

Reference



Title: Methods for rigorous in-home observation conducted during a food aid cost-effectiveness trial in Burkina Faso

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Background and Objectives:

- In-home observation methods help satisfy the need for direct assessments of feeding behaviors
- We describe a multi-day approach to in-home observation aimed at understanding food preparation and feeding practices during a study comparing the cost-effectiveness of food aid in Burkina Faso

Methods:

- Female observers surveyed children aged 6-23 months using a pre-coded grid in 30-minute time increments from 06:00 to 18:00 for four consecutive days
- Recorded feeding and hygiene practices linked with product use
- Took qualitative notes and photos on events related to childcare, health, and feeding
- Families offered soap as thank you
- Pre-observation: Village leaders informed of observations, consent obtained from households, family members instructed to ignore presence of observer, observers spent a day in each household without taking notes to habituate their presence
- Post-observation: Collected self-reported data on feeding practices using structured surveys



Results:

Observer Experiences:

- “People make an effort to satisfy you.”
- “The first two days people fake it, but they can’t keep that up”
- “It was better to sleep in the household. That way, you’re like a member of the family and people get more habituated. You get confounded with any other woman in the village and are no longer seen as an outsider.”
- “We should not have returned to the same village more than once, because people inform each other about what we’re studying.”

Advantages	Challenges
Habituation of observed household to observer	Observer presence could create social desirability bias
Thorough and objective data	Places burden on families
Time-tracking of opportunity costs	Cost to administer
Validation of reported vs observed behavior	Paper data collection tool complicated

Conclusions:

Multi-day in-home observations can provide rigorous data on observed food preparation and feeding practices and reduce the Hawthorne effect. Techniques, including using tablets, which may streamline data collection, should be further refined to address noted challenges.

Keywords: Methods, observation, supplementary feeding, cost-effectiveness

No conflicts of interest

Further Collaborators: ACIDI/VOCA, Save the Children