of policies and programmes. Several stakeholders expressed strong opinion on this point, suggesting that they only considered FIES an indicator for exploration of FNS context with further research, and not one ready for use in global FNS monitoring.
78. There is a growing realization that context matters in interpreting the results of FIES in relation to other FNS indicators and for policy or programmes in general. The recent SOFI noted how

<sup>35</sup> Barrett, C. Measuring Food Insecurity. Available at: [www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org).

there were different prevalence and even different trends in some countries for FIES as compared with the other FNS indicators. There were also reports of problems of similar nature with FIES at national and subnational level in Angola, Burundi and Uganda as well as with project stakeholders such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

79. As already explained, there are also discrepancies between the FIES data and the PoU's, particularly at moderate food insecurity levels, while severe food insecurity as picked up by FIES seems to correlate better with the PoU.
80. In a small number of countries, these discrepancies have been pointed at to block the publication of the national data. The future of FIES will depend on the VOH team addressing these apparent discrepancies. Additional research, better synthesis of data streams and more context-specific assessments are needed to better grasp this issue of the comparability of food security experience scales across countries, in order to increase confidence in FIES as a global indicator of economic access to food.
81. Such a broad review by the scientific community at large would clearly benefit from putting the FIES microdata on open access, as was intended by the project team. However, this publication has been blocked out of corporate concerns for political sensitivity, creating a dilemma for the project team: the FIES methodology cannot gain widespread acceptance and credibility until the data is widely published and analysed by independent researchers; and yet the data may not be widely published until the methodology gain stronger support from member states.
82. In addition, the VoH team does not have full autonomy to directly engage with FAO country offices, and these are the main structures linking FAO to policymakers at national level. Their stronger engagement would seem crucial to support the sensitization, communication and advocacy of FIES for policymaking and monitoring.

**e) Did the project produce any unintended result, either positive or negative?**

83. The evaluation did not find any unintended results, either positive or negative.

**f) To what extent are there any overlaps and/or synergies between the different components funded by each donor?**

84. The evaluation team did not find any overlaps between the different components funded by each donor (project codes GCP/GLO/450/UK, FMM/GLO/106/MUL, MTF/GLO/707/BMG and FMM/GLO/120/MUL and FAO own funds). On the contrary, the different sources of funding, the trust of resource partners and the flexibility they afforded the project team allowed for numerous synergies and complementarities, as well as for continuity of operations throughout the project life.
85. The Department for International Development (DFID), the main donor during the evaluated period, funded the main activities promoted by the project: development and validation of the methodology, data collection and analysis in over 140 countries for three years, capacity development for different government representatives and development partners, and communication strategies.
86. The FMM supported, inter-alia, the FIES's inclusion into a national survey coordinated by the Society for Social and Economic Research in Bangladesh and into a provincial survey conducted

by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. It has also promoted the inclusion of the FIES module in surveys conducted by the Gallup World Poll in 14 Indian states for research purposes. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided extra budget for technical support and data collection on food security through the Gallup World Poll.

### **3.3 Evaluation Question 3: To what extent has the project built effective partnerships consistent with the goals and principles of the FAO partnership policy?**

**Finding 7:** Partnerships were essential for validating and disseminating FIES, as well as for exploring different forms of utilization of this new scale (i.e. UNICEF). The project involved partners from the design stage (i.e. donors and academia) to implementation. Different actors used FIES for different purposes (e.g. to monitor projects; to conduct research; and to monitor policies).

**Finding 8:** The endorsement of FIES as part of the SDG monitoring framework for SDG 2.1 is expected to increase the number of partnerships in the future.

#### **a) Which partners were involved in project design and implementation?**

87. The VoH project has built a number of important partnerships including with the donor countries, academia, research institutions and civil society organizations. The Government of the Kingdom of Belgium was the first resource partner who contributed to the project in November 2013, through the FMM. DFID has been supporting the project throughout its implementation from December 2013 to 2017 as the primary resource partner. FAO also signed a grant agreement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in November 2016 that is due to expire in November 2020. Donors were involved as partners in programme design, especially the early ones.
88. FAO also invested some of its own resources in the project: USD 500 000 during the inception phase in 2012, USD 1 943 594 to allow for the 2016 Gallup World Poll data collection, and about USD 250 000 recently, to support production of e-learning material, advocacy and capacity development in the context of the work supported by the Office of the Chief Statistician (OCS).
89. The project entered an important contractual partnership with Gallup World Poll Inc. to collect data on access to food through a world survey of people’s experience with food insecurity, which in turn was necessary to validate and establish a global monitoring metric of food insecurity.
90. The FAO team built relationships with the academia for the external validation of FIES: Government of Brazil, two Civil Society Organizations in Bangladesh and in India, with the McGill Institute for Global Food Security, as well as with UNICEF and the World Bank.
91. The endorsement of FIES as part of the SDG monitoring framework for SDG 2.1 is expected to increase the number of partnerships in the future.

#### **b) To what extent were these collaborations useful to the project interventions and built on comparative advantage of each partner?**

92. The strong collaboration with DFID was essential for the success of the project, allowing for the development of the project’s methodology for measuring experienced-based food insecurity

- with a scale that can be compared across countries. The project is closely aligned with the goals of the DFID team working on food and nutrition security, who places a strong emphasis on the importance of monitoring. The partnership was seen as an initial investment in developing the indicator for comparable global measurements, an area where FAO has a perceived comparative advantage. This partnership is perceived as constructive, especially with regard to responsiveness, timely communication, flexibility and speed in allocating resources when they were needed.
93. The early support from the FMM – thanks to funding from the Kingdom of Belgium – allowed a smooth beginning and was very catalytic to run the Project: it would not have acquired such a dimension without this funding support. The inclusion of the FIES in a large national survey in Bangladesh and a large provincial survey in South Africa during the early stages of the project happened under the exclusive funding of this FMM allocation.
  94. To date, the Gallup World Poll survey has allowed the collection of three years’ of nationally representative data in some 145 countries. FAO’s initial plan was to collect FIES through the Gallup World Poll for five years – from 2014 to 2018. However, taking into account that some countries have developed the capacity to produce their own FIES-based indicator in 2018, the decision was made to reduce the number of countries where data would be collected through the Gallup World Poll and dedicate the freed-up resources to further capacity development at country level. The roll-out of a variety of capacity development initiatives is planned through the resource partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
  95. The research partnerships with the McGill Institute for Global Food Security as well as with the Brazilian Government allowed for deeper collaboration on food security indicators, including the Prevalence of Undernourishment and the FIES. The Brazilian Government facilitated an exchange between the Secretariat for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Ministry for Social Development and the Fight against Hunger of Brazil and the VOH team regarding the use of experience-based food security measurement along with other indicators of food security.
  96. Two consultants from the McGill Institute for Global Food Security joined the team in the beginning of the project in 2014. The institute is also a co-lead of the VoH scientific committee, which involves the selection of grantees of Gallup World Poll data licenses for promoting food security social research. The FAO team issues eight licenses to researchers aiming to analyse the data more closely, notably to address comparability issues. Temporarily, this approach offers a workable compromise between the long-term request of DFID to make data publicly available, and the FAO corporate orientation to maintain a low public profile on FIES, so as to prevent unproductive controversies among its Member States about the new indicator at this early stage of its development. On the long-term, however, FAO must publish the data widely if it wants the scale to become better studied, better applied and trusted by more governments.
  97. In the same vein, FAO provided nationally representative data from the Gallup World Poll survey in 2014-15 to UNICEF’s Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, who used it to produce the first global estimates of food insecurity among households with children under the age of 15. The research team also looked at how well FIES captures different aspects of food insecurity by testing the robustness of the index against other food security indicators, monetary poverty and a measure of well-being - the Negative Experience Index.

98. Finally, the FAO team and the World Bank collaborated on a research initiative to analyse FIES data with the data used to inform the Global Financial Inclusion Index (FINDEX), which have been collected in 2014 on the same samples of individuals by the Gallup World Poll.
99. It should be noted that scientific partners have made mixed remarks about engagement with VoH, highlighting timeliness and data sharing as continued concerns. Several partners noted that it takes too long to get information and new Gallup World Poll data from FAO.
100. In terms of collaborations built with other FAO initiatives, the team promoted synergies between the FIES and the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) reference tables by filling a recognized gap in the set of existing indicators, and especially by capturing the implication of the access-related dimension of food insecurity. This effort led to the inclusion of FIES as part of IPC in different countries such as El Salvador, where partners such as the *Comisión Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional* (CONASSAN) and *Programa de Sistemas de Información para la Resiliencia de la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional* (PROGRESAN) consider this inclusion as an achievement.

**c) How did early adoption and use of FIES by partners contribute to achieving the project goals?**

101. In this context, the early adoption of FIES by some global and national partners is proving essential to validate what FIES measures in comparison to other indicators. It was also important for testing whether the advantages of FIES match needs and requirements of decision makers in the FNS arena.
102. At country level, 22 countries have already included FIES into their national household surveys after receiving support from the VoH team. In Madagascar for instance, *the Institut National de la Statistique* (INSTAT) adapted FIES in the context of monitoring food insecurity in the South of Madagascar by using the mobile phone surveys of “Listening to Madagascar”.<sup>36</sup> In Swaziland, the Central Statistical Office added FIES to their household income and expenditure survey for 2016. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics incorporated the FIES module in their agricultural survey. In Pakistan, the FIES module was inserted in four different surveys: one at national level with a sample of 14 000 households and three others conducted in drought-prone and conflict-affected areas of the country. In Ethiopia, the FAO team has engaged with the Ethiopian Public Health Institute to include the FIES in the National Food Consumption Survey. The FIES is a key indicator for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture in monitoring their joint efforts to reduce malnutrition. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is providing support on nutrition-sensitive indicators and the FIES will be included in that module. FIES is also included in a revised micro-nutrient assessment tool with measures of dietary diversity and is used at project level. Two staff members for Ethiopian Public Health Institute travelled to Rome for training on FIES and found the training to be very useful.

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<sup>36</sup> Listening to Africa (L2A) is an initiative by The World Bank and national statistical offices and NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa using mobile phones to regularly collect information on living conditions. The approach combines face-to-face surveys with follow-up mobile phone interviews to collect data that allows welfare monitoring. It is currently operating in a number of countries: Madagascar, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo and Mali.



103. FIES was also included as a monitoring and evaluation indicator in three FAO projects funded by the Global Environmental Facility that sought to bridge environmental and food security programming.
104. More generally, FIES has been seen as very successful by some resource partners in their own project monitoring. The Global Agricultural and Food Security Program is one of the early adopters of the indicator. It adopted FIES in its results monitoring framework to measure self-reported food insecurity in project impact assessments aiming at generating evidence to inform policy/project design. An expert steering committee of the GAFSP conducted a review of indicators that would be suitable for a large portfolio of FNS and agriculture investments around the world, and the FIES had many attributes that were found desirable. The committee was looking for an FNS indicator that also spoke to poverty and other broader programme objectives. Calorie and diet-based indicators were seen as hard to collect and of limited use with regard to many of the project goals. Many of the GAFSP projects leverage private sector partnerships and the link to economic access and measurement of experience was seen as a positive aspect of the FIES.
105. GAFSP has already successfully tested FIES in one of its projects in Liberia. There is interest in FIES use at different scales such as regional, national and subnational. A comparably large proportion of GAFSP projects will undergo impact evaluation and this is seen as an opportunity for learning and research on FIES as an indicator. As there is not yet a large body of research on FIES, target setting may be difficult and this is seen by GAFSP as the key area for further indicator development and context specific FIES testing.
106. The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) has also adopted FIES for monitoring and evaluation of food insecurity in its projects and programmes, including monitoring and evaluation of nutrition-sensitive agriculture projects.

### **3.4 Evaluation Question 4: To what extent is the VoH contributing to FAO’s Strategic Objective 1?**

**Finding 9:** FIES has been selected as an official indicator to monitor progress towards FAO’s SO1. However, other forms of synergies and complementarities between VoH and SP1 teams should be explored.

107. Introduced in 2014, FAO’s Reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019 outlined five new Strategic Objectives representing the areas of work in which FAO would focus its efforts in support of Member States. As Strategic Objective 1, one of FAO’s main goals is to eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.
108. FIES was appropriately selected to be one of the indicators to monitor FAO’s progress towards SO1. However, this is to date the only formal connection between VoH and SO1. At team level, it seems that neither the VoH team nor the team responsible for overseeing the implementation of Strategic Programme 1 have explored areas for collaboration. And yet, strengthening links with FAO’s Strategic Objective 1 could serve as an opportunity to promote FIES at country level<sup>37</sup> and to support policy advocacy.

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<sup>37</sup> Outcome 3: The decisions of member countries and their development partners regarding food security and nutrition are based on evidence and high-quality, timely and comprehensive food security and nutrition analysis that draws on data and information available in the network of existing sector and stakeholder information systems.

109. Now that the national prevalence rates have been published, there are numerous opportunities and potential complementarities between the VoH and SP1 teams. Promoting FIES is also a way for SP1 to achieve its planned outcome, since one of the SO1 Outcomes (1.3) for the 2018-21 programme cycle is “countries made decisions based on evidence for the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition by 2030”. The SP1 team could use FIES, in tandem with other FNS indicators, to select target countries for action or design better programmes. On the other hand, the VoH team could benefit from the SP1 team’s links at regional and country level, e.g. through the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST), to better communicate and advocate for FIES. Some efforts have already been made in this direction: all FIRST Policy Officers were briefed on FIES in 2017 through a dedicated webinar; and the FIRST Policy Officers in Guatemala and Afghanistan have reported discussing FIES with their national counterparts.

### **3.5 Evaluation Question 5: How has FAO communicated the benefits and limitations of FIES, including links to policy, advocating for the hungry and the utility for SDG monitoring and reporting?**

**Finding 10:** Communicating the benefits and limitations on FIES, as well as advocating for its policy uptake, were identified as areas of weakness in the VoH project, starting from design to implementation.

**Finding 11:** For increased FIES’s adoption and policy uptake, the communication needs to go beyond the technical level and reach the political level. FAO through the Office for Corporate Communication (OCC) could help VoH to develop a communication strategy to engage national stakeholders over and beyond National Statistical Offices.

110. In hindsight, communication and advocacy efforts for FIES adoption and policy uptake appear to have been insufficient, especially at country level and targeting non-statisticians. Even in countries where the VoH capacity development activities were perceived as excellent (e.g. Dominican Republic, Ethiopia and Pakistan), the indicator is not well disseminated at the political level.
111. In contrast, a consistent effort of communication and sensitization involving different sectors of government and civil society was made before EBIA becoming one of the main indicators selected to monitor food and nutrition security policies in Brazil.
112. In particular, linking FIES to hunger (e.g. in the project name) is causing confusion in some countries. Historically, hunger has been associated with a lack of sufficient food, and the PoU has been used for years as the main indicator to measure the incidence of hunger.<sup>38</sup> It would be important to communicate that FIES measures something else: the extent to which people have access to diverse and nutritious food.
113. Arguing that more analysis of discrepancies between FIES and PoU data was needed before assertively communicating about FIES, FAO management have opted to reduce the visibility given to FIES in the corporate communication efforts. One example is the Seminar for Permanent Representatives held in June 2017 at FAO headquarters. Though initially planned to be a media-type launch event, it ended up becoming a technical seminar to, among others,

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<sup>38</sup> The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017 - Building resilience for peace and food security, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-l7695e.pdf>).

clarify the relevance of FIES for monitoring SDG2, illustrate the FIES methodology to FAO Permanent Representatives to help them interpret the results, and explain how the FIES indicator complements the PoU. Another example is the FIES web-based portal allowing free access to the data, which has not been put online yet. As already argued above, a broader dissemination of the microdata within the scientific community appears necessary to ensure sound, independent technical review of FIES and strengthen its accuracy and comparability.

### **3.6 Evaluation Question 6: To what extent is the FIES Project making use of available resources in fulfilling its objectives?**

**Finding 12:** VoH made a cost-effective use of the resources made available to develop FIES and endorse it as an official SDG indicator, to collect data for about 145 countries every year and to capacitate different countries to collect their own data.

114. In terms of the use of financial and human resources to fulfil the project objectives, as originally planned by the VoH team, in the period from December 2013 to December 2017 the largest share of resources was spent on data collection through a contract with Gallup World Poll (70 percent of total funds). Data collection represented a cost of USD 15 000 per country or about USD 2 million per year, which is less than originally budgeted (average of USD 2.36 million per year). This supports the finding that project Outputs 1 and 2 were achieved by the VoH team in a cost-effective manner.
115. Fourteen percent of the total resources were dedicated to data analysis and research, under Output 3. A similar share was spent on capacity development, advocacy and communication in the above-mentioned period. More resources will need to be allocated in the future to fulfil the growing requirements in capacity development at country level and to support much-needed advocacy and communication efforts. In the original umbrella Project budget, 20 percent of all funds were planned to be spent only on capacity development.
116. Nevertheless, the VoH Project provided some 70 countries with capacity development or technical assistance, as compared with the 25 institutions originally planned in the project document, which suggests that the funds available for Output 4 were efficiently spent.
117. Only 2 percent of all resources were allocated to communication, which seems inadequate to fully achieve project Output 5.

**Table 6:** Expenditures under the various projects, by budget line

(As of 15 January 2018 – expenditures funded out of FAO's "assessed contributions" (i.e. FAO core funding) are not reported below. They pertained essentially to: USD 1 943 594 for data-collection through the Gallup World Poll in 140 countries in 2016, and USD 100 000 for the development of the e-learning course on FIES in 2017)

<b>Category</b>	<b>GCP/GLO/450/UK</b>	<b>FMM/GLO/106/MUL</b>	<b>FMM/GLO/120/MUL*</b>	<b>MTF/GLO/707/BMG</b>	<b>Total (USD)</b>
Budget lines EOD-NTE:	Dec 2013 - Mar 2018	Nov 2013 - May 2018	Jan 2017 - May 2018	Nov 2016 - Nov 2020	
5011 Salaries Professional	337 132	715 939	82 674		1 135 745
5013 Consultants	266 697	1 020 381	393 989	4 896	1 685 963
5014 Contracts	4 013 750	178 650		1 345 547	5 537 947
5020 Locally Contracted Labour		39	313		352
5021 Travel	28 636	163 728	62 444		254 808
5023 Training		500	906		1 406
5024 Expendable Procurement		1 586	590		2 176
5025 Non Expendable Procurement		6 036			6 036
5027 Technical Support Services					
5028 Gen. Operating Expenses	9972	31 739	19251		60 962
5029 Support Costs	325 933	275 413	68 946	94 531	764 823
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>USD 4 982 120</b>	<b>USD 2 394 011</b>	<b>USD 629 114</b>	<b>USD 1 444 974</b>	<b>USD 9 450 219</b>

\* As per the Project's Objectives, approximately half of expenditures under FMM/GLO/120/MUL were allocated to activities related to SDG Indicator 2.1.1 - the Prevalence of Undernourishment.

### **3.7 Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the project design and implementation mainstreamed gender?**

**Finding 13:** Permitting sex-disaggregate data analysis was at the core of the project’s design and implementation, and it is considered one of the main project’s achievements. In line with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, FIES has potential to orientate policies, programmes and projects aimed at addressing gender equality.

118. Closing the gender gap is an imperative step towards achieving food security. Generating and making widely available sex-disaggregated data is necessary to substantiate and monitor gender gaps in access to food and to the resources necessary to produce or purchase it. The commitment to support governments in collecting sex-disaggregated data is part of FAO’s mandate and it is reflected in the FAO Policy on Gender Equality (2013).
119. Until recently household level food security measures have certainly prevailed over individual. The reason for this was the conviction that food uncertainty and food insufficiency are household level experiences. However lately, growing research on individual food security has challenged this belief.<sup>39</sup> According to the empirical evidence collected by some studies in a wide range of cultural contexts, male and female in the household tend to differ relative to one another, in their ability to command food for their own consumption.<sup>40</sup>
120. By collecting data at the individual level, FIES can be disaggregated by gender and other characteristics measured globally at a reasonable cost. It has been applied in a large number of countries following a standardized procedure allowing for an analysis of the links between food insecurity, its determinants and its outcomes as well as for a proper investigation into possible gender disparities in food access in the population.
121. Initial pilots were carried out in Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi and Niger in 2013 where gender-based differences in food insecurity prevalence and severity were demonstrated by the project for the first time. More recently, FIES was integrated into the Indonesian National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS). Initial results seem to confirm that women tend to be more food insecure than men in the country.<sup>41</sup> The application of FIES in the GAFSP project in Liberia also demonstrates the utility of gender disaggregation at project level for an accurate assessment of project benefits.

### **3.8 Evaluation Question 8: To what extent has there been increased demand for FIES at the national level and to what extent is FAO prepared to meet this demand?**

**Finding 14:** Demand for support to incorporate FIES at the national level has increased throughout the years, and it is expected to increase further due to the endorsement of the scale as one of the indicators to monitor progress towards SDG2.

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<sup>39</sup> Exploring gender-based disparities with the FAO Food Insecurity Experience Scale, By Chiara Brunelli and Sara Viviani, FAO, November 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Alderman et al. 1995; Quisumbing et al. 2000a,b; Lundberg et al. 1997.

<sup>41</sup> Unequal access to food by males and females within the same household is a different issue from the potential differences in food security between male- and female-headed households.

**Finding 15:** The VoH team is already planning a new strategy to address the increasing demand (e.g. nominating focal points in FAO regional offices), but more resources may be needed in the long-term.

122. To date, 22 countries have already included FIES into their national household surveys after receiving support from the VoH team, and some 36 others have plans in place to do the same in the near future. As countries align their plans and priorities with the SDGs, progress against SDG2 may increasingly be measured in part with FIES. At least two countries, Indonesia and Panama, are already considering doing so, according to respondents to the questionnaire survey administered as part of this evaluation. All such countries (including countries that have long adopted experience-based food security measures) will need support to be able to calibrate the measures they produce against the global FIES reference scale maintained by FAO.
123. The type of support currently requested varies across countries. For example, the Seychelles asked FAO VoH staff to support the analysis and reporting. Jordan requested support from FAO to be able to produce and report on FIES indicators themselves in the future. Some countries such as India or Indonesia are pursuing FIES data collection at subnational level. In other countries, government agencies or United Nations partners are promoting FIES for project baselines and monitoring, e.g. in Angola, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan. FIES was also reported to have been integrated into a resilience measurement tool, for a project in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Thus far, FIES appears to be a flexible tool that is attracting wide interest and increasing use.
124. To be able to respond to such demand, the VoH team needs to be strengthened to assist countries with the technical requirements of questionnaire design, survey planning, training of enumerators and data analysis. A new capacity development strategy is being developed by the VoH team. Its strategy relies heavily on technical advisers placed in the FAO regional offices who will coordinate capacity development in the region and travel to the countries as requested. Three focal points have already been placed in Accra, Bangkok and Panama and the recruitment of additional personnel for the other regions is underway. The regional adviser in Panama, after being trained by the VoH team, has successfully capacitated three people from the national statistics office in the Dominican Republic.

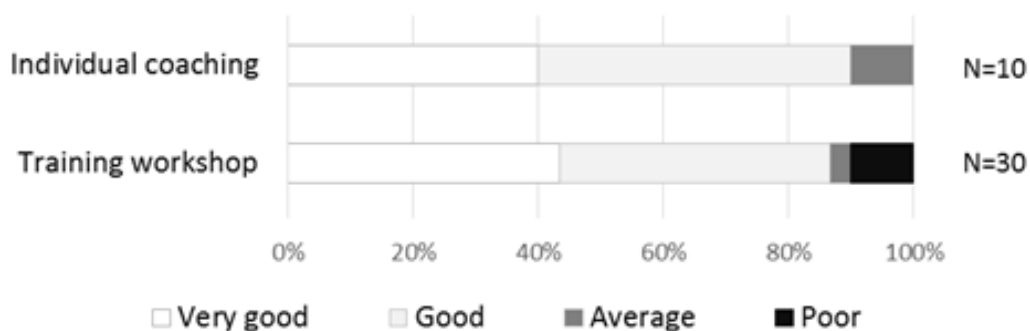
### **3.9 Evaluation Question 9: To what extent has the project improved national capacities of technical/statistics professionals?**

**Finding 16:** The project has successfully increased capacities of technical and statistical professionals to collect and analyse FIES data. However, more support is needed to adjust the raw data and weighting the results.

**Finding 17:** Capacities to interpret FIES data are still insufficient and the learning curve for using the “R” software is too steep. Only some technical professionals feel comfortable to use it for FIES analysis.

- 125. While from 2013 to 2015 the project focused primarily on the development of the FIES scale and analysis methods, the work on developing capacities at country level intensified since 2016, and is still an ongoing process.
- 126. Partners have a positive view of FAO’s ability to put together the right team for indicator development and initial testing. The survey sent as part of this evaluation asked specific questions about how capacity development activities have strengthened the capacity of national statistics offices. It was answered by 30 national statistical organization as well as a few FAO staff and academic partners.
- 127. Not surprisingly, individual coaching was perceived as the most effective channel, but nearly all (87 percent) respondents of the survey also rated the capacity development workshops as either good or very good (see Figure 1).

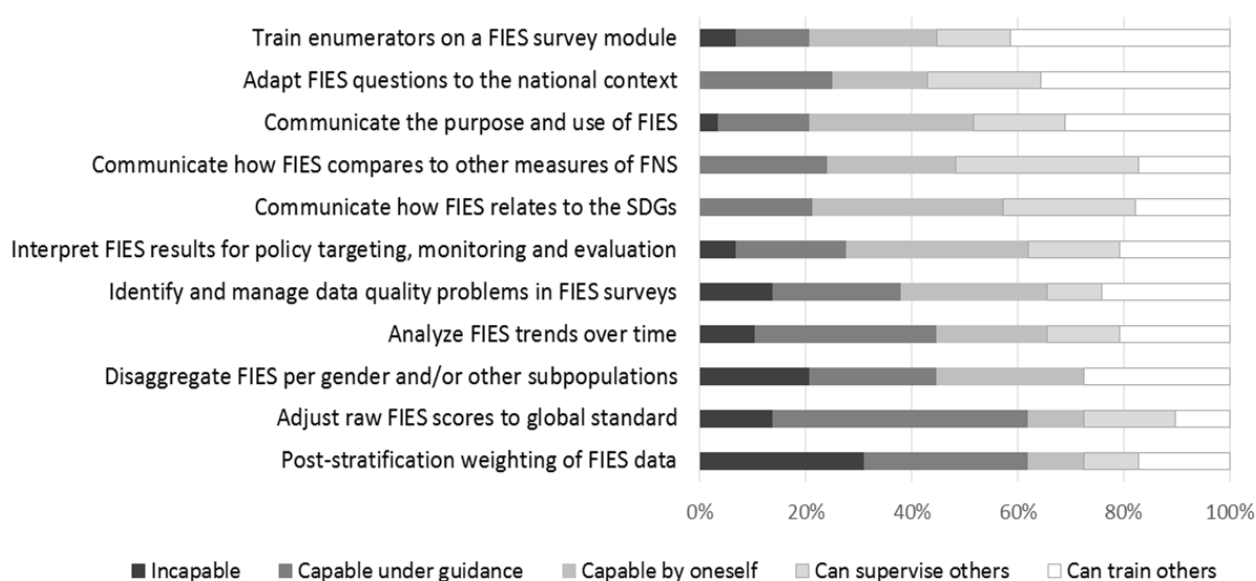
**Figure 1:** Quality of the VOH training workshops and individual coaching (as assessed by National Statistical Office participants themselves)



**Table 7:** Average change in ability to perform key FIES-related tasks after capacity development

FIES-related tasks	Before capacity development	After capacity development	Change
<b>Ability to communicate about FIES</b>			
Communicate the purpose and use of FIES	1.74	3.6	1.9
Communicate how FIES compares to other measures of food and nutrition security	1.9	3.5	1.6
Communicate how FIES relates to the SDGs	1.8	3.5	1.7
<b>Ability to collect and process FIES data</b>			
Adapt FIES questions to the national context	2.0	3.7	2.3
Train enumerators on a FIES survey module	2.2	3.9	1.4
Adjust raw FIES scores to global standard	1.6	2.8	1.1
Post-stratification weighting of FIES data	1.6	2.7	1.0
<b>Ability to interpret results to inform FNS decision making</b>			
Identify and manage data quality problems in FIES surveys	1.9	3.0	0.9
Disaggregate FIES per gender and/or other subpopulations	2.0	3.2	1.0
Analyze FIES trends over time	1.9	3.3	1.2
Interpret FIES results for policy targeting, monitoring and evaluation	1.8	3.4	1.3

**Figure 2:** Capabilities of staff from National Statistics Offices after training

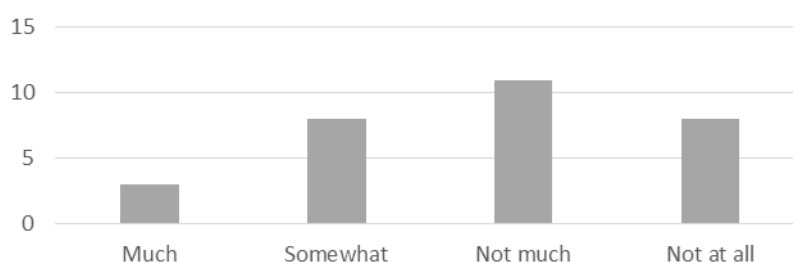


(self-assessed, N=29, sorted by decreasing ability)



128. As explained in the methodology section, the survey used a self-assessment scale to compare abilities to perform key FIES-related tasks before and after training. Trainees from national statistical institutes recorded a significant increase in capacity after participating in VoH workshop and other capacity development activities (see Table 7 and Figure 2 above).
129. Not surprisingly, more people rated themselves as having the capacity to carry out the simpler tasks, while fewer people possessed more advanced capacities. The skills that were best imparted relate to survey design and administration (adapting questions to national context, training of enumerators, etc.) and communicating about FIES.
130. However, half of the respondents mentioned that they required additional capacity development, particularly on interpretation issues: post-stratification weighting of FIES data and adjusting raw FIES scores to global standard (see Figure 2 above). There was relatively little improvement in these capacities through engagement with VoH and most participants do not think they can perform these tasks independently. Many trainees also felt they did not yet learn enough about disaggregating FIES per gender and/or other subpopulations, analysing FIES trends over time, and identifying and managing data quality problems in FIES surveys.
131. Similarly, most respondents felt ‘not much’ familiar with the “R” software to undertake common FIES-related tasks, even after training (see Figure 3). “R” is commonly considered a hard-to-learn software, especially when compared to other statistical software such as Stata or SPSS, where the graphical user interface is more intuitive than the “R” statistical programming language. It is also worth noting that many National Statistical Offices may have experience using a different statistical software and learning a new tool for such a specific purpose might be perceived as a burden.

**Figure 3:** How familiar are you with the “R” package for FIES?



132. In replying to open-ended questions, respondents used terms such as “hands-on”, “produce results”, “interpret results”. Application in the national context seemed to be the most important aspect. There were also calls for training workshops in Portuguese. A couple of summary observations can be made on the response to the VoH capacity development survey.
133. In general terms, respondents with the highest initial capacity (before training by VOH) gave the lowest ratings to the training workshops. This pattern of responses implies that the current workshop format is effective at developing basic capacities to adapt the FIES

instrument to the national context and train enumerators for data collection, but that additional efforts are required to impart higher-level skills of analysis and interpretation. There may be a need for two training curricula: introductory and a more advanced one. It is likely that the skills of adjusting the FIES results to the global standard and more sophisticated techniques such as weighting may always require more capacity development resources.

134. The “R” software issue requires additional consideration by FAO. Further development of the interface or the use of another software may improve uptake and reduce the need for individual coaching.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. The “Voices of the Hungry” Project has achieved much progress towards its objective by developing the Food Insecurity Experience Scale as a global standard for measuring people's food security. The methodology has been successfully tested worldwide and some of the results published. Since the endorsement of FIES as an official indicator for Target 2.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 2, there is growing demand for FAO to support national capacities for data collection, and much need for assistance on data analysis.**

135. The project has achieved remarkable results. Data has been collected by Gallup in some 145 countries during three consecutive years. In July 2017, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the global SDG indicator framework, including FIES as Indicator 2.1.2 to monitor SDG2 (End Hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). In September 2017, the Gallup FIES data were published in the State of Food Security in the World for 58 countries who validated them. To date, the project team has provided support on FIES to around 60 countries – far more than the number originally planned. Twenty-three countries have requested further support from FAO to include FIES in their national survey, and this demand is growing. In addition, some development partners such as GAFSP, UNICEF, Feed the Future and GIZ are already using the FIES to monitor the impact of their projects.
136. While it is too early to tell how many countries will use the FIES to monitor SDG2 in their own national SDG reports, national demand for FAO's support in data collection and analysis is likely to grow. The 2030 global development framework stresses the importance of using national data for monitoring, and as a custodian agency for a series of SDG indicators including FIES, FAO is duty-bound to strengthen national statistical capacity in data collection and analysis.
137. The survey conducted as part of this evaluation noted that amongst National Statistical Offices, data analysis and interpretation skills appeared in greater need of support than simpler data collection skills. It also pointed at a steep learning curve for using the “R” software, with many technical staff who received training from the project still not feeling comfortable with using the software. Many National Statistical Offices may have license for different and more user-friendly statistical software that could be used to analyse FIES data, such as Stata and SPSS.

**Conclusion 2. FIES is considered a technically solid and cost-effective tool to measure economic access to food and adds value to the existent suite of indicators developed to this end. However, doubts about the international comparability of FIES have affected its uptake at national level and scarce dissemination of microdata have hindered an independent scientific validation of the indicator.**

138. The FIES was found a robust and cost-effective tool to measure people's economic access to food. As such, it added value to the existent set of indicators meant to measure different components of food security. The FIES methodology was tested and validated across

- different countries and languages. Similar experience-based indicators such as EBIA and ELCSA also attest for the validity of this type of scale.
139. The scale, composed of eight reasonably straightforward and intuitive questions, can be inserted in pre-existing surveys without difficulty and only takes a few minutes to answer. Ease of data collection is particularly desirable within the context of the SDG monitoring framework, which is complex and may prove a significant financial burden on developing countries. The capacity for data disaggregation is also perceived as a strong advantage in terms of “leaving no one behind”.
140. However, questions remain about what the moderate end of the scale actually measures in some countries. Some of the questions in the scale (e.g. Question 1) are more subjective than others and may be more sensitive to local culture and context than others. Moreover, discrepancies between FIES and the Prevalence of Undernourishment still require clarification. The PoU itself has been subject to many valid criticisms and its methodology has evolved, in part as a response to such criticism, the last time in 2012.
141. FIES’s simplicity and cost-effectiveness stem from the fact that it is an experience-based indicator but some, within the statistics profession and beyond, still question whether an experience-based indicator such as FIES can offer a global monitoring yardstick, or whether it is so encumbered with local biases and cultural subjectivity – different cultures worry about food in different ways, they define a diverse diet in different ways, etc. – that the data cannot accurately be compared across countries and regions. The project posits that national biases in rating the various levels in the scale can be ‘averaged out’ statistically in the computation of food insecurity severity levels by carefully calibrating the weights of the different questions on a national basis (a procedure which some of the national statisticians interviewed required more support about, see Finding 16). In this spirit, interpreting each single FIES item as an indicator of its own is conceptually wrong, as it defies the spirit of forming a valid measurement scale.
142. While the evaluation was not meant to answer this question, it can note that no indicator is beyond reproach; that the FIES is still very young and understudied; and that its methodology could well continue to evolve and become progressively more robust. As the history of the PoU attests, global, high-visibility indicators are always under scrutiny and always a work in progress. Over and beyond FIES, the SDG framework includes numerous other indicators that will be collected through perception surveys.<sup>42</sup> Therefore some of the issues explored in this report may well apply to other SDG indicators.
143. In practical terms, these technical objections are slowing down the uptake of the FIES by countries. The research conducted so far by VoH and selected partners to test the robustness of FIES is perceived as useful but insufficient, including by the VoH team itself who would like to see more independent statisticians review their work. To assuage the concerns expressed by some Member States about the new indicator, FAO has limited the planned broad dissemination of FIES’s microdata to a small number of researchers who

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<sup>42</sup> Including another SDG indicator for which Gallup World Poll is involved in data collection: indicator 8.10.2 on financial inclusion with the World Bank as a sponsor. GWP also collects through its surveys some of the data published by ILO on forced labour and modern slavery, under SDG Target 8.7.

were granted a special license to the full Gallup World Poll dataset. Unfortunately, this limits the capacity of external researchers to review the data independently and address the technical concerns described above. The risk for FAO is to find itself unable to address legitimate technical concerns about an SDG indicator it is custodian for.

**Conclusion 3. Insufficient communication, especially towards non-statisticians, limits broad political acceptance and policy uptake.**

144. Communication and advocacy efforts to promote FIES among non-statisticians, especially at the political level, were not adequately planned and budgeted for during the evaluated period, and are rapidly proving a limiting factor for FIES adoption. The VoH team has seldom engaged directly with policymakers. Their advocacy efforts are mainly targeting statisticians and other partners working with statistics. The network of FAO Decentralized Offices could be used to a greater extent to make the case for FIES in national policy circles.
145. At the political level, FIES was found counter-intuitive and rejected in some countries, including some where FIES is already collected by National Statistical Offices, often because the data showed high levels of moderate food insecurity, typically in contrast with a low prevalence of undernourishment as indicated by the PoU and growing levels of obesity. At least some of these cases seem legitimate and point to the complexity of the “double burden” of nutrition that increasingly affects middle-income countries, as explained in the body of the report. Other observed discrepancies may possibly stem from contextual specificities.
146. These issues need to be studied in much more depth than this evaluation could possibly do, but they also need to be communicated simply and transparently at the political level and to the population at large. No food security indicator is ever perfect, and the point of having a battery of different indicators around food security is not that each of them is perfect in isolation but that they complement one another when carefully triangulated and interpreted, taking into account their respective strengths and weaknesses. FIES is still a work in progress, necessarily imperfect at this stage of its evolution, but potentially useful to periodically “take the pulse” of the nation in terms of its economic access to food. This certainly is a case that FAO can make in national policy circles, to a greater extent than it has done so far.

**Conclusion 4. The ability of FIES to provide disaggregated data is a key advantage of the indicator, particularly for guiding policies and programmes addressing equity and the requirement to “leave no one behind”. This potential for disaggregation is only partially utilized to date: most FIES data is collected at household rather than individual level, which means that disparities in access to food within the same household cannot be assessed.**

147. One of the main advantages of FIES is its ability to generate disaggregated data, for instance by income quantiles, by geographic area, by gender, age, education level or any other potential explanatory factor. This is a key feature for guiding policies and programmes addressing equity and the commitment to “leave no one behind” contained in the 2030 Development Agenda. Moreover, the commitment to support governments in collecting sex-disaggregated data is part of FAO’s mandate and it is reflected in the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.

148. However, most countries incorporating the FIES module in their national data collection instruments do so within household-level surveys. The same applies to development partners adopting FIES for project monitoring purposes. It is usually cheaper and easier to collect data at household level than at individual level. While the household level supports some types of disaggregation, e.g. per income group or geographic area, or between male- and female-headed households, only data collected at the individual level would be able to reveal potential gender differences in access to food and to the resources necessary to produce or purchase it.
149. Indeed, a handful of individual-level FIES surveys conducted in Angola, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malawi and Niger have demonstrated gender-based differences in food insecurity prevalence and severity. FIES offers much potential to expand upon this work.

## 4.2 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1. The VoH team should strengthen its support to national capacities to collect and analyse FIES data, while gradually phasing out the Gallup World Poll. South-south cooperation offers an opportunity in this regard. The use of another, more user-friendly software for data analysis may improve uptake and reduce the need for individual coaching.**

150. Appropriately, the VoH team has already planned a progressive phase-out of the Gallup World Poll as national data collection picks up in more and more countries. This is consistent with the central role afforded to national data in the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. The project has also established regional focal points to support countries in three regional offices (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean). In 2018, an e-learning course for self-paced training on FIES will be launched.
151. The VoH team needs to strengthen its focus on capacity development activities, with a view to enable National Statistical Offices to collect, analyse and interpret the data autonomously. Beyond the regional focal points and online training already being deployed, FAO should seek the collaboration of regional statistics institutions such as the *Sistema Integrado de Información Estadística del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana* (si-ESTAD, part of SICA), or the *Observatoire économique et statistique d’Afrique Subsaharienne* (AFRISTAT). South-south cooperation between countries where capacities have already been developed and countries still requiring further support could be a good way to leverage FAO’s limited human and financial resources.
152. The VoH project may also consider using different statistical platforms for FIES analysis and interpretation, based on client preference, as a way to reduce the need for individual coaching on the use of the “R” software.

**Recommendation 2. FIES microdata should be widely shared and disseminated within the scientific community and among development partners, as a way to promote more independent research and validation of this new measurement tool.**

153. As of date, most of the research conducted on FIES was led or supported by professionals involved in the VoH project design or in its implementation. Accelerating the process of external validation is necessary to settle the questions mentioned in conclusion 2, and to further strengthen FIES’s methodology, credibility, robustness and international

comparability. FAO should officially launch the web-based portal for microdata dissemination, offer restricted access to it by selected researchers and development partners, and communicate more openly about the potential advantages and disadvantages of the new indicator as a way to promote the studies in need without inciting opposition from some governments.

**Recommendation 3. FAO should adopt a corporate communication strategy to better communicate FIES in policy circles and among the general public. Strategic Programme 1, the FIRST programme and country offices could serve as entry points to work with policymakers at national level.**

154. The communication strategy should explain FIES’s strengths and limitations to a broad audience and promote a better understanding of the different types of phenomena picked up by the severe and moderate levels of the scale. The moderate end of the scale does not relate to behaviours typically associated with “hunger” in common language, and this point needs to be carefully communicated. FIES aims to measure access to food, and the moderate end of the scale refers not to an absolute lack of food but to circumstances where this access is constrained in terms of the diversity and quality of food people can afford.
155. This strategy would highly benefit from the Office for Corporate Communication (OCC) support, as well as from greater collaboration with FAO’s Strategic Programme 1 (Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition). SP1 also manages the FIRST programme which could use FIES as a tool to promote evidence-based policies. Country offices and FAO Representatives also offer some capacity to advocate for FIES and explain its advantages and limitations at country level, a capacity that has remained largely untapped so far.

**Recommendation 4. The VoH project should advocate for the benefits of collecting data at the individual level to support better data disaggregation by age and sex.**

156. The implications of collecting FIES at the household vs the individual level should be further investigated with regards to cost, questionnaire design and methodological and communications material.

## 5. Appendices

### Appendix 1. List of people interviewed

Name	Role	Organization/Institution
Alan Bojanic	FAO Representative	FAO Brazil
Alan González	FAO Representative	FAO El Salvador
Alisha Coleman-Jensen	Researcher	USDA-ERS
Amadou Allahoury	FAO Representative	FAO Ethiopia
Anne Kepple	Consultant	FAO - ESS
Andrew Rzepa	Managing consultant	Gallup Inc.
Antonio Alfredo Balitán	Country coordinator	INCAP – Dominican Republic
Anuja Kar	M&E officer	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
Aymeric Songy	Programme officer	FAO - ESS
Carlo Cafiero	Project manager	FAO - ESS
Carmelo Gallardo	FAO Representative	FAO Dominican Republic
Christian Arita	Specialist in information systems for FNS	PROGRESAN - SICA
Daisy Márquez	Executive director	CONASAN – El Salvador
Francisco Cáceres	Director for census and surveys	ONE – Dominican Republic
Gantjang Amannullah	Director of people welfare statistics	BPS Statistics - Indonesia
Hur Ben Corrêa da Silva	Head, Advisory Office on International Affairs and Trade	SEAFDA – Brazil
Karine Santos	Coordinator for the national school feeding programme	Ministry of Education - Brazil
Marília Mendonça Leão	Executive Secretary	National Council for Food Security - Brazil
Mark Smulders	FAO Representative	FAO Indonesia
Mario Montoya	Specialist in information systems for FNS	PROGRESAN - SICA
Michele Lessa	FNS coordinator	Ministry of Health – Brazil
Miguel Ángel Corleto Urey	Planning officer	Central American Statistical Commission
Natasha Hayward	Deputy programme manager	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
Nichola Dyer	Programme manager	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program



Paolo Ceci	International resilience expert	Global Environment Facility
Pavel Issa	Researcher	Observatório INTEC – Dominican Republic
Raffaella Rucci	Outreach specialist	FAO
Rob Vos	ESA leader	FAO
Soloman Eshetu	Researcher	EPHI - Ethiopia
Stefano Fedele	Regional specialist in FNS	UNICEF - LAC
Talip Kilic	Senior economist	World Bank
Terri Ballard	Food security and nutrition specialist	FAO
Vincent Gainey	Livelihoods adviser	DFID
William Vigil	Country Director	WFP – Dominican Republic
Willy Otañez	Data design and analysis	ONE – Dominican Republic

## Appendix 2. List of documents consulted

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## **6. List of Annexes**

Annexes available at <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/>

Annex 1. Terms of Reference



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**

**OFFICE OF EVALUATION**  
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