



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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NOSSAL
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GLOBAL HEALTH
RESEARCH AND
PRACTICE



Humanitarian Disability Needs Estimation Screening Tool (HD-NEST)

A quick practice guide

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The Humanitarian Disability Needs Estimation Screening Tool (HD-NEST) project is funded and supported by Elrha’s Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) programme, a grant making facility which improves outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by identifying, nurturing and sharing more effective, innovative and scalable solutions.

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Elrha is a global charity that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation. Visit www.elrha.org to find out more.

Introducing HD-NEST

What is HD-NEST?

The Humanitarian Disability Needs Estimation Screening Tool (HD-NEST) is a set of three questions for rapidly identifying most people with disability in a disaster affected population.

HD-NEST was designed for use in rapid assessments immediately following a sudden onset disaster. The design of the tool was guided by the constraints humanitarian actors face in the early days of a response.

HD-NEST allows humanitarian responders to identify:

- The number of people with disability affected
- The approximate support needs of those people with disability affected

The first section of this guide outlines the tool development process. The second section presents the tool and questions.

HD-NEST was designed specifically for use in rapid assessments in the immediate, or early, response phase. HD-NEST is not a replacement for comprehensive disability data collection and should be considered as part of a disability data collection process that is ongoing and refined throughout response and recovery.

What problems does HD-NEST aim to solve?

1. Rapid assessments following a sudden onset disaster are usually **joint assessments**. These assessments include questions from **multiple agencies** (clusters or working groups) across key humanitarian sectors. This means space is at a premium and **long question sets** become **impractical**.
2. A single **direct question**, for example ‘Do you have a disability?’, is an alternative. However, a direct question can **underreport** the number of people with disability due to **stigma** surrounding disability. A single direct question will also not identify people who may have support needs but do not consider themselves to be a person with disability, for example, an older person with a mobility limitation.
3. An early **understanding of support needs** can assist humanitarian actors to better, and more quickly, **adapt interventions** and **improve targeting** to meet the needs of people with disability affected by crisis. Disability data tools currently available to humanitarian actors focus on identifying individuals and not needs. For example, combining the **Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Functioning** with additional questions on support needs can provide a comprehensive understanding, but is often impractical in an initial rapid joint needs assessment.
4. Due to the need to quickly understand impacts and needs, initial humanitarian assessments often collect data from **key informants** rather than directly from individuals or households. These ‘**proxies**’ may be village heads or community representatives. HD-NEST was tested with proxies and with individuals who self-reported.

HD-NEST was designed for a specific use case. HD-NEST is not a diagnostic tool and is not designed to provide full details of support needs, such as who is the person the identified individual relies on, type of assistive products used, and type of communication needs. HD-NEST is not a tool for measuring disability prevalence in a population.

Introducing HD-NEST

How was HD-NEST developed?

The HD-NEST questions were developed and tested in Indonesia and the Philippines. Following an initial scoping review of **disability data collection tools**, consultations with humanitarian actors and people with disability identified priority areas of support for people with disability in a humanitarian response. Consultations included people with disability with a range of impairments.

Five support categories were identified resulting in six potential questions, including a single question that combined support categories. During later field testing, this combined question performed poorly on understanding and recall. Based on this, we do not recommend combining support categories in a single question.

The questions were translated into Indonesian and Filipino languages using **team translation**. The questions were then tested and refined with individuals and small groups in both languages to ensure the questions were understood as intended.

Field testing of the six questions was conducted in a rural area in Indonesia and urban setting in the Philippines. Both areas had high natural hazard risks, including from earthquake, volcanic eruption, typhoon, and floods.

Testing of the six questions was completed with a total of 61 village representatives, 218 heads of households, and 247 individuals. People with disability were included in all data collection teams.

How were the HD-NEST questions selected?

The final HD-NEST questions ask how many people require support in three categories (or areas or domains). These categories are whether a person:

- **Relies on another person** to do daily activities. For example, a personal assistant or family member.
- Uses **assistive products**. For example, wheelchairs, hearing aids, walking sticks, canes, magnifiers or communication boards.
- Requires **information in alternative formats**. For example, sign language, text to speech, easy-to-read, or large print.

Field testing of the HD-NEST questions included asking all respondents the Washington Group Short Set of questions. The selection of the final HD-NEST questions was based on how well they performed in comparison to responses to the Short Set as follows:

- Combined, the three selected questions identified most people identified by the Washington Group Short Set using both the at least 'some difficulty' and 'a lot of difficulty' cut offs.¹
- Individually, these three questions accurately identified most people with genuine support needs. These questions had the least false positives and false negatives; that is, the number of people wrongly identified as having, or not having, support needs was low.
- Individually, these three questions were understood and did not present conceptual difficulties for the different respondents.

¹ Greater than 80% of people identified having support needs by the three questions combined in both countries, were also identified to have disability using the Washington Group Short Set questions with both 'at least some difficulty' and 'at least a lot of difficulty' cut offs.

The HD-NEST questions

HD-NEST question set

In an initial rapid assessment following a sudden onset disaster, questions are often asked to key informants (or proxies) who respond on behalf of other people in their community or household. The wording used in the HD-NEST question set below reflects this situation.

HD-NEST is not a standalone tool. The HD-NEST questions are designed to be included in assessment tools alongside other questions.

The following are the recommended questions assuming they are asked to community representatives or similar.

HD-NEST question set

Does anyone in your [community / household] rely on someone else to do day-to-day activities at home or outside?

[If YES, how many?]

Does anyone in your [community / household] use assistive products [e.g. cane, wheelchair, hearing aids] to do day-to-day activities at home or outside?

[If YES, how many?]

Does anyone in your [community / household] need information in sign language, easy-to-read, large print, or other formats [to access emergency assistance or relief items]?

[If YES, how many?]

HD-NEST questions can be asked to individuals (or caregiver if required) by changing the initial wording as presented below.

Wherever possible, HD-NEST questions should be asked directly to affected individuals to allow them to self-report any support needs they may have.

HD-NEST for self-reporting of support needs

1. Do you [does he / she / name] rely on someone else to do day-to-day activities at home or outside?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Do not want to respond [or no answer]
2. Do you [does he / she / name] use assistive products [e.g. cane, wheelchair, hearing aids] to do day-to-day activities at home or outside?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Do not want to respond [or no answer]
3. Do you [does he / she / name] need information in sign language, easy-to-read, large print, or other formats [to access emergency assistance or relief items]?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Do not want to respond [or no answer]

The HD-NEST questions

Single question

Testing of potential HD-NEST questions in Indonesia and the Philippines resulted in one question identifying most people with support needs.¹ This single question does not provide specific information on what those needs may be. For example, responses may include people with mobility or communication difficulties who have different support needs.

While we DO NOT recommend this approach, we appreciate there may be humanitarian situations with severe operational constraints where only a single question is viable.

The HD-NEST single item question should ONLY be used in situations where all three HD-NEST items cannot be included. Note that the wording of the single item question differs from other HD-NEST questions and directly asks for data on how many people.

HD-NEST single question

How many people in your [community / household] *would not* be able to access [emergency] assistance or collect relief items on their own?

Use of support categories only

In rapid assessment forms, information on disability status may be included under general demographic data at the beginning of the form. HD-NEST questions may be included here or under other sections depending on the design of the assessment form.

Sometimes assessment forms only include a space for recording the answer to demographic data with no accompanying question. For example:

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Disability

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

We do not recommend this approach for disability data collection as it results in data collectors asking non-standardised (direct) questions. This can lead to underreporting and unreliable data.

If it is decided to organise the assessment form in this way, the shorter HD-NEST support categories presented below could be used. We DO NOT recommend this approach as the limitations outweigh the advantages of including the full HD-NEST questions. However, we recognise there may be some humanitarian situations in which this option may need to be considered.

HD-NEST support categories only

[How many in your community/household:]

- **rely on someone else** [to do day-to-day activities]
- **use assistive products**
- **need information** in alternative formats [e.g. large print, sign language, easy to read]

¹ More than 80% of people who responded they couldn't collect relief items independently also reported having support needs in other categories in both countries.





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HD-NEST was developed by the [Nossal Institute for Global Health](#), University of Melbourne in partnership with [Arbeiter-Samariter Bund](#) and [Life Haven Centre for Independent Living](#) with support from Elrha's [Humanitarian Innovation Fund](#).

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If you have used HD-NEST in your work, we would also like to hear your experiences.