Frequently asked questions on the Livelihood Coping Strategies Indicators

Question 1): Do we need to ask about each of the coping strategies if the respondent says that they did not face any food shortages (LCS-FS) /lack of resources to access essential needs (LCS-EN) in the past 30 days?

Answer: It is important to ask about all the coping strategies as households might not think that they are facing a shortage of food [or lack of resources to access essential needs in the case of LCS-EN], but may still be engaging in some of the strategies without realising it, or forgetting them as they happened more than 30 days ago (for example, selling assets in the past 12 months). Thus, it is not permitted to introduce a filter question at the outset of the LCS module asking, "in the past 30 days, did your household face any food shortages or money to buy food" in order to avoid asking the full module. This is an incorrect application of the module, and it gives enumerators the chance to skip it. Even if households say that they did not face any food shortages or a lack of food or money to buy food, it is still mandatory to ask each of the 10+ questions on each of the strategies in the module.

Question 2): What was the reason for removing the strategy on buying food on credit from the list of strategies?

Answer: This strategy was removed because there is some overlap with the question from rCSI as to whether the household "Borrowed food or relied on help from friends or relatives." Though mainly, this strategy on buying food on credit was removed because it was often being misused, as this is often common practice in a country that is used to maintain consumption where income is irregular, rather than an actual coping strategy. In addition, it is important to note that there is still another very similar strategy related to borrowing: "Lcs_stress_BorrowCash: did anyone in your household have to borrow money to cover food needs?"

Question 3): What should we do if we see very high percentages (more to 10 percent) of households adopting emergency coping strategies? What are acceptable ranges?

Answer: It is true that typically, around 10 percent or less of the population would apply emergency coping; however, sometimes emergency coping goes up to 20 percent. If the population is facing a very high percentage of the population reporting emergency coping strategies, you need to first understand which of the three emergency severity questions is the driving this high percentage. There are three possible reasons for very high emergency coping:

1. It is possible that the severity level of the strategy was not adequately assessed before the survey (i.e. the strategy is not that dramatic or irreversible in the context of the survey). If it indeed appears that an emergency coping strategy was classified as the incorrect severity for the context, it is suggested to use a different emergency severity coping strategy to calculate the indicator if more than 3 were collected in the module during data collection; if not, the analysis team will have to decide whether or not to use it in the overall calculation. However, in any case, it is suggested to review the strategies and their severities prior to the next assessment.
2. It is also important to investigate how people understood the question, and how it was asked in the local language. For example, in certain datasets, it was found that a very high percentage (up to 15-20 percent) of the population was begging. However, looking

at the translation into the local language, the concept of begging was translated into 'aid', or was understood by the respondent as if receiving assistance was considered as begging. Thus, understanding how the question was asked and answered is necessary. If it is suspected that the question was misunderstood or applied incorrectly, it may be necessary to follow the same approach as above.

3. Finally, in some contexts, high emergency coping might simply be more prevalent due to the severity of the situation; in cases of Cadre Harmonize or IPC phase five, it is possible to find more than 25 percent of the population applying emergency coping.

This is why you need to understand the context, and unpack the questions and how they were applied to understand the results.

Question 4): In certain contexts, some strategies, e.g., child work, are frequently adopted as common cultural practices; do we consider this as a coping strategy or not?

Answer: While some strategies are part of common cultural practices and should thus not be counted as coping strategies, such as the case for 'buying food on credit,' in other cases, such as the case of child work, they must still be considered as coping strategies, even if they are common practice as it has a negative impact on the long-term human capital of the household. Just because it is often applied does not mean that it should not be considered a negative coping strategy.

However, for this particular strategy, the level of severity depends on a few factors, including - the age of the children (i.e., under or over 15), the types of jobs that they are engaging in (i.e., dangerous or not), and if they are missing school to do so. The severity can range from an emergency coping strategy if they are employed in smuggling or other illegal activities, whereas children above the age of 15 working for the family business might be considered a stress coping strategy or not even a strategy because they are already old enough to contribute to the household income.

There is a lot of contextualisation that needs to take place related to this strategy – depending on the nature of the work the age of the children, and whether they are missing school to do it. Regardless, child labour will influence the future productivity of the household and should be considered as a livelihood coping strategy.

LCS	Not LCS
Is this behaviour used to cope with an existing shock (ex-post)?	…or is it meant to build resilience (ex-ante)?
Does it influence households in the medium or long-term in terms of livelihood, human capital, or dignity?	… or does the strategy involve changing short-term food consumption behaviours?
Is the strategy adopted as a coping mechanism to shocks?	… or is it part of the usual culture in the community?

Question 5): As long as cash transfers for WFP interventions are not followed by an obligation to use the assistance to pay for food, and it is possible to calculate the LCS for FS using the LCS for EN module, then why don't we just use the LCS for EN to monitor any cash-based programme?

Answer: Although it is possible to calculate LCS-FS indicator from the LCS-EN module, it is not ideal. This is just an approximation that is done whenever the main objective of the data collection was for a reason that is broader than food security. The LCS-EN indicator is the indicator to be used for monitoring multipurpose cash assistance. In the case of cash for food assistance programmes, households might not be required to spend this money on food, and they can use it for food or other essential needs. However, if the program is targeted at improving food security, even though the cash is not restricted, the correct version is the one for food security.

Question 6): Why do we specify the 12 months' timeline in relation to the exhaustion of coping strategies?

Answer: The timeframe is based on the acuteness of responses to shocks as the objective of the indicator is measuring acute food insecurity. If a household has exhausted their assets or changed their coping strategies within the year prior to the interview, this is within the period that is considered as an acute response to a shock. If assets were depleted more than 12 months prior to the interview, this falls more into the chronic deprivation situation of the household, which is of interest but not of interest to measuring acute food insecurity. That is why there is distinction between the 30 days and 12 months, because it allows to disaggregate the analysis by those who adopted their resources recently (within 30 days) versus within the past 12 months.

Question 7): How many coping strategies should be included in the LCS module? And how many should be used to compute an LCS indicator?

Answer: It is important to note that there is a difference between the number of strategies that should be included in the module (i.e. in the questionnaire), and the number to be used to compute the indicator (i.e. in the analysis). To calculate the indicator, ten strategies only must be used, which are strictly four stress, three crisis and three emergency strategies. However, this does not mean that an LCS *module* should strictly include only 10. It is possible [and in some cases recommended, for example if there are largely dissimilar population groups like urban vs. rural] to include more than 10 strategies, and then, at the analysis stage, select amongst these strategies which will be used for calculating the indicator. A range between 10-15 should be included in the module, with 15 being the maximum. If one is confident of the 10 strategies that will be used for the calculation, then it is fine to keep only 10, however, it is usually best to have some margin of applicability, from 10 to 15.

Question 8): The indicator still does not capture the number of times that a household is applying each coping strategy; so, would it be possible to ask in the questionnaire about the frequency that the strategy was applied over the last six months? I.e., 'How many times did your

household have to apply this coping strategy?' This would capture the greater severity in the condition of households that report having applied coping strategies multiple times.

Answer: Indeed, the LCS indicators do not capture the frequency of adoption of the strategies (unlike the rCSI indicator); households are classified based on whether they applied each strategy at least once, and even just one strategy per severity level. If a household applied a strategy within a severity level just once, then it is classified the same as if it applied it three or four times within the past 30 days or the past 12 months, or if it applied all the 3-4 strategies within that severity level.

Further developments of the LCS module could thus explore the idea of taking into account the number of strategies applied within each severity level, and the number of times applied (if more than once). But for now, the frequency of applying the strategy is not captured, and this could be considered one of the limitations of LCSI.

Question 9): Is there a color code to produce graphs related to the LCS indicators?

Answer: Recommended color codes (in rgb to cmyk) can be found in the LCS guidance documents.

Question 10): Can strategies be different across countries? And within countries?

Answer: Firstly, it is important to distinguish between the selection of strategies and their severity levels:

- **The severity of the strategies** can be different between countries, but should not be different within the same survey or in the same country. It is recommended to contextualize the severity of each strategy using the qualitative tool. However, once the severity level of a certain strategy is determined, it should be applied for the population covered by the survey, or the whole country. For example, if it is decided that 'withdrawing children from school' has a crisis level severity, then it should be applied as crisis severity for the whole population within the same survey. Before going into the field, quantitative data collection and community consultations (the qualitative tool) can help to correctly determine severity levels of strategies. However, this should not be changed during the survey data collection or analysis.
- **In terms of having different strategies for different areas** of the same country (including within the same survey) - if there are both urban or rural contexts, it is possible to have a list of strategies that cover both urban and rural contexts. This means that some strategies will not be applicable for a large portion of the population in the rural or urban context. For example, 'selling the last female animal' will not be applicable for most of the urban population, but will be applicable for the rural population. So, the module questionnaire should account for different contexts; and at the time of the analysis, LCS indicators should be calculated using the 10 most relevant strategies for the context. That is why ten strategies might not be always enough if a survey covers very different contexts.