

**Regional Workshop on promoting disability data collection through the 2010 Population and Housing Censuses**

8-10 April 2008 – Bangkok, Thailand

**CONCLUSIONS ADOPTED AT THE WORKSHOP**

**Organization**

1. The Regional Workshop on promoting disability data collection through the 2010 Population and Housing Censuses was organised by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with the Emerging Social Issues Division and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and the World Bank. The meeting took place at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand on 8-10 April 2008. The workshop was the first in a series of activities to take place within the two-year UN Development Account project lead by ESCAP on the improvement of disability measurement and statistics in support of the Biwako Millennium Framework of Action and the Regional Census Programme in the Asia and the Pacific region.

2. The workshop was attended by senior statisticians, health and disability professionals, and representatives of non-profit organizations working with people with disabilities from more than 25 countries from the Asia-Pacific region, along with experts from the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization and other specialised agencies.

**Objectives of the Workshop**

3. The objectives of the workshop were to:
- a) Present and advocate the use of the Global Principles and Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF);
  - b) Serve as an important opportunity to identify countries' needs for support for both census and survey-based data collection;
  - c) Provide specific training in disability statistics and introduce the Training Manual on Disability Statistics; and
  - d) Help identify candidate countries for the pilot testing of the Washington Group proposed extended question sets for surveys.

## **Structure of the Workshop**

4. As laid out in the workshop programme, the meeting was structured among the following main topics:

- a) Dialogue between data users and producers: understanding the mismatch;
- b) Shifting towards the ICF-based approach for disability data collection;
- c) Applying the ICF-based approach to census data collection;
- d) ‘Learning by doing’: targeted training on census disability data collection methods and advocating for better data on disability;
- e) How to convince decision makers;
- f) From censuses to surveys: national needs for support.

5. The workshop intended to progress from a typical format of formal presentations and panel discussions, to a more interactive and participatory approach, maximizing the impact and relevance of the training. Moderated group discussions as well as targeted group exercises provided for a richer exchange of ideas and experiences. Training in the areas of advocacy and communication skills were also included for the first time as a key need and a means to promote better data collection on disability.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

6. Participants addressed the mismatch between data users and producers recognising that various ministries and government agencies collect data on disability deriving in different prevalence rates. Several participants pointed out that their countries’ current data collection reflects surprisingly low prevalence rates. Country delegates acknowledged that absence of a common approach to data collection impedes international comparability.

7. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) which provides a unifying framework on disability data collection was introduced to participants as well as the six questions proposed in the Global Principles and Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, which have been globally accepted as part of the United Nations family of social and economic classifications. Moderated group discussions revealed the need to increase awareness and understanding of the ICF framework in addition to actively advocating for the ICF-based approach data collection at the national level.

8. Participants recognised censuses provide a unique occasion to collect data on disability, despite the fact that only a few questions can be included given space and financial limitations. Some delegates expressed their concerns on an increase in the disability prevalence rate using the ICF-based approach. Several participants, however, suggested such increase would more accurately reflect the number of people with different levels of functioning. It was also noted that these estimates address prevalence more accurately, empowering the cause of people with disabilities.

9. Delegates noted that a number of countries in Asia-Pacific have already implemented the ICF approach in their data collection efforts. Participants acknowledged the importance and benefit of sharing countries’ experiences in the

implementation of the ICF framework by discussing the advantages and challenges faced in the adoption of this new approach.

10. Representatives of National Statistical Offices undertook a special training focusing on questionnaire design, translation of questions into local languages, training of interviewers and data compilation. A comprehensive review of these topics combined with practical exercises revealed the interest in the use of this approach. Participants identified countries' needs for support in the areas of technical training, raising awareness of the ICF and promoting its implementation. In connection to this, delegates expressed their appreciation on the usefulness of the Training Manual on Disability Statistics.

11. Parallel to the discussions on technical issues, health and disability professionals and representatives from non-profit organizations working with people with disabilities acknowledged the increasing policy demand for better statistics, pointing out to the relevance of the next round of census as a good opportunity to adopt the ICF-based approach. Building consensus, strengthening local capacity around the ICF framework as well as moving from the medical approach to the social model in data collection, were identified as key challenges to be overcome.

12. Training on advocacy and communication skills as a means to promote better data collection on disability was positively welcomed by participants. Several delegates agreed that more effective campaigning as well as better data were needed to improve the livelihoods of people with disabilities. Country representatives suggested that such training component should be given more importance in subsequent workshops.

13. Countries communicated their interest in training on disability statistics requesting ESCAP support in: a) sub-regional and in-country based training and advisory services to deepen understanding of the ICF approach among different stakeholders; b) building technical capacity for survey design and data analysis; c) design mechanisms for sharing best practices and to strengthen technical collaboration between countries.

14. Workshop participants emphasised the central role of addressing the disability subject as part of their countries' strategies aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In these lines delegates conveyed their appreciation for the workshop acknowledging a greater awareness and acceptance of the ICF approach, and encouraged ESCAP to continue its leading role promoting a unifying framework for disability data collection.

15. Countries agreed to take part in an on-line group of experts set up by ESCAP, to exchange experiences and best practices on disability data collection. Several delegations expressed their strong interest in participating in follow-up activities related to the pilot testing of an extended question set for surveys. A back-to-back workshop will be held at the end of October along the Washington Group Eight Meeting in Manila, Philippines, with those countries confirming their interest in pilot testing the extended survey question set. This meeting will help organise and plan the activities for the pilot testing and the subsequent analysis of results.