

Chapter 4.1 Basic principles in designing studies to assess the effects of interventions

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Further reading

1. Clarke M, Allen C, Archer F, Wong D, Eriksson A, Puri J. What evidence is available and what is required, in humanitarian assistance? 3ie Scoping Paper 1. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). 2014. https://www.3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/3ie_scoping_paper_1-humanitarian-top.pdf (accessed 22 February 2022).

Summary of this document: This scoping paper provides information that should help researchers and others who wish to identify topics in the humanitarian sector that are likely to benefit from new research, in particular, impact evaluations of the effects of interventions, actions and strategies.

The paper is based on a study that used an online survey and semi-structured interviews with experts from the humanitarian sector in November 2013 and February 2014, to collect their evidence needs. The study then mapped these needs to available evidence to identify gaps for new impact evaluations.

2. White H. An introduction to the use of randomized control trials to evaluate development interventions. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*. 2013; 5(1): 30-49

Summary of this document: This journal article provides an introduction to the use of randomised control trials (RCTs) to evaluate the effects of interventions in the development sector. It illustrates many of the features that also need to be considered when designing and conducting a randomised trial in the health emergencies and disasters.

This brief article provides a short, non-technical introduction to RCTs. The article briefly addresses what is meant by impact evaluation, before moving onto the problem of selection bias and how it can be dealt with through experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Practical and ethical concerns in designing and implementing an RCT are then discussed before moving on to some of the criticisms which are commonly made of this approach and finally, challenges for practitioners of RCTs.