Ragsdale K, Read-Wahidi MR, Wei T, Gochanour A, Reid A. Occasional, Moderate, and Severe Hunger among Small-scale Men and Women Farmers in Rural Ghana: Exploring Food Insecurity Using the Household Hunger Scale. 2017 APHA Annual Meeting, November 4-8, Atlanta, GA.

Abstract: 250 words (250 max)

Background: In Ghana’s Northern Region, 73.5% of men and women work in the agriculture sector (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013), primarily as small-scale farmers. The Region has some of the highest rates of poverty, food insecurity, and childhood malnutrition in Ghana (Malapit & Quisumbing, 2014; Quaye, 2008; Worldreader, 2015).

Methods: As part of a larger survey, we administered the 6-item Household Hunger Scale (HHS) (Ballard et al., 2011) to farmers in 11 Northern Region villages. The HHS is designed to be used crossculturally in food-insecure areas to assess HH hunger in the past 4 weeks (occasional (1-2 times), moderate (3-10 times), severe (≥11 times)) for 3 hunger events: 1) no food to eat of any kind in HH due to lack of resources to get food, 2) HH member(s) went to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food, 3) HH member(s) went a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food. The data is disaggregated by gender in order to explore whether husbands and wives responses differed.

Results: The sample (N=675) included 93.7% husband/wives dyads of whom 85.5% had less than a primary education. For all 3 hunger events, females reported more occasional HH hunger, but the gender gap closed for moderate and severe hunger.

Discussion: Results suggest a need for 1) affordable nutrient-rich food sources for small-scale farming HHs and 2) a better understanding of gender disparities and circumstances surrounding HH hunger events in order to improve food security in rural Ghana.

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Learning Objectives: Describe results from 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 results disaggregated by gender in order to explore whether husbands and wives responses differed. Discuss implications for enhancing gender equity and food security among women smallholder farmers and their children in rural Ghana.

Target Audiences: Social/behavioral researchers and CHES who conduct research and program evaluations to address global health, food insecurity, gender empowerment, and women’s socioeconomic advancement through rural development programs; Public health leaders, social/behavioral researchers, and CHES involved in health initiatives to enhance health/nutrition education programs and rural development efforts targeting vulnerable women and children.

Keywords: Food Security, Gender
Geographic Focus: Africa
Related Web Page: http://soybeaninnovationlab.illinois.edu/

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

First author/Presenter
Ragsdale: Qualified on the content I am responsible for because: For more than 15 years, my international and domestic research program on health disparities has focused on culturally tailored interventions for public health promotion. Research areas include sexual risk behavior, gender disparities, food insecurity, nutrition education infant health, eHealth interventions, CBPR, and program evaluation among minority and vulnerable populations. My funders include USAID, CDC, NIH, USDA NIFA, UNIFEM, and numerous foundations and university-level grantors.

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Second author
Mary R. Read-Wahidi, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Social Science Research Center
Mississippi State University
PO Box 5287
Mississippi State, MS 39762-0868
Phone Number: 662-325-3760
Fax Number: 662-325-7966
Email: mary.read-wahidi@ssrc.msstate.edu

Third author
Tianlan Wei, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology & Foundations
Mississippi State University
PO Box 9727
Mississippi State, MS 39762-0868
Phone Number: 662-325-3641
Fax Number: 662-325-3263
Email: ewei@colled.msstate.edu

Fourth author
Amanda Gochanour, MA
Research Assistant
Social Science Research Center
Mississippi State University
PO Box 5287
Mississippi State, MS 39762-0868
Email: amanda.gochanour@ssrc.msstate.edu

Fifth author
Audrey Reid, BA
Research Assistant
Social Science Research Center
Mississippi State University
PO Box 5287
Mississippi State, MS 39762-0868
Phone Number: 662-325-9168
Fax Number: 662-325-7966
Email: audrey.reid@ssrc.msstate.edu