Background: Ghana’s Northern Region—where approximately 73.5% of adults are smallholder farmers—experiences some high rates of poverty, food insecurity, and childhood malnutrition (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013; Malapit & Quisumbing, 2014; Quaye, 2008). The USAID Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab’s activities in the Northern Region are focused on assisting smallholder farmers towards improved food security and sustainable agricultural production.

Methods: As part of a larger survey, we administered the six-item Household Hunger Scale (Ballard et al., 2011) to men and women farmers in the Northern Region—of whom the majority were husband-wife dyads—to assess dyad congruence for reported household-level hunger (HLH). The scale categorizes HLH in the past 4 weeks as occasional (1-2 times), moderate (3-10 times), or severe (≥11 times) for three Hunger Events: 1) No food to eat of any kind in the household due to lack of resources to get food, 2) Household member(s) went to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food, and 3) Household member(s) went a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food.

Results: Husband-wife dyads comprised 93.7% of the sample (N=675). Over 30% reported Hunger Event 1 in the past 4 weeks 1-2 times (19.1%), 3-10 times (11.6%), or >10 times (2.1%). Nearly 29% reported Hunger Event 2 in the past 4 weeks 1-2 times (16.8%), 3-10 times (11.4%), or >10 times (2.8%). Nearly 23% reported Hunger Event 3 in the past 4 weeks 1-2 times (11.6%), 3-10 times (10.3%), or >10 times (2.9%). For all three Hunger Events, females were more likely to report occasional HLH. Males and females were equally likely to report moderate and severe HLH.

Discussion: Results suggest that the Household Hunger Scale may be an appropriate measure for cross-cultural use to assess HLH in food-insecure regions.

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Learning Objectives: Describe results from Household Hunger Scale, which was part of the baseline WEAI+ (Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index + Household Hunger Scale + Soy Cultivation Modules) administered to 675 men and women smallholder farmers in Ghana’s Northern Region, of whom the majority are husband/wife dyads. Analyze the Household Hunger Scale results disaggregated by gender in order to explore whether reports of three household-level hunger events differed across husbands’ and wives’ responses. Discuss implications as to whether the Household Hunger Scale may be appropriate measure for cross-cultural use to assess household-level hunger in other food-insecure countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Target Audiences: Social/behavioral researchers and CHES who conduct research and program evaluations to address global health, food insecurity, gender empowerment, and maternal and child health in developing countries; Public health leaders, social/behavioral researchers, CHES, and policy makers involved in health initiatives to enhance health/nutrition education programs, reduce food insecurity, and promote rural development efforts targeting vulnerable women and children in developing countries.

Keywords: Food Security, International MCH
Geographic Focus: Africa
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Learning Areas:
Conduct evaluation related to programs, research, and other areas of practice
Diversity and culture
Other professions or practice related to public health
Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs
Social and behavioral sciences

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