

Simple Coping Strategies Tool

This simple coping strategies tool will help you to measure and monitor the use of a few key coping strategies by people in the project area. The goal is to report the percentage of the population using each key coping strategy. By repeating the survey at various times, you can track changes in the use of each coping strategy – is it being used by more people, fewer people, or the same number?

Data Collection

Add the coping strategies table (below) to the questionnaire that you will use with households. **Make sure that you review each coping strategy on the list.** Eliminate any strategies that are not relevant or important to the target population. Add any strategies that are relevant and important. Allow people from the target population to help you identify the key strategies through focus group discussions and by testing the tool before you use it for the survey. **This is very important.** Including irrelevant coping strategies will increase your workload. Ignoring locally important coping strategies will reduce the usefulness of the tool.

Coping Strategies Table

(Add this table to your questionnaire, using only locally relevant coping strategies)

In the past 30 days, if there have been times when you did not have enough food or money to buy food, how often has your household had to:

<i>Coping Strategy</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Rarely or Never</i>
a) Rely on less preferred and less expensive foods?		
b) Borrow food, or rely on help from a friend or relative?		
c) Purchase food on credit?		
d) Gather wild food, hunt, or harvest immature crops?		
e) Consume seed stock held for next season?		
f) Send household members to eat elsewhere?		
g) Send household members to beg?		
h) Limit portion size at mealtimes?		
i) Restrict adult consumption in order for small children to eat?		
j) Feed working members of household at the expense of non-working members?		
k) Ration the money you had and buy prepared food?		
l) Reduce number of meals eaten in a day?		

At each selected household, enumerators ask the respondent about each of the coping strategies that you have identified. For each coping strategy, they put a check mark in the appropriate column, based on how often people in the household use that strategy (often or rarely/never). There should be one and only one check mark for each coping strategy.

Data Analysis

The results from each questionnaire should be entered into a computer spreadsheet (e.g. Excel) or statistical package. Set up the spreadsheet as follows: leave one row for each household and one column for each coping strategy. In each row enter the household ID (a number that you use to identify individual households) and the score for each coping strategy. Scores are as follows:

“Rarely or Never” = 0
 “Often” = 1

We will use a simple example where 111 households were surveyed regarding their use of four key coping strategies: borrowing food, collecting wild foods, consuming seed, and limiting portion sizes. These coping strategies were identified by focus groups of project participants. The data were entered into an Excel Spreadsheet:

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Household ID	Borrow Food	Wild Food	Consume Seed	Limit Portion Size	
1						
97	5	1	0	0	1	
98	123	0	0	0	0	
99	87	0	0	1	1	
100	78	1	0	1	1	
101	43	1	1	0	0	
102	54	0	1	0	0	
103	58	1	1	1	1	
104	4	0	1	0	1	
105	64	0	0	1	0	
106	42	1	0	1	1	
107	23	1	0	1	0	
108	89	0	0	1	1	
109	41	0	0	1	0	
110	7	0	0	0	0	
111	33	1	1	0	1	
112	49	0	1	0	1	
113						
114	Total "Often"	46	53	39	64	
115	Total Hhlds	111	111	111	111	
116	% Often	41%	48%	35%	58%	
117						

Once all data have been entered, you can do the analysis. If you are using a spreadsheet such as Excel, you can simply calculate the SUM for each column. This will be the total number of households that used each coping strategy “Often” (the total of all “1”s in the column).

Divide this number by the total number of households that answered the questionnaire (111 in the example) to calculate the % of households using each coping strategy “Often”.

In our example, 41% of households surveyed borrowed food, 48% collected wild foods, 35% consumed seed and 58% limited their portion sizes “often” in the past 30 days.

Presentation

When you report this information, you may use a simple table as follows. Final reports should contain both the pre-project (baseline) results and the end-of-project results, to assess whether there has been any change in the use of each coping strategy.

Table 1. Percentage of households using key coping strategies “often”

Coping Strategy	% at Baseline	% At end of project
Borrowing food	41	40
Eating wild foods	48	31
Consuming seed	35	15
Limiting portion sizes	58	59

As always, your report should contain a clear description of your methods of data collection and analysis, and your interpretation of the results.