

United Nations Statistical Commission

Fifty-third session

Item 3 (i) of the provisional agenda

Items for discussion and decision: health statistics

Document E/CN.3/2022/13 – Report of the World Health Organization on health statistics: strengthening statistical systems to track the health-related Sustainable Development Goals

Statement provided by:

National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India

Statement:

The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) would like to take this opportunity to share some observations of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India which are as follows:

1. While India feels strongly and supports transparency in sharing of information on all health related aspects and firmly believes on the scientific approach to decision making in public health policy issues, we feel that the process, methodology and the results obtained by the WHO's Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment do not hold scientific rigor and rational scrutiny as expected from an organization of the stature of the World Health Organization.
2. India feels that the process was neither collaborative nor adequately representative, the data sources used for the modelling exercise were not reliable. India does not agree to the use of varied sources of data that in turn makes the validity of the forecast techniques questionable, particularly when countries like India already have a robust system in place for collecting vital data relating to births & deaths.
3. Also, as per WHO, in the country consultation conducted during September to November 2021, only 113 countries nominated focal points for country consultation process, and only 45 of these focal points provided feedback on the methods that were taken on board. Even the methodology adopted for the exercise was not rigorous enough as it failed to take into account the heterogeneous demographics, existing mortality recording systems. The methodology also didn't take into account the inter- and intra-country variations in containment practices, dynamic nature of positivity rates, or even quantify and account for differential methods of COVID-19 testing used by different countries. Hence, the "one size fits all" approach may not be viable.
4. To conclude, Government of India neither supports the process and methodology adopted by WHO's Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment and neither endorses the results obtained by the same. We strongly advise that the World Health Organization must continue to hold consultations with Member States in order to address all related concerns and should refrain from release of the WHO COVID-19 excess mortality estimates for 2020 till concerns raised by India and fellow Member States are addressed.

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