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1st – 2nd June, 2016

PSSC-12 Agenda 13

Meeting Paper Title: Disability Washington Group Questions for Census

1. Purpose of Paper

- For information of PSSC-12 and Partners

2. Background

- 2.1. Refer to Annex I

3. Key Issues

- 3.1. Refer to Annex I

4. Key Recommendations

- 4.1. Note further information and upcoming training on the Washington Group short set of disability questions

5. Annexes

- 5.1 Annex I:



Washington Group on Disability Statistics

What is the Washington Group?

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The Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) is a UN city group established under the United Nations Statistical Commission. The WG was constituted to address the urgent need for cross-nationally comparable population based measures of disability. Its mandate is the promotion and co-ordination of international co-operation in the area of health statistics focusing on disability data collection tools suitable for censuses and national surveys.

The WG has sought to foster international collaboration, and in particular, to ensure that its efforts are broad-based and inclusive of voices from developing countries from every region of the world. Representatives of National Statistical Offices around the world, as well as Disabled People's Organizations (DPO), and other international organizations are encouraged to participate in the WG.

Washington Group Tools

Since its inception in 2001, the WG has developed and tested several tools to be used for the collection of internationally comparable disability statistics. These include the WG Short Set on Functioning (described in detail below), the WG Extended Set on Functioning for adults 18 years of age and over, and the WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning for children 2 through 17 years of age. In addition, other tools currently under development include the WG/UNICEF Module on Inclusive Education and a disability module intended for use in labor force surveys developed in a collaboration between the WG and the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG SS)

A major accomplishment of the WG has been the development, testing and endorsement of a short set of questions that can be used on censuses, sample-based national surveys, or other data collection platforms, for the primary purpose of informing policy on the full inclusion of persons with disability into civil society. These questions provide a cost effective way to determine overall disability prevalence rates and to understand the situation of people with disabilities across a range of demographic and socio-economic indicators. The information obtained will provide valuable, internationally comparable evidence to inform effective policies and programs to support people with disabilities.

The WG questions have been extensively tested in all regions of the world, both cognitively and in the field in order to ensure their validity and universality. The set includes questions on six core functional domains: seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care, and communication.

Each of the six questions has four response categories: (1) No, no difficulty, (2) Yes, some difficulty, (3) Yes, a lot of difficulty and (4) Cannot do it at all. With these response categories, the WG questions fulfil two specific data needs:

- to describe disability data as a continuum of functioning based on graded responses, and
- to define a cut-off (or a set of cut-offs) to calculate disability prevalence and to disaggregate outcome indicators (e.g. access to education, employment) by disability status to determine if people with disability are participating in society at equal levels to those without disability.

The Short Set of questions has been recommended by the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Council of European Statisticians as the means to collect information on disability in the upcoming 2020 round of censuses. Furthermore, this set of questions has been endorsed by an Expert Group convened under the auspices of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) as the means to disaggregate outcome indicators by disability status, which is vital for evaluating the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Support

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is supporting the institutional capacity of the WG. The Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre based at University College London is administering the grant on behalf of the WG. The aim is to improve the collection and analysis of disability statistics globally by strengthening the WG's capacity to broadly disseminate and provide technical assistance to support the consistent implementation of the WG's existing data collection tools.

With support from DFAT, UNICEF and the WG have plans to conduct a series of regional workshops on the measurement of disability. The purpose of the workshops will be to build and strengthen local capacity for data collection. Training will be provided to National Statistics Offices, other Government staff and local researchers on concepts, models and measures of disability, survey design, data processing, data analysis, data dissemination and data use.

In addition, implementation workshops are planned for countries that are planning disability data collections and require more technical support and capacity building. The first such workshop is planned in the Pacific region in July, 2016. Countries from throughout the region are invited to attend.

Publication

The work of the WG over the past 15 years will be the topic of a new book, International Measurement of Disability: Purpose, Method and Application, edited by B. Altman and published by Springer. The four sections of the book cover: the origin of the WG and issues in disability data collection; the purpose, process and testing of questions designed for census formats; extended sets of questions and methodological advances; and outcomes and the role of the WG measures in international data collections. It is expected that the book will be published in 2016.

The WG disseminates its work products globally through the world-wide web (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/washington_group.htm) and scientific publications.