

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)

Evaluative review of the Development Account Project: Improvement of Disability Measurement and Statistics in Support of the Biwako Millennium Framework and Regional Census Programme

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Commissioned by : UN ESCAP, Statistics Division

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***This report contains the author's opinions and are not
necessarily those of the commissioning agency***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
I. Introduction	8
II. Methodology	13
III. Findings	15
Results Framework.....	15
Project design	16
Project results and evaluation criteria	18
Relevance.....	18
Effectiveness.....	18
Sustainability	21
IV. Conclusions.....	22
V. Recommendations	23
Annexes:	
a. Terms of Reference for the evaluation	
b. List of documents reviewed	
c. List of interviews	
d. Survey questionnaire report results and questionnaire form	
e. NSO interview protocol guide and results	

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BMF	Biwako Millennium Framework
EA	Expected Accomplishment
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ICF	International Classification on Functioning, Disability and Health
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
PMD	Programme Management Division
SDD	Social Development Division
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
WG	Washington Group
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background of the evaluation

The current evaluation was commissioned by the ESCAP Statistics Division. It is meant to evaluate the UN Development Account Project, “Improvement of Disability Measurement and Statistics in Support of the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) and Regional Census Programme” implemented by ESCAP in cooperation with internal and external partners, including the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, WHO and selected national statistical offices and experts. The project started in August 2007 and is coming to an end in December 2010, after having received a one-year extension.

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The main purpose of the evaluation is to: (a) assess the performance of the project; and (b) derive lessons from implementation to put forward recommendations for future interventions in the same area of work.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- (i) Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the project and the strategy used in its implementation, and
- (ii) Formulate concrete recommendations based on an overall assessment of the project and the lessons learned to inform future work in statistical capacity building projects.

Methodology

In line with the TOR for the Project evaluation and after discussion and review of the evaluation scope with ESCAP staff, and based on the evaluation framework, four different methods have been used to collect data and information in order to appraise the performance of the project, its relevance, effectiveness and sustainability: documentary review and content analysis, face to face interviews, observation, and e-mail survey to selected respondents.

Main findings and conclusions

The ESCAP Development account 5th Tranche Project AB – Improvement of Disability Measurement and Statistics in Support of the Biwako Millennium Framework and Regional Census Programme has largely been successful in reaching two of its three Expected Accomplishments (EA).

The project has been particularly relevant and effective for EA 2, stated as “increased national technical capacity for collecting disability statistics in accordance with ICF standards and regional guidelines for national censuses and surveys, which also reflect gender concerns”. Another specific contribution has been the achievement of EA 3, stated as “Increased knowledge-sharing and joint activities among ESCAP members in the field of disability statistics”:

The first anticipated result, EA 1, stated as “improved understanding of the ICF approach to disability measurement by NSOs, health professionals and policy makers in the region”, has only been achieved at the NSO level. The project had an ambitious objective and did not necessarily have the resources to target all three stakeholder categories. While health professionals and policy makers did attend one workshop in Bangkok in 2008, this was only a one-off event and, while certainly showing a very positive response from the wider stakeholder categories of participants, it was not repeated and remains short of the critical mass necessary to reach all three target groups.

However the evaluation is able to confirm that improved understanding of the ICF approach to disability measurement among the NSOs from the six participating countries has been achieved.

The project is currently entering its final phase, as the short-set of questions have been reviewed and practical research work has been undertaken, with most participating countries able to incorporate the short-set in the coming census work in the coming years. For the extended set of questions, and on the basis of the workshop in Bangkok and the presentation by the Washington Group and the project consultants, it appears that some additional work for certain domains is still required before the extended set of questions can be translated into operational modules for participating countries.

A specific mention must be made at the commitment of ESCAP to ensure that countries from Central Asia could participate, notably with Kazakhstan where translation into Russian has been necessary for all meetings held, and therefore entailed higher costs for the project. This proved a worthy investment as the project documents and meetings documents translated into Russian will be beneficial to other Central Asian countries interested in improving disability statistics in their countries.

It is also worth mentioning that the innovative exercise of conducting a cognitive test as part of this project has not only derived in enhancing countries’ technical expertise to collect data on disability, but it has also equipped NSOs’ staff with the necessary skills for effective questionnaire design in other areas of statistics.

Recommendations

While participating countries continue to advance in the field of the ICF and the work of the Washington Group progresses and uses the achievements of the current project to expand to other regions and replicate some of the learning obtained, it is necessary for ESCAP to consider an extension of the project for at least an additional five year period if it wants to attain the overall project objective of “National disability policies and programmes, following the BMF and other international development goals, are developed, implemented and monitored on the basis of improved disability statistics in the Asian and Pacific Region”.

Several aspects of the project need a different time frame, with support for at least three years in order to continue to provide participants with a forum where regional interactions and exchange can take place and continue to provide specific technical assistance to NSO professionals until the extended set can be included as modules in the participating countries (although it is important to highlight that the extended question set will not be included until NSO have the financial resources to conduct such a survey). In addition the project should ensure that the linkages and a proactive strategy for targeting and communication is established to encompass the other two stakeholder groups: health professionals and policy makers.

A wider steering committee is required if health professionals and policy makers are to be active participants in a continuation of the project, and as the ultimate aim is that improved disability statistics must contribute to better informed and improved policy making in participating countries, it may be necessary to establish more formal links with other ESCAP divisions in order to support this process. In particular, while support to the NSOs should continue within the current system with site visits from the ESCAP Statistics Divisions to interested countries and stakeholders, there is a need for a wider framework to capitalise on the work achieved to date and develop the linkages for health professionals and policy makers, something that could be done as part of a wider programme provided appropriate funding is found and as a response to requests from member states.

The key issue is for the project to have a product and concrete examples of application where the use of the improved statistics based on ICF in participating countries have been able to generate and inform policy making, something the final project report is expected to partially cover, at least providing examples on how to make use of such estimates to inform policy making. In order to do so it may be necessary to place the continuation of the project for another three to five years depending on the revised objectives and maybe under a regional programme that could be led by the Social Development Division (SDD) of ESCAP, as this more ambitious goal requires behaviour change amongst policy makers and health professional, which in the evaluator's experience requires at least a 5 year time-frame to obtain results at both national and international levels.

In any case despite a conceptual framework somewhat overly ambitious regarding its stakeholder groups, the project has performed well with limited resources and has developed strong support and ownership among the participating project countries and partners.

I. Introduction

1.1. Background of the evaluation and the topic being evaluated

The ESCAP Statistics Division is implementing the UN Development Account Project, “Improvement of Disability Measurement and Statistics in Support of the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) and Regional Census Programme” in cooperation with internal and external partners, including the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, WHO and selected national statistical offices and experts.

Building upon the outcome of the previous ESCAP/WHO project on disability statistics (2004-2006), this project seeks to further contribute to the development of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) based international standards for disability data collection, and to improve national technical capacity in integrating ICF-based disability data collection into regular national statistical systems, thereby improving availability, quality and comparability of disability statistics to support policy formulation and promote the implementation of the BMF in Asia and the Pacific.

The design and implementation of the project was overseen by a Steering Committee, composed of all key project partners. A Project Task Team of national statistical experts and disability data users was set up to coordinate the development and implementation of specific activities, particularly (1) the development of standard survey question sets; (2) the design and conduction of pilot tests; and (3) the pilot-test study plans as well as the subsequent joint data analyses.

An evaluation has been commissioned to appraise the performance of the project to date and identify lessons as it nears completion on December 2010.

1.2 Purpose, objectives and outputs of the evaluation

The main purpose of the evaluation is to: (a) assess the performance of the project; and (b) derive lessons from implementation to put forward recommendations for future interventions in the same area of work.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

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