**Disaggregation by Disability**

**A way forward: Washington Group Questions**

**Methodology**

There are two necessary conditions in order to disaggregate data by disability. First, the indicator must already be collected and second, there must be a straightforward and simple way to identify persons with disabilities so that the indicator can be disaggregated by disability status.

The current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework addresses the first aforementioned condition as the agreed set of indicators will be used for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the SDG goals and targets. The second condition is also met. The UN Statistical Commission established the Washington Group on Disability Statistics in 2002, and since then the group – with membership from over 100 national statistical offices – has developed a set of six questions that can identify persons with disabilities for disaggregation purposes in an internationally comparable way. The Washington Group, in collaboration with UNICEF, has developed a set of questions that specifically address disability in children. These questions have already been tested in a wide range of countries, both developed and developing. Consequently, the UN Statistical Division has recommended the use of the 6 question set in the next round of population censuses, and the UN Disability Data Experts Group has recommended them for use in disaggregating the SDGs and also for monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Countries in the Asia and Pacific Region, through the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), have recommended their use in producing the Incheon “Making the Right Real” Disability Strategy indicators. Bilateral agencies have also adopted them. For example, both DFID (UK Department for International Development) and DFAT (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) have decided to use the questions for monitoring the effectiveness of their programs in reaching persons with disabilities. Overall, there is a broad international consensus that the Washington Group Questions represent the international best practice for disaggregating data by disability.

**Practical implications**

These questions take approximately one minute to administer and once included in a survey can be used to disaggregate all of the indicators that rely upon that survey. To produce a table with a given indicator disaggregated by disability, takes virtually no time; it is merely adding one line of code in a statistical program. To add one or two paragraphs in the write up on an indicator (already agreed upon for the SDGs and reported on anyway) also requires little time, and yet would relate to approximately 15 percent of the world’s population with a disability.

**Why is this important?**

Studying the exact nature of barriers for persons with disabilities, determining actions to be taken, and planning for their implementation does take extensive data collection. However, disaggregating SDG indicators to determine if those gaps exist is a necessary first step for casting the spotlight on a group of people who have consistently been shown to experience higher rates of poverty and exclusion. Doing so only requires the addition of a small set of questions on already existing data instruments.

**What do we achieve by disaggregation? (An example)**

In recent years the rate of primary education has increased significantly, in no small part from efforts to build more schools and train more teachers. A logical conclusion would be that to address those last few percent of children not in school, a country should simply build even more schools and train more teachers according to past models. But if the remaining out-of-school children are out of school for reasons associated with other characteristics – such as disability – then only doing what has been done in the past may not get a country that much closer to universal primary education. It may require different actions, like making schools, school materials and curricula more accessible.

Information on the Washington Group question and guidelines for implementation can be found here: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/washington_group.htm>