Feed the Future

Survey Implementation

Document

Questionnaire and Field Manual   
Translation Protocol

Zone of Influence Midline Survey

April 2021

This publication was prepared for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared for the Bureau for Food Security, United States Agency for International Development, USAID Contract Number GS-23F-8144H/AID-OAA-M-12-00006.

**Recommended Citation**

Kiersten B. Johnson. 2018.

*Feed the Future Zone of Influence Surveys: Questionnaire and Field Manual Translation Protocol.*

Washington, DC: Bureau for Food Security, USAID

**Contact Information**

Feed the Future

1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20004

[www.feedthefuture,gov](http://www.feedthefuture,gov)

Table of Contents

[Determining the number of translations needed 1](#_Toc69976495)

[Translation procedure: The TRAPD model 1](#_Toc69976496)

[1. Finalize source language document 2](#_Toc69976497)

[2. Identify and train translation team 2](#_Toc69976498)

[3. Translate survey and conduct an independent review 2](#_Toc69976499)

[4. Conduct back translation 3](#_Toc69976500)

[5. Correct translation based on questionnaire pretest 3](#_Toc69976501)

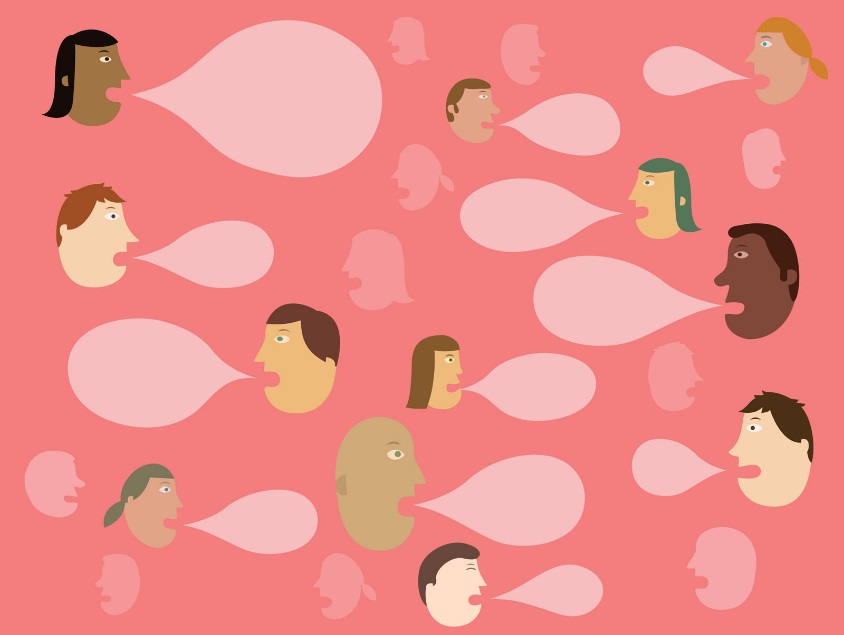
[Programming the translated survey to tablets 3](#_Toc69976502)

[References 4](#_Toc69976503)

[Appendix A: Questionnaire and manual translation error log 5](#_Toc69976504)

Appropriate translation procedures are central to the quality of the survey questionnaire and, therefore, to the quality of the collected data. Translations of survey documentation, including the questionnaire as well as the Interviewer’s Manual and Supervisor’s Manual, must follow a specific protocol to avoid situations in which poor translation of survey documents results in the collection of invalid and unreliable data.

# Determining the number of translations needed

Feed the Future survey questionnaires must be translated into relevant languages. At a minimum, language groups that constitute the native language of 10 percent or more of the sampled population must have a formally translated questionnaire. If budget allows, questionnaires should be translated for languages constituting less than 10 percent of the native languages of the sampled population. In countries where English is not recognized as a national language, the Interviewer’s Manual and Supervisor’s Manual must also be translated into a national language.

# Translation procedure: The TRAPD model

Translation of survey documents should be implemented using a modified version of the team translation approach called the TRAPD Model (Harkness, 2003). TRAPD is an acronym for five interrelated procedures required for optimal translation: Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pretesting, and Documentation.

Translation of the survey questionnaire will occur according to the following steps:

1. Finalize source language document.
2. Identify translation team for each language.
3. Translate document and conduct an independent review of the translation (team review).
4. Conduct oral back translation with a member of the team that developed the questionnaire to ensure the fidelity of translated questionnaire items to the original concepts in the source language document.
5. Implement the questionnaire pretest and revise the questionnaire and corresponding translations accordingly.

Translation of interviewer and supervisor manuals will follow Steps 1-3.

## Finalize source language document

Prior to beginning translation, the document to be translated should be finalized. The survey questionnaire in the source language (usually English) will be formatted for paper-and-pencil administration during the questionnaire pretest.

## Identify and train translation team

The in-country data collection partner will identify a translation team for each language into which the survey documents will be translated. A minimum of three translators (one Translator, one Reviewer, and one Translation Manager who will adjudicate differences and serve as back-translator) per language will be trained on the translation protocol. These translators will be located in the country where the survey is to take place.

Senior technical advisors will train the translation teams in the translation method. Training will include a comprehensive review of the survey documents to ensure complete comprehension of the meaning of each question, response option, and instruction. This review will include an opportunity to discuss any words or phrases that seem ambiguous or confusing.

Translation team members should have native fluency in the dialects spoken in Feed the Future’s Zone of Influence; and a solid understanding of the survey objectives, procedures, and subject matter, including terms and concepts that are used in the survey documents. Translators should avoid word-for-word translations but instead focus on translating the meaning of the question, response option, or instruction. The translation team members’ training must include a review of the questionnaire item by item.

## Translate survey and conduct an independent review

For each language, once the translation team has been trained, the Translator will translate the survey documents into the specified language. It is very important that the translation retain any formatting (e.g., capitalization, location in questionnaire structure) from the source language version because this formatting provides important instructions to the Interviewer. The draft translation will be given to the Reviewer, who will review the translation item by item. Specifically, the Reviewer will:

* Read each questionnaire item or manual passage aloud.
* Compare the translated version of that item to the source-language version.
* List any problems or issues.
* Propose alternative wording or solutions to the problems or issues.
* Raise any concerns about respondent comprehension.
* Ensure that no substantive information has been lost in translation.

The Reviewer will record any errors found during this process in the Questionnaire and Manual Translation Error Log (Appendix A). The Translation Manager will review the Questionnaire and Manual Translation Error Log and decide if anything in the translation needs to be corrected. If there is any confusion about the meaning of any questionnaire or manual item, the Translation Manager will contact senior technical staff for clarification. The Translation Manager will work to achieve consensus on issues and accurately document those decisions on a new version of the translation.

## Conduct back translation

Back translation is a useful tool for assessing translation quality and can provide valuable insight into how well the translated items were understood and translated. Once the translated documents are final, the Translation Manager will meet with the Senior Researcher either in person or via teleconference. The Translation Manager will orally back-translate the translations of the questionnaire. During the meeting, the Senior Researcher and the Translation Manager will discuss any issues and decide on the correct translation for the local language.

## Correct translation based on questionnaire pretest

Interviewers in the specified country will conduct a pretest of the survey questionnaire, as described in a separate questionnaire pretest protocol. The questionnaire will be pretested with respondents who have similar characteristics to those likely to be encountered in the field (i.e., rural residents with agricultural livelihoods whose native language is the same as that of the questionnaire being administered). Female respondents should be between 18 and 49 years of age; male respondents should be 18 years of age or older). The questionnaire pretest is an opportunity for the interviewers to determine whether the survey is fit for use as translated.

The Translation Manager and the Senior Researcher will meet (in person or via teleconference) to discuss the need for revisions to the translations that emerged from the questionnaire pretest findings. The Translation Manager will make the corrections, while maintaining rigorous document version control.

# Programming the translated survey to tablets

In most cases, the questionnaires will be administered to respondents using tablets. When the questionnaire is finalized, it will be programmed for data collection on the tablet. The data collection program will include data entry screens in each local language. The Translation Manager, using the finalized translated questionnaire and working with the programmers, will support the process of transferring the translated version of the questionnaire to the tablet. The translated version of the questionnaire on the tablet will be tested during the interviewer training and pilot.

Changes to the survey, including survey instruments, will likely be necessary based on the interviewer training and pilot. The Senior Researcher should collect all recommended changes from Interviewers and Supervisors based on their experiences during the training and pilot, and communicate the changes to the Translation Manager. The Translation Manager will make any necessary revisions to the translated version of the questionnaire. The Translation Manager will track all revisions made and ensure that the changes are communicated via email to all senior survey staff. The programmers will ensure that the data collection program is updated to reflect any changes made to the questionnaire.

# References

Harkness, J. A. 2003. Questionnaire translation. In J. A. Harkness, F. van de Vijver, & P. Ph. Mohler (Eds.), *Cross-cultural survey methods* (pp. 35-56). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

# Appendix A: Questionnaire and manual translation error log

As you review the translated documents, please use the table below to document all errors encountered. When categorizing the errors, please use the following guidelines:

**Error Category:**

* Errors of meaning: If the meaning of the translation is different than the meaning of the source language
* Errors of form: If the translation contains an error of grammar, spelling, or other formal error that does not otherwise change the meaning of the translation with respect to the source language
* Errors of compliance: If the translation, even though meaning and form are correct, does not conform to the instructions received, style guide, preferred terminology, or other client-specified requirement

**Error Weight:**

Error weight is the gravity of the error. Errors should be categorized as either “serious” or “minor.”

**Serious Errors:**

* Errors of meaning: The meaning of the translated language is completely different than the meaning of the source language.
* Errors of form: A blatant error that any educated speaker of the translated language would recognize as such
* Errors of compliance: Blatant disregard of the instructions, style guide, etc.

**Minor Errors:**

* Errors of meaning: The meaning of the translated language is slightly different than the meaning of the source language.
* Errors of form: A clear error concerning a minor point of grammar, punctuation, etc.
* Errors of compliance: A minor deviation from the instructions, style guide, etc.

**Remarks:**

Include any notes about the error here.

**Solution:**

Record here whether a decision was made to make a change to the translation and what that change was.

**Questionnaire and Manual Translation Error Log | Date:**

**Select one: Review of original translation Findings from pretest**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Error Category** | **Weight** | **Remarks** | **Solution** |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |
|  | □ Error of meaning  □ Error of form  □ Error of compliance | □ Serious  □ Minor |  |  |