



Advances in the measurement of child functioning and disability

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In 2009, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) began work on the development of a set of questions on child disability for use in surveys. This coincided with the plans of UNICEF to revise the existing data collection module used in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) program. The UNICEF/WG questionnaire on child functioning and disability reflects current thinking around child disability and can produce internationally comparable data. The questionnaire covers children between 2 and 17 years of age, and assesses speech and language, hearing, vision, learning (cognition and intellectual development), mobility and motor skills, emotions and behaviours. To better reflect the degree of disability, each area is assessed against a rating scale. A draft of the proposed UNICEF/WG module was discussed and revised during a three-day expert consultation that brought together 35 experts from around the world on a variety of topics ranging from paediatric development to survey design. Since then, the questionnaire has undergone cognitive testing in: Mumbai, India as an independent project carried out by ADAPT; USA at the National Centre for Health Statistics (NCHS); Belize in association with UNICEF Belize, the National Statistical Office, and Care International; in Oman by the Central Statistical Office; and Montenegro in collaboration with UNICEF Montenegro. All cognitive testing and question evaluation was coordinated through the Questionnaire Design Research Laboratory (QDRL) at NCHS. So far, independent 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 the implementation of the module. The manual will include all the necessary background documentation that will accompany the module, including tabulation plans, templates for reporting, instructions for interviewers and training material. The new module and the manual for its implementation are expected to be ready for actual data collection and use by countries in the second half of 2015.

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