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Report

Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals Cairo, 18-20 September 2018

Summary

The Statistics Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with the Social Development Division, held the first Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2018.

The meeting agenda included items on global and regional guidelines to improve disability statistics; implementing the Washington Group questions on functioning in the Arab region; the effective use of statistics in policy making and monitoring; disability indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals and other development indicators; methods to produce disaggregated cross-tabulated analysis; developing an Arab disability indicator framework; field work training needs; and the terms of reference of the Casablanca group on disability statistics in Arab countries.

The present report summarizes the meeting discussions and sets out the resulting conclusions and recommendations.

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Introduction

1. Official disability statistics play a key role in planning, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes aimed at strengthening and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development describes persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group and calls for their empowerment. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, especially target 17.18, calls for enhancing capacity-building support to developing countries by 2020 to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including on disability.¹
2. Over the past decades, concerted national efforts have been made to collect disability data in both developed and developing countries, because of increased international and national focus on involving persons with disabilities in societies on a par with other individuals. Twelve Arab countries² have applied the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning in at least one survey or census. Nonetheless, in most countries, question application and disability prevalence calculations did not fully meet the Washington Group standards. Consequently, the results were not as accurate as required. In many cases, collected data were not processed, and results were not disseminated with the necessary detail. Many countries lack the information to formulate development policies and programmes that are inclusive of persons with disabilities, aimed at ensuring their participation in society and equal access to services. The aim of providing guidelines to improve the collection of disability statistics and of calculating disability and SDG indicators is to contribute to the production and dissemination of consistent and high-quality disability data, and to provide policymakers with the necessary information to develop inclusive policies for that social group.
3. As part of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, in 2016, ESCWA launched the Disability Statistics Programme in its Statistics Division to improve disability data collection and dissemination in member States, and to ensure that no country was excluded. In that context, the Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals was held in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2018. It was the third in a series of meetings convened since 2016 to address issues and needs related to disability statistics at the regional level.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals issued the following recommendations to member States and to ESCWA:
 - (a) Apply the global and regional guidelines to improve disability statistics set out in the “Regional guidebook to improve disability data collection and analysis in the Arab countries”, and especially the Washington Group questions on functioning, so as to enhance the production of consistent and comparable data of importance to policymakers and non-governmental institutions concerned with persons with disabilities;
 - (b) Expand disability fields to include the largest number of persons with disabilities by adopting the “Arab Washington Group extended short set on functioning” (AWG_SS+) as a minimum, which includes seeing, hearing, mobility (walking or climbing stairs), communication, cognition, self-care and upper-body mobility;

¹ Target 17.18: By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

² Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi) and Yemen.

(c) Include the Arab Washington Group extended short set on functioning in and systematically collect data through periodic surveys, such as labour force, demographic and health surveys and censuses, when possible, to ensure that nobody is excluded, in line with paragraph 48 of “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” that stresses the importance of quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind;

(d) Develop detailed disability-disaggregated SDG indicators derived from surveys, censuses and administrative registers to monitor the implementation of the SDGs and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and disseminate them according to metadata standards, especially in areas that lack quality data, such as poverty, violence, access to drinking water and sanitation, the Internet, mobile telephone penetration, transport and benefits;

(e) Benefit from technical support to countries provided by ESCWA, in collaboration with specialized United Nations agencies, in conducting surveys and censuses so as to produce detailed disability indicators and disseminate them in all areas of life and development;

(f) Strengthen dialogue and cooperation between statisticians and policymakers to effectively use statistics produced by national statistical offices in developing and monitoring programmes and policies, and in preparing reports on implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the SDGs and national strategies on persons with disabilities;

(g) Request ESCWA to provide guidance on intensifying efforts to achieve cooperation between statisticians and policymakers to effectively use statistics in developing evidence-based policies;

(h) Assist national statistical offices in raising awareness on statistical work and its methodologies, determinants and uses;

(i) Support communication with civil society organizations concerned with persons with disabilities, and benefit from their experience;

(j) Disseminate disaggregated cross-tabulated analysis to strengthen statistical analysis, amend data collection mechanisms as required, and follow global classifications to extract comparable indicators;

(k) Strengthen field work training on disability data by reviewing training needs for disability data collection and by benefiting from the various techniques and lessons learned that were discussed at the meeting;

(l) Develop regional guidebooks on producing disability indicators and metadata for statistical analysis, and on field training for household surveys;

(m) Build statistical capacity to produce regional disability indicators, in collaboration with United Nations agencies and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics;

(n) Approve the membership of the Casablanca group on disability statistics (annex II), comprising coordination officers who have been trained for three years to advance statistical work on disability;

(o) Request countries to localize the Arab SDG disability indicator framework and urge policymakers to link related national priority issues and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to appropriate indicators, in collaboration with national statistical apparatuses.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. GENERAL DISCUSSION

5. The meeting addressed ways to improve disability statistics, to implement the related global and regional guidelines, and to bridge the gap between statisticians and policymakers by using statistics in formulating programmes and policies. It also considered the importance of developing an Arab disability indicator framework to help policymakers and statisticians in implementing and monitoring the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the SDGs. Disability data users and producers discussed standard methods used to measure data production and analysis and to improve communication, so as to better monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention and prepare reports in that regard, to exchange national and regional expertise, and to facilitate inter-regional cooperation. The discussions were based on several documents uploaded to the following link before the meeting was convened: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/expert-group-meeting-improving-disability-statistics-sustainable-development-goals>.

B. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE DISABILITY STATISTICS

6. Participants were introduced to the Washington Group tools on functioning using the short set of questions comprising six domains (seeing, hearing, mobility, communication, cognition and self-care), the extended short set that includes, in addition to those six domains, upper-body mobility, psychosocial functioning, pain and fatigue, and the extended set that consists of 12 domains. Moreover, a set of questions was developed for children aged between 2 and 5, and another for children aged 5 to 17. The Washington Group is currently aiming to include the short set in multiple-indicator cluster surveys and demographic and health surveys.

7. Disability is a complex concept that cannot be easily summarized in responses to simple questions. Efforts are being made to define disability through a limited number of questions that are consistent across cultures, which can be added to existing data collection mechanisms. The challenge lies in conducting that process in various countries and cultures and in multiple languages. When the Washington Group was established in 2001, there was no single mechanism for collecting disability data or calculating indicators. Today, the Washington Group questions are applied in over 130 countries, given their ease of use and understanding by the public.

8. The Washington Group questions are based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, but avoid medical approaches. The aim of the questions is to determine how persons with disabilities interact with their environment, and whether they contribute to and participate in society on a par with other individuals. Furthermore, the questions focus on a person's 'ability' to complete basic daily activities, so as to identify those at a greater risk of experiencing restrictions in social participation. The questions allow for comparisons between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities to analyse equality of opportunity.

9. Participants stressed the importance of applying the guidelines set out in the "Regional guidebook to improve disability data collection and analysis in the Arab countries", and of implementing recommendations on producing disability data. Eight domains were adopted in the short set of questions so as to identify a greater number of persons with disabilities. It is recommended to apply the Washington Group on Disability Statistics Data Collection Tools, given that doing so is common practice in surveys and censuses related to key challenges in the field.

10. The regional guidebook provides standardized Arabic translations of Washington Group terms, so as to unify disability terminology at the regional level. Countries should translate definitions and concepts into local languages, if necessary, in line with the instructions provided in the guidebook to ensure that the integrity of the concept is maintained.

11. A key objective of applying the Washington Group questions is to understand the prevalence of disability in a country and its distribution among the population, and to assess differences in disability levels according to sex, age, race, geographic location and other characteristics. The questions also aim to calculate intersections with socioeconomic variables to collect data for various development indicators, including SDG indicators. The questions allow for comparisons between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities, thus providing important information on their participation in daily activities to achieve equality of opportunity among individuals. To meet various user needs, it is necessary to refer to appropriate data sources; for example, administrative registers are the most effective data source to assess the efficiency of service provision to persons with disabilities.

12. Participants called for improving employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by considering their current status in the labour market and determining their needs and the challenges they face. Many countries do not have data on unemployment rates among persons with disabilities, and only a few collect data on persons with disabilities in labour force surveys. Consequently, it is important to recommend the use of the Washington Group questions in labour force surveys to determine why persons with disabilities are unemployed and to identify obstacles that prevent them from joining the labour market. If they are able to overcome those obstacles, it is necessary to identify the factors that enabled them to do so. The International Labour Organization will request countries to test a proposed model, which tackles the difficulties facing persons with disabilities in the labour market.

C. IMPLEMENTING THE WASHINGTON GROUP QUESTIONS ON FUNCTIONING IN THE ARAB REGION

13. At the meeting, a presentation was made on the experiences of some Arab countries in applying the short set of questions. Participants discussed some cases where the guidelines were not followed (such as identifying the time reference of a difficulty, and adding questions on the cause of a disability or the age it began). Some countries have improved data collection tools by applying the regional guidelines (for example, by eliminating the screening question, adding an introductory statement, and not providing a time reference of a difficulty).

14. The Washington Group short set of questions does not address time references of difficulties; the Group recommends not setting a time reference so as to include all types of disabilities, including temporary ones, such as a broken arm, for example. If such individuals are counted as persons with disabilities, they will not have a significant impact on disability prevalence rates because their numbers are small. Not excluding such cases prevents respondents from being confused if asked to provide a time reference of a difficulty. In all cases, everyone should be entitled to assistance whatever their situation, under the slogan “Universal access to services and benefits”.

15. Sources other than surveys and censuses can provide more accurate information on disability causes or the age they begin. If countries wish to add other variables, they must ensure that no changes are made to the structure and hierarchy of the Washington Group question model so as to guarantee the quality and accuracy of the derived data. If countries wish to make any additions, they must do so in a section following the Washington Group model rather than within the model itself.

16. Participants stressed the importance of securing the prior consent of persons with disabilities, in line with the 10 fundamental principles of official statistics, before conducting any follow-up studies aimed at assessing their living conditions and access to services.

D. EFFECTIVE USE OF STATISTICS IN POLICYMAKING AND MONITORING

17. Participants stressed the importance of using statistical data produced by national statistical offices to achieve the SDGs and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They focused on data analysis methods and data use in achieving equality of opportunity and ensuring that nobody is excluded.

18. Key uses of information from surveys and censuses are identifying persons with disabilities who are not included in administrative registers; calculating disability prevalence; and highlighting gaps between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities to assess equality of opportunity and identify the most marginalized and needy social groups. This provides policymakers with valuable information, enabling them to implement more efficient programmes and measure their impact.

19. The Standard Statistical Indicators were adopted globally with clear, comparable and consistent definitions and methodologies that have been tested and endorsed. Deriving indicators from various sources is expected to yield disparate data, which is acceptable especially if standard methods are adopted for each source with metadata to highlight differences in the concepts used. Countries are responsible for identifying the appropriate national standard source for each indicator. It is important to adopt a standard data collection tool for each indicator, to monitor it over time and to measure changes over a set period so as to assess the impact of policies.

20. Survey and census results, which provide valuable information on persons with disabilities, can be used to assess policies, especially population policies and those related to education and employment, and to identify areas of difficulty as measured in each country. For example, surveys and censuses can provide information on persons with significant difficulties in seeing or on those who are fully blind, and their age group, sex and geographic location. Such information can be used to implement more effective and less costly programmes for persons with disabilities.

21. Many countries are organizing periodic dialogues between data users and producers before conducting surveys or censuses so as to consider their demands and needs; the results are then shared with them. Some countries invite disability organizations to participate in those dialogues and in field training and work. Everyone is invited to work under the slogan “Nothing about us without us”.

22. Many countries do not make full use of statistical data provided by statistical apparatuses in developing programmes and policies. Instead, they rely on some administrative registers that provide information only on registered persons with disabilities, but do not provide information on their environment, including education, employment, social status and residence, resulting in a failure to develop evidence-based programmes and policies. To benefit from surveys conducted by national statistical offices and use them in formulating policies and plans, policymakers must be familiarized with data collection methodologies and their shortfalls. It is also necessary to build national capacity to promote the effective use of statistics produced by statistical apparatuses in policymaking.

23. Participants discussed the benefits of the proposed disability policies, how statisticians could assist policymakers in developing more effective and efficient policies, the indicators used, and the involvement of disability organizations in the process. Statistics are a tool to meet the needs of policymakers and other users; however, there is no single set of questions that covers the needs of all. Consequently, it is vital to adapt what is available to meet those needs. The SDG indicators provide a framework for developing policies and planning programmes.

24. Information on national disability prevalence can assist in guiding officials’ attention towards persons with disabilities, and facilitate proposing draft laws for their benefit. However, such data use is insufficient given the massive amount of disability data produced by national statistical apparatuses.

E. DISABILITY INDICATORS IN SDGs AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

25. In the SDGs, the term ‘disability’ appears 28 times across several Goals, targets and indicators and in metadata. The sources of 20 indicators were identified, with available metadata standards. Assessments of national data availability will continue, and a regional plan will be developed to monitor indicators that are available in most countries so as to provide technical support and build capacity regarding unavailable indicators or those that have not yet been calculated or disseminated.

26. The SDG framework, comprising 17 Goals, 169 targets and 244 indicators, is a unique tool used by statisticians and policymakers to link policies and evidence through information derived from censuses, surveys and administrative registers, and to assess the impact of policies and programmes to see if their goals and targets have been achieved. Goals and targets are policymakers' tools, which can only be operationalized through indicators whose data is provided by national statistical apparatuses in their capacity as sources of official data, in line with their metadata standards.

27. The importance of the SDG framework lies in countries' commitment to it and to monitoring progress towards its achievement over 15 years. Despite the absence of a disability indicator in the framework, paragraph 48³ of the 2030 Agenda provides for several data classifications, including by disability. Many indicators are related to disability, including unemployment rates, for example, whose data can be collected only from household and labour force surveys. Administrative data provide information on workers in formal sectors only, thus excluding a large segment of the population working in the informal sector.

28. Administrative registers are a vital source on information on persons with disabilities. Two types of registers exist. The first includes self-identification records on persons with disabilities, and records of people familiar with the types of assistance provided to registered persons with special needs. Little data on persons with disabilities are recorded in those registers, either because of a lack of awareness about their existence or because of traditional obstacles that prevent the identification of those persons. For example, the data of many persons with disabilities living in rural areas may not be recorded in administrative registers, because of a lack of awareness of their existence or of the associated benefits of registration for persons with disabilities.

29. The second type of administrative registers comprises records on all individuals, known as 'population records', which are linked to an information network providing all important information on the population, as is largely the case in developed countries. Such registers can include responses to Washington Group questions, detailed data on persons with and without disabilities, and definitions and methodologies related to those two groups.

F. METHODS TO PRODUCE DISAGGREGATED CROSS-TABULATED ANALYSIS

30. ESCWA presented a draft handbook on disability indicators comprising 30 standard indicators derived from 25 cross-tabulations. Member States collected disability data from household surveys and censuses. ESCWA then verified them and used them to prepare coordinated tables for use in analysis. The data were published on the website of the ESCWA Statistics Division as part of the bulletin entitled "Arab disability statistics in numbers 2017", available from <https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/arab-disability-statistics-2017>. The data were used in many regional and global studies, including a report by the Secretary-General that will be launched at the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December 2018.

31. To benefit from best practices in statistical work in the future, ESCWA has documented lessons learned in extracting tabulations using national expertise. Iraq, the State of Palestine and Yemen volunteered to document and present the components of tabulations on population, education and employment. Discussion also covered the best ways to review, complete and publish the handbook on the ESCWA website. According to ESCWA, an analytical section will be added to assist researchers in drafting the handbook, determining how to measure indicators, and identifying questions that should be included in surveys and censuses.

³ Paragraph 48 of the 2030 Agenda states the following: "Indicators are being developed to assist this work. Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making. Data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible. We agree to intensify our efforts to strengthen statistical capacities in developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. We are committed to developing broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product".

G. FIELD WORK TRAINING NEEDS

32. The session included a presentation on the ESCWA draft manual on field work training regarding the Arabic extended short set of questions. The draft manual is divided into two parts. The first part sets out the guidelines that cover information on the credentials, selection and training of field staff. It explains the types of training material such as instruction manuals and training booklets, and the recommended training methods including techniques for interviewing persons with disabilities and how to conduct interviews in institutions. The first part also provides advice on avoiding common mistakes.

33. The second part of the draft manual presents instructions on providing training on concepts and on asking questions. It explains each disability domain and the associated degree of difficulty (some difficulty, a lot of difficulty, cannot do it at all). Field researchers must ascertain whether a person has difficulties seeing close up or at a distance to cover all categories of seeing difficulties. Consequently, it is necessary to check the accuracy of data in each domain by asking comprehensive questions that do not exclude any difficulties, and therefore include all persons.

34. Training methods and techniques vary between countries, as do best practices. For example, best practices implemented in Egypt entailed providing training to experts by disabled persons organizations to improve understanding of disability issues and the challenges faced by field researchers when conducting interviews. Also in Egypt, examples were presented of potential difficulties in each domain and the level of difficulty during training on the Washington Group questions. In Morocco, a cartoon was used to present questions on difficulties and on how to pose them. In Jordan, training involved forming groups to simulate interviews by asking questions and providing responses, and by placing field researchers in the field to test the questions and experience the challenges. Moreover, the media was used to raise public awareness on participating in surveys.

35. Training challenges faced by most countries include knowledge loss, because of hierarchical training methods. Knowledge is lost through the transfer of knowledge from supervisors to controllers then to field staff. It is therefore vital to develop integrated techniques that provide researchers with the required knowledge in short timescales, at a low cost and in non-boring ways.

36. Challenges faced by field researchers include non-disclosure by households of family members with disabilities, especially women, thus requiring awareness raising efforts through the media and other methods. Moreover, to avoid researchers answering questions on behalf of respondents, they should be trained in various scenarios to ensure that respondents accurately answer questions on their own.

37. Participants discussed techniques to train policymakers and other users, aimed at building their capacity to read and analyse data and at developing clear and simple policy summaries on disability that allow policymakers to directly access information for tackling problems. The Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics provides varied training methods, such as in-person training and online distance training. Training can also be facilitated through exploratory visits between countries.

H. PROPOSAL TO FORM THE CASA GROUP ON DISABILITY STATISTICS

38. Pursuant to a recommendation issued at a workshop on improving disability statistics in Arab countries (Casablanca, Morocco, 17-20 April 2017), participants discussed forming an Arab group under the Washington Group to address disability statistics in Arab countries and to coordinate the application of questions on functioning to ensure the consistency of statistical findings at the regional level, in collaboration with national statistical offices in the Arab region.

39. The representative of the State of Palestine proposed forming a group on disability statistics in the Arab region comprising several coordination officers from national statistical offices in Arab countries and representatives of international agencies and disability organizations and experts, aimed at developing and

improving disability statistics in the Arab region. The proposed functions of the group include providing guidance on standardizing concepts and methodologies, identifying training needs, unifying mechanisms for collecting data, deriving indicators based on regional and global evidence, and disseminating and presenting indicators using simple software like DevInfo. Participants stressed the importance of exchanging information by establishing a knowledge platform and using social media to raise awareness of disability statistics to bridge gaps between policymakers and other users, and to facilitate the review and translation of training material.

40. The group should consist of high-level members, including representatives of ESCWA and five representatives of national statistical offices in Arab countries who have the required expertise and credentials to achieve the group's main goals and subsidiary objectives. Members will be appointed annually at a yearly meeting of the group. The group will also have a subcommittee comprising representatives of national statistical offices in Arab countries, international agencies and disability organizations and experts.

41. ESCWA welcomed the consensus among representatives of statistical apparatuses on forming the Casablanca group, comprising coordination officers who had contributed to laying the foundation for the ESCWA disability statistics programme by attending the three meetings held by ESCWA since 2016, and through tireless work on the regional publication entitled "Arab Disability Statistics in Numbers 2017" (their names are provided in annex II to the present report).

42. National statistical offices should agree to continue working with ESCWA coordination officers, who were intensively trained over three years so as to persevere institutional memory and ensure the continuity and development of statistical work.

43. Participants discussed the paper presented by the State of Palestine on establishing the Casablanca group. ESCWA will amend the proposal in line with its responsibilities and functions and those of other organizations in the region to ensure efficient statistical work and provide support to Arab countries at the national, regional and global levels.

I. ARAB SDG DISABILITY INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

44. The Arab SDG disability indicator framework was presented at this session. It includes 96 indicators distributed over 12 of the areas of concern set out in the SDG global indicator framework. ESCWA collected those indicators based on national, regional and global sources related to disability statistics and on relevant international standards. ESCWA has also linked many indicators to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

45. One source cannot provide all information or meet all needs, in the same way that one indicator cannot provide a complete picture of a topic under consideration. A set of indicators is therefore required to highlight the challenges, complexities and effects of an issue. There is sometimes only one appropriate source from which to collect several indicators, such as labour force indicators collected from labour force surveys which facilitates labour market comparisons. Data must be collected and produced for each indicator according to official sources and the standards of specialized United Nations agencies.

46. Countries are invited to review the framework to identify appropriate national indicators and link it to urgent national issues. ESCWA will review the final framework and continue linking key indicators for the Arab region to provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. DATE AND VENUE

47. The ESCWA Statistics Division, in collaboration with the ESCWA Social Development Division, and in partnership with the Washington Group, several United Nations organizations and the League of Arab

States, held the Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals at the InterContinental Semiramis in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2018.

B. OPENING

48. At the opening session, the “Regional guidebook to improve disability data collection and analysis in the Arab countries: implementing the Washington Group questions on functioning” was launched. The guidebook, the first of its kind globally, tackles challenges in applying standards; sets out recommendations to improve disability data collection and analysis; and focuses on the role of disability statistics in assessing policies and on the contribution of disability statistics to formulating inclusive policies and to monitoring and evaluating their impact. The guidebook highlights strengths and weaknesses in data collection and analysis in Arab countries, and reviews the region’s experience in applying the main principles and concepts of the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning in various types of surveys and censuses. It therefore constitutes an extended Arab model of the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning, and contains a set of recommendations to increase the production of consistent and comparable disability data.

49. Mr. Khairat Barakat, President of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), opened the Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals. He said that the Egyptian Government assigned great significance to disability statistics, and had declared 2018 as the “Year of persons with disabilities” in Egypt. He noted that disability issues had been included in the new law, and that CAPMAS had undertaken several disability-related activities by conducting household surveys and censuses, including a specialized and inclusive census in Monufia Governorate in 2015. He added that CAPMAS followed global standards for collecting disability data, as evidenced by the application of the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning.

50. Ms. Neda Jafar, Head of the ESCWA Statistical Policy and Coordination Unit, opened the expert group meeting on behalf of the Director of the ESCWA Statistics Division, Mr. Juraj Riečan. She thanked CAPMAS for hosting the meeting, which was being held in collaboration with the ESCWA Social Development Division, the Washington Group, policymakers, and several representatives of United Nations organizations, statistical apparatuses and disability organizations. It was the first meeting of its kind globally that considered best practices in disability data collection and production, and their contribution to formulating and assessing policies. She added that the meeting would contribute to reaching a common understanding between participants on the various technical issues and challenges related to producing consistent and comparable disability data that ensured the inclusiveness of sustainable development so as to leave no one behind.

51. Ms. Gisela Nauk, Chief on the ESCWA Inclusive Social Development Section, thanked CAPMAS for inviting ESCWA and its member States to Egypt. She congratulated Egypt on declaring 2018 the “Year of persons with disabilities”, and expressed her hope that the country would continue its efforts to achieve equality for persons with disabilities and to integrate them in society. She said that strong partnerships between ESCWA and CAPMAS and the National Council for Disability Affairs would form a strong basis for work by Egypt in that field. She added that the current meeting aimed to build foundations for an Arab framework for disability statistics through an innovative approach that combined the expertise of statisticians and policymakers, so as to monitor outcomes and impacts in practice. She said that Ms. Jafar had been a source of inspiration for the framework, and expressed her happiness at working with participants over the next three days to achieve that goal.

C. PARTICIPANTS

52. A total of 13 ESCWA member States (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen) were represented at the meeting. Those countries participated through 56 representatives of national statistical apparatuses and ministries concerned with disability issues.

53. Participants also included a representative of the Washington Group, and representatives of seven United Nations organizations, namely the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization.

54. Representatives of several national, regional and global non-governmental organizations, the League of Arab States, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, the General Authority for Urban Planning, the International Disability Alliance, the Federal Egyptian Association for Intellectual Disabilities, the National Council for Disability Affairs, and several bodies concerned with disability issues also participated in the meeting. The list of participants is provided in annex I to the present report.

D. EVALUATION

55. A total of 46 participants completed the evaluation questionnaire at the end of the meeting, as follows.

56. Participants assessed the meeting as excellent or good (according to 96 per cent of responses) and average (according to 4 per cent of responses). Participants said that presentations had covered the relevant issues, and that the meeting's objectives had been achieved (to a high level) through the exchange of successful experiences and best practices in the field of disability statistics and by presenting mistakes in that area. In their comments, participants praised the excellence and leadership in presenting topics and organizing sessions; the excellent team; the quality of presentations and the efficiency of presenters; the importance of topics in terms of their practical application; the clarification of available disability data; and the importance of bringing together statisticians and policymakers and of examining the contribution of disability statistics to national policy formulation.

57. Participants called for further meetings between statisticians and policymakers, given the importance of implementing joint programmes to develop SDG disability indicators and identifying ways to calculate them. They stressed the importance of continuing efforts with ESCWA coordination officers to promote statistical work, and organize a meeting on the uses of SDG indicators of importance to policymakers. They proposed complementing that meeting with workshops and other meetings on calculating indicators, on ways to bridge data gaps, and on building a common platform for statisticians and policymakers.

Annex I*

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA member States

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