



# Disability Data in Schools: Testing the Child Functioning Module – Teacher Version (CFM-TV) in Emergency and Protracted Crises

Research  
& Studies

RS Brief | 45 | By Aude Brus, Sandrine Bohan-Jacquot, Yahoko Asai  
3I Division / Social Inclusion Technical Direction/ EAR Program  
2023

## About HI

Humanity & Inclusion (HI) works alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights. HI works to contribute to global dialogues about data collection disaggregated by disability.

## About this brief

A Humanity & Inclusion publication

## About this study

This study has been conducted with the support of the Washington Group on disability statistics and thanks to the financial support of Education Cannot Wait.

## A. Context of the research

Collection of data is of critical importance in addressing social challenges and ensuring that individuals with disabilities are ‘not left behind’. While the World Report on Disability<sup>1</sup> estimates that up to 15% of the population has disabilities, collecting accurate disability data remains challenging, often expensive and inaccurate. This data gap is particularly concerning for children and youths with disabilities, making them “politically and socially invisible”, and creating barriers to their access to key services such as education and health.

The Short Set (SS) of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics is a widely used tool for collecting disability data in adults. However, the SS has limitations when applied to children. In response, UNICEF developed the Child Functioning Module (CFM) that aims to identify children with functional difficulties that may limit their participation in daily life. Primary caregivers answer questions as proxies. Interviews can be conducted in different locations, preferably at home but also at school. However, summoning parents to schools to ask 24 questions about each of their enrolled children can be challenging, especially in emergencies and protracted crises.



The Child Functioning Module – Teacher Version (CFM-TV) was then designed. It allows teachers to be proxy respondents. It comprises 13 questions covering various functional domains, enabling teachers to assess their students’ functional difficulties.

HI conducted research in the refugee settlement of Kyaka II in Uganda to explore the CFM-TV’s effectiveness, reliability, and implications for inclusive education in challenging contexts.

1 World Health Organization and World Bank, 2011. Available at the [WHO website](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-disability-2011)



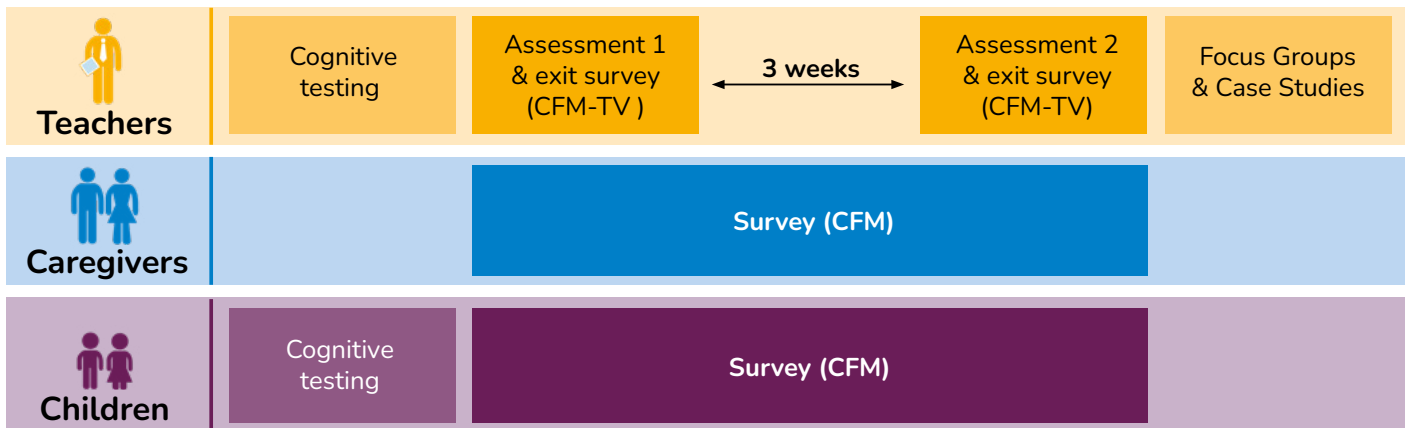
## B. General and specific objectives

The Disability Data in School (DiDa) project aims to contribute to the production of dependable data on disability in school settings in fragile contexts. The first specific objective was to assess the comprehensibility of the CFM-TV by the target respondents. The second and main objective was to assess the reliability of the CFM-TV. The project assesses the consistency of results when repeated in identical conditions (same teachers assessing the same learners, three weeks apart) and the degree to which it agreed with other data collection methods by other respondents (CFM by caregivers and self-report by children aged 12-17). Finally, the research aims to evaluate the feasibility and practicability of the CFM-TV in real school/ classroom situations.

## C. Methods

This research employs a mixed-methods approach. First, cognitive interviews were led with teachers and learners over 12 years in two randomly selected schools. To explore the CFM-TV reliability, three other schools were randomly selected, with one class per grade randomly selected from each school, making a total of 21 classes and then 21 teachers. Quantitative surveys were administered within three groups: teachers (two sessions, three weeks apart), caregivers, and learners over 12 years old. Finally, 3 focus group discussions and 5 case studies were conducted to assess the feasibility of implementing CFM-TV in other school settings. The flowchart below illustrates the research structure.

**Figure: Presentation of the research methodology by target populations.**



## D. Findings

### (1) Comprehensibility of the CFM-TV by teachers

Teachers' feedback on the questionnaire was generally positive, with questions described as "user-friendly" and relevant to their work environment. However, a disparity emerged between questions: some functional domains did not raise any (or few) difficulty (e.g. answering questions on seeing, hearing, mobility). For the question on 'remembering' rather than memorization, teachers focused on learners' ability to recall lessons from the previous day. Interestingly, some teachers found the inclusion of the question about 'making friends' surprising, as it was not considered part of a teacher's responsibility or observation. All this information was used to feed the teachers' training.

### (2) Reliability of the CFM-TV

- The Intra-Observer Reliability of the CFM-TV was done by comparing the proportion of learners with functional limitations assessed by teachers for two different sessions 3 weeks apart. Results point towards a moderate level of agreement, implying a moderate degree of reliability in evaluating disability status of learners of their class.
- The Inter-Rater Reliability was done comparing first teachers' and caregivers' assessments, then comparing teachers and self-reporting (by children between 12 and 17 years).

#### Teachers versus Caregivers

Results indicate that caregivers identified more children with difficulties compared to teachers. Caregivers and teachers assessed the same percentage for the remembering dimension, and

they were almost equal in the controlling behaviour dimension. However, substantial discrepancies were observed in other dimensions.

The analysis of agreement between teachers and caregivers regarding the disability status of children yielded interesting results. It suggests that there is limited agreement between teachers and caregivers in their assessments of disability status across all dimensions. However, despite the lack of strong correlation and agreement, it is notable that teachers and caregivers did concur on the absence of any difficulty in any domain for a substantial portion of the children.

This research also shows that while caregivers and teachers agreed on the disability status of certain children, their responses differed on the specific dimensions that posed challenges. While teachers tended to focus on learning-related aspects and the ability to adapt to change, caregivers were particularly attentive to sensory impairments, communication difficulties, socialization challenges, and emotional well-being. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of disability identification and highlight the unique perspectives of caregivers and teachers.

**While they may agree on the presence of disability, the specific dimensions they identify as challenging can differ based on their roles, experiences, and priorities.**

### **Teachers versus Learners**

Learners' self-report of functional difficulty varied across domains, with remembering being the highest. **There was a lack of agreement between learners and teachers in assessing disability status.**

To summarize, the research demonstrates that **teachers generate reasonably reliable disability data as proxies.** The results show that the intra-rater reliability was moderate between teacher assessments, however inter-rater reliability between teachers and caregivers or children was limited. But this is due to different perceptions, perspectives and priorities among the informants (teachers, caregivers, and children).

### **(3) External factors affecting reliability included class size and timing of evaluations**

Teachers generally showed determination in assessing students, even with large classes. However, there was potential for guessed answers in cases of uncertainty. The research noticed that teachers' relationships with students improved over time.

Nevertheless, if a window period between the start of the school year and the assessments is indeed necessary (at least 1 month and even more), it may not be necessary to wait longer than this, as teachers in this research were able to assess each learner in their class after a few weeks together.

### **(4) Change in attitudes and practices**

An unexpected benefit was CFM-TV's catalysing effect on inclusive teaching, including positive changes in teacher attitudes and practices, as well as unexpected improvements in learner dynamics and participation. This research revealed notable and significant shifts in teachers' attitudes and behaviors over a relatively short timeframe.

**"The tool made me question myself from multiple angles. For instance, how could I teach a learner for an entire year without even knowing their name?" – a male teacher, Case Studies.**

**"I feel like my students now consider the classroom theirs. They used to say 'my class' but now it's 'our class'." – a female teacher, FGD**

The catalyst for change seemed to be a two-days training session aimed at raising awareness and explaining the use of the CFM-TV, completed by continuous support of the teachers during data collection. The report emphasizes eventually that **collecting data on the disabilities of students within schools remains important, as it can shape the school environment, teaching methods, and learning practices.** Additionally, this data plays a pivotal role in formulating educational policies, allocating resources, and monitoring efforts. From a programmatic perspective, this data is crucial for project-level planning and evaluation.

## E. Conclusion

Several key takeaways emerge from the research findings.

- **Addressing Disability Data Gaps:** The research underscores the significance of addressing disability data gaps, particularly concerning children and youth with disabilities. When children with disabilities are absent from official statistics, they become “politically and socially invisible,” a situation that this research aims to rectify.
- **Role of the CFM-TV:** The CFM-TV allows teachers to assess the functional difficulties of their students within a classroom setting. By providing teachers with the means to evaluate their students’ abilities and challenges comprehensively, it bridges a critical gap in disability data collection, especially in contexts marked by emergencies and protracted crises.
- **Reliability and Benefits of CFM-TV at class level:** Results point towards a moderate level of agreement between the two assessments done by the teachers 3 weeks apart. However, it showcases how teachers can effectively use the questionnaire to assess students, thereby contributing to the collection of accurate data. The classroom size does not seem to affect the ability (and motivation) of the teachers to assess all the learners. Moreover, the CFM-TV demonstrates tangible benefits, such as positive changes in teacher attitudes and practices, along with unexpected improvements in learner dynamics and participation.
- **Teachers as proxies:** Teachers and caregivers can be both proxies to assess the disability status of children but the data produced will not get the same meaning and will not be relevant for the same purposes.
- **Inclusive Education in Challenging Contexts:** In emergency and protracted crisis contexts, inclusive education faces heightened challenges. This research report underscores that the CFM-TV can be a powerful tool in supporting inclusive education efforts in such difficult situations. By providing a mechanism for teachers to identify and address the functional difficulties of their students, it contributes to the realization of the right to quality education for all, including those with disabilities.

In conclusion, this research report advocates for the importance of accurate data in understanding and addressing the needs of children and youth with disabilities, particularly in challenging circumstances like emergencies and protracted crises. It offers insights on further needed research, nevertheless, the CFM-TV emerges as a practical solution, offering reliability and tangible benefits for teachers and students alike. By closing disability data gaps, this tool contributes to the broader goal of inclusive education, ensuring that no child is left behind, regardless of their abilities or challenges.