

Statistical Commission

Thirty-eighth session

27 February - 2 March 2007

Item 3(c) of the provisional agenda

Items for discussion and decision: disability measurement

Background document

Available in English only

Addendum to the Report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics

Prepared by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics

**Addendum to the Report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics
(Report to the United Nations Statistical Commission)**

12 February 2007

Original Census Questions Proposed by the Washington Group

Introductory phrase:

The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities because of a HEALTH PROBLEM.

Question set:

- 1) Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?
- 2) Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
- 3) Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?
- 4) Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
- 5) Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?
- 6) Because of a physical, mental or emotional health condition, do you have difficulty communicating, (for example understanding others or others understanding you)?

Response categories:

- a. No – no difficulty
- b. Yes – some difficulty
- c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
- d. Cannot do at all

Recommended modifications

Based on the results of the cognitive and field testing of the Census questions on disability proposed by the Washington Group and subsequent discussions at the 6th Washington Group meeting in Uganda, the workgroup proposed minor changes in wording to the question set. The changes are related to the assistive device clause associated with the seeing question and the length/complexity of the question associated with communication. The nature of the changes and our recommendations for revision follows.

1. The question on seeing included the phrase “even if wearing glasses”. It appeared that, in some instances, respondents were having difficulty with this phrase, particularly when the phrase was being translated word for word using the English construction.

Recommendation: Instruct countries to translate the phrase in a way that is culturally appropriate to capture the concepts in the question (i.e. “even if wearing glasses”) rather than employing a literal translation.

2. Interpretation of the hearing aid clause did not appear to pose the same problem for respondents as the glasses clause for the question on vision.

Recommendation: Although this question was interpreted consistently across countries and there were no apparent problems with interpretation, it is recommended that countries translate the phrase “even if using a hearing aid” in a way that is culturally

appropriate to capture the concept in order to enhance respondents' understanding of the question and to be consistent with the wording for the question on vision.

3. Generally, the question on communication was well understood, however some respondents focused on the long introduction and interviewers had to repeat the question. There were some instances where respondents answered affirmatively because of a second language problem (i.e. they had communication problems because the primary language in the country was not their native language). Concern was expressed about removing the introductory phrase since this may create more false positive responses because of second language problems.

Recommendation: Omit the introductory phrase and add a reference to communicating in one's normal language. Reformat the question as follows: Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?

4. In addition, the group recommended that we propose an additional (7th) question about ability to perform upper body functions that can be used in place of the self-care or communication questions or in addition to the six question set should a country choose to do that. We will bring that proposal to the next Washington Group annual meeting, 19-21 September 2007, Dublin, Ireland.

Revised Census Questions Endorsed by the Washington Group

Introductory phrase:

The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities because of a HEALTH PROBLEM.

Question set:

- 1) Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?
- 2) Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
- 3) Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?
- 4) Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
- 5) Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?
- 6) Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?

Response categories:

- a. No – no difficulty
- b. Yes – some difficulty
- c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
- d. Cannot do at all