

Strengthening statistics on children with disabilities:

UNICEF's work and planned activities



Large gaps remain in what is known about disability among children. Information gaps include how many children experience activity limitations and how the environment (including physical, social and attitudinal factors) affects children's participation in their communities. As the main global advocate for children, UNICEF has a lead role in providing the world with current, high quality information on the activities and participation of children across the world. Many initiatives are currently being undertaken by UNICEF and its partners to address the need for comparable and reliable data on children with disabilities. The most salient are summarized below.

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Manual for production of statistics on children with disabilities

This document will provide guidance for those considering collecting data on children with disabilities. The manual discusses conceptual and theoretical issues related to measuring disability in children and reviews methods and tools that have previously been used to collect data in this area. Considerations for designing, planning, and implementing a child disability data collection effort are presented. The manual is currently being drafted with inputs from 40 international experts. The draft manual is expected to be finalized by the end of 2014.

New survey module on child functioning and disability

UNICEF and the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) have developed a survey module on child functioning and disability for use in surveys and censuses. The module reflects current thinking around disability and can produce internationally comparable data. The survey covers children between 2 and 17 years of age, and assesses activity limitations in the domains of speech and language, hearing, vision, learning, mobility and motor skills, emotions, and behaviours. The module has been presented, discussed, and revised at several expert consultations since 2011, involving representatives of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), academic institutions, international organizations, and national statistical offices. The module has undergone cognitive testing to determine the quality of the questions being asked and ascertain the cultural understanding by the respondents. The module has been tested in India, the USA, Belize, Oman, and Montenegro (see video available here <http://youtube.be/sMcI3jEJaZU>). Field testing has taken place in Cameroun, Italy, and Haiti, and is planned to take place in a few more countries. UNICEF and the WG are also working on the development of a manual to support implementation of the module. The module and manual are expected to be ready for actual data collection and use by countries in the second half of 2014.

New survey module on school environment and participation

UNICEF and the Washington Group are developing a new survey module to measure the school environment and children's participation in education. The module will measure the barriers and facilitators to education by children with/without disabilities. This module will complement the module on child functioning and disability. Together, they will provide a comprehensive measurement of disability - assessing activity limitations, as well as children's interactions within their environment. The module will cover: attitudes, accessibility, getting to school, and affordability. Once finalized, the module will undergo cognitive testing and field testing. It is expected to be ready for actual data collection and use by countries in early 2015.



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Toolkit for the assessment of activity limitations and participation restrictions in children

UNICEF is working with a group of international experts to create a toolkit and methodological guidelines for an in-depth assessment of activity limitations and participation restrictions in children based on existing best practice approaches in low-income countries. The toolkit and guidelines utilize the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health-Children and Youth version (ICF-CY) as the conceptual framework for an approach to disability where the focus is on activity limitations and barriers/support to participation. The toolkit will include the survey instrument and interview guide, methodological guidelines, training program/materials, staff recruitment guidance, and overall logistics. The interview guide and training program will cover the entire assessment procedure, including the minimum qualifications for the interviewers, the steps to undertake before, during, and after the assessment in order to ensure data quality, how to follow the required ethical codes, and how to guarantee appropriate follow-up if needed. The package will also comprise an analytical framework for the analysis of the findings, including indicators for reporting and main tables, and a strategy for validation and field testing. The toolkit is expected to be ready for use by countries in late 2014.



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Regional workshops on the measurement of child disability

UNICEF and the Washington Group intend to develop training material and to conduct workshops on the measurement of child disability. The training material is intended to be used in technical workshops as well as for individual learning. The workshops are meant to take place in all 7 UNICEF regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, West and Central Africa, East and Southern Africa, Middle East and North Africa, CEE/CIS, East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia). The purpose of the workshops will be to build/strengthen local capacity for data collection. Training will be provided to National Statistics Offices, other Government staff, and local researchers, on concepts, models and measures of disability, survey design, data processing, data analysis, data dissemination, and data use. The workshops are expected to take place in 2015. UNICEF and the Washington Group also intend to establish a mechanism of technical assistance for countries that want to implement the module on child functioning and disability, as well as the module on school participation, including technical assistance during the design of the questionnaire and methodology, training of interviewers, supervision of fieldwork, and support for the analysis and presentation of the data.