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From the Editor

As UNESCAP recently launched the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012, we report on the first workshop on improving disability data for policy use, which also introduced the WHO's ICF classification. Further activities in this field are likely to be held in the coming years.

We also report on a workshop on economic classifications in preparation of the revised ISIC and CPC classifications due to come into effect in 2007, and on an expert group meeting on poverty mapping and monitoring.

This third quarter also saw the conclusion of the UNSD project on strengthening regional capacities for statistical development in South-East Asia. Highlights of the evaluation seminar are featured in this issue.

As always, we wish you good reading.

Starting January 2004, the quarterly printed edition of the *Statistical Newsletter* will cease to be distributed. This is in line with the UNESCAP Commission recommendation to streamline the number of publications and to gradually shift recurrent publications to UNESCAP web site. Accordingly the newsletter will continue to be issued on a quarterly basis for publication on the UNESCAP Statistics Division site at www.unescap.org/stat. Only a yearly printed compilation of the newsletter will be made available.

To keep receiving timely information, regular subscribers of the printed edition of the *Statistical Newsletter* are cordially invited to take advantage of the service of email notification of new issues of the newsletter by sending us an email at stat.unescap@un.org or filling up the online form at http://www.unescap.org/stat/nl/newlet_reg.htm.

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First UNSD/UNESCAP/ASEAN Taskforce Workshop on Classifications, 9-11 July, Bangkok

The first workshop of the Task Force on statistical classifications for the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was held from 9-11 July 2003. It was jointly organized by the ASEAN Secretariat, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).



Standing row: Ms. Sigrid Kremser (UNESCAP); Ms. Kanjana Phumalee (Thailand); Mr. Satoshi Sasaki (ILO); Mr. Keita Ebisu (UNESCAP); Mr. Blaise Ehounoubakrohi (UNESCAP); Mr. Kuan Boon Wah (Malaysia); Mr. Tran Tuan Hung (Viet Nam); Mr. Teav Rongsa (Cambodia); Ms. Low Hui Peng (Singapore); Mr. Chol O Han (UNESCAP); Mr. Vilon Viphongsay (Lao PDR); Mr. Happy Hardjo (Indonesia); Mr. Ilpo Survo (UNESCAP); **Sitting row:** Mr. Barry Keekey (Australia); Ms. Lia Emalia (ASEAN); Ms. Margarita D. Salutan (Philippines); Mr. Ralf Becker (UNSD); Ms. Lene Mikkelsen (UNESCAP); Mr. Agus Sutanto (ASEAN); Mr. Joel Jere (UNESCAP); Mr. Goh Soon Ho Kenneth (Singapore); Mr. Zaw Win Maung (Myanmar)

The taskforce was created as a follow-up to the United Nations Statistical Commission's recommendation to conduct consultations with countries concerning the revision process of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and of the Central Product Classification (CPC). Revisions to both classifications are planned to come into effect in 2007. The rationale for the revision process is to repair some weaknesses in the classifications; to reflect changes in technologies and economic organizations; and to achieve a better comparability through the convergence of different national and regional classifications.

The meeting was the first technical meeting on statistical classifications for the ASEAN subregion following the decision taken during the last ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting (AHSOM4, Yangon, December 2002) to establish a Task Force on Harmonization of Statistical Classifications.

Over 20 statisticians from statistical offices of ASEAN countries as well as from the ASEAN Secretariat, UNSD, UNESCAP, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) participated in the workshop. The

meeting had two immediate objectives: to provide inputs for the revision process of ISIC and CPC so that the subregion's specific needs are reflected in the updated versions of both classifications; and, secondly, to adopt a common position and to establish an overall plan to achieve comparable statistics through common classifications within the ASEAN subregion, as the global 2007 revisions of ISIC and CPC may not accommodate all of the subregion's concerns.

Among the major issues discussed during the meeting, the top-down approach of the classification was acknowledged as appropriate as it ensures the best consistency for aggregated data.

Based on this approach, the principal activity of an establishment is to be determined according to the highest added value of its various activities and to be classified accordingly. For example, an enterprise might be engaged in the manufacturing of 3 different products with each representing 20% of the total added value, and in wholesale activities representing the remaining 40% of the total added value. Wholesale activities represent the main activity in terms of added value at the 4 digits level of ISIC and the enterprise might be classified as such. But at the 2 digits level, total manufacturing activities (adding up the 3 products) represent a larger added value than wholesale and the

enterprise should be classified under manufacturing based on the top-down principle. The value added criterion is also recommended for the treatment of a vertically integrated chain of activities, to replace the current practice of classifying activities according to the final product only. This would better reflect the nature of the production process.

The workshop also noted the need for the revised economic activities classification to provide a link with product classifications such as the CPC. Most products are the outcome of a single industry so a simple one-to-one relationship would be ideal. However, as some products are the result of more than one industry, the workshop agreed with the proposed revision concept paper on the need to develop a more flexible treatment where a one-to-one relation is not possible.

The workshop also reviewed the proposed high-level structure of the revised classification. The draft classification proposes a high-level structure with 22 categories, introducing new ones, notably Information and Communication; Repair and Maintenance; and some other categories of services.

The discussion on the high-level structure highlighted the region's concerns to have a more detailed category for 'Agriculture and Fisheries' to reflect the importance of food crops, oil palm, ornamental plants, ornamental fish, and hydroponics food crops. The workshop recommended considering aquaculture; hydroponics crops; and non-hydroponics crops as major categories. It also recommended separating crop growing from animal husbandry and from fishing.

The workshop also examined boundary issues of particular concern to the subregion; boundaries between wholesale and retail; between agriculture and manufacturing (concerning simple market preparation and processing); between retail, e-commerce and services (internet cafes, CD ROM shops); between fishing and manufacturing; and between manufacturing, information and services.

ISIC is intended as a guide for developing national classifications that better reflect the structure of national economies. The structure and details of ISIC may not be sufficient for national purposes and hence there are incentives to modify ISIC to build a better adapted national classification, with however a resulting loss of international comparability. The meeting expressed the view that there is a need for a common degree of conformity to ISIC. It agreed with the proposed revision concept paper recommendation of the two-digit level (as compared to ISIC Rev 3.1) as the optimum level of conformity, leaving entire latitude to countries to adapt national classifications at lower levels.

The workshop, noting that the current level of implementation of ISIC (Rev. 3) was limited in some ASEAN countries due to the lack of capacity, suggested that international organizations might assist in that area by providing training and practical guidelines.

Further information relating to the workshop and to the ISIC revision process can be found at:

<http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/tfwc/tfwc.htm>

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/regrev2.asp?id=3>

UNSD/UNESCAP Final Evaluation Seminar on the Project on Strengthening Regional Capacities for Statistical Development in South-East Asia, 4-6 August, Bangkok

The evaluation seminar concluded the activities of the Development Account funded project launched 3 years ago and implemented by the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD). The project was initiated to strengthen the national statistical capacities of the ASEAN countries and to improve the flow of exchange of statistical information within the region.

The seminar was attended by the heads and senior officials of the national statistical offices from the ten ASEAN countries as well as by representatives from UNSD, UNESCAP Statistics Division, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), and the ASEAN Secretariat.

With the overall objective of contributing to the region's statistical development through training, the project activities were structured according to four priorities: (a) strengthening national and satellite accounting; (b) harmonizing development indicators; (c) strengthening statistical organization and management; (d) improving the use of information technology for statistics.

The seminar agenda was similarly structured in 4 modules following the 4 stated priorities with each module being introduced by a presentation by UNSD staff and followed by several country presentations. Each project priority was reviewed in the light of an evaluation questionnaire filled in by countries prior to the seminar.

Under the objective of strengthening national and satellite accounting a total of 10 workshops have been held covering the following subjects: the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA93) (3 workshops); statistical classifications (2 workshops); establishment surveys (1 workshop); informal sector statistics (1 workshop); environmental satellite accounting (2 workshops); and consumer price index and price statistics (1 workshop). Two study tours to Australia and Japan were also organized under this first objective.

Most participating countries reported progress on the various issues covered under this first objective; more significant progress was noted on the issues of classifications and establishment surveys, and implementation of the SNA93. However some countries mentioned some ongoing difficulties in relation to informal sector statistics and noted the low level of compilation of environmental satellite accounts as well as the need to improve GDP estimates. The need for a better harmonization of methodologies to improve internal comparability of national accounts was also noted.

The second objective, harmonizing development indicators, aimed at developing a common indicator framework including shared methodologies. Activities under this objective included for the most part 2 workshops and the compilation of a web based database on indicators. The seminar noted that the workshops made regional statisticians more familiar with the international debate on development indicators and facilitated the dialogue among countries through the sharing of experiences during and after the workshops.



Front Row: Mr. Supriyanto (Indonesia), Mr. Agus Sutanto (ASEAN), Mr. Nguyen Van Tien (Viet Nam), Mr. Bounthavy Sisouphanthong (Lao PDR), Mr. Dato' Shaari Abdul Rahman (Malaysia), Ms. Soedarti Surbakti (Indonesia), Mr. Willem F.M. De Vries (UNSD), Mr. Andrew J. Flatt (UNESCAP), Mr. Paul Cheung (Singapore), Ms. Estrella V. Domingo (Philippines), Ms. Daw Marlar Aung (Myanmar), Ms. Phetsamone Sone (Lao PDR); **Second Row:** Mr. Has Bunton (Cambodia), Mr. David Allen (Consultant), Mr. Nguyen Bich Lam (Viet Nam), Mr. Vixay Santivong (Lao PDR), Ms. Lene Mikkelsen (UNESCAP), Mr. Romulo A. Virola (Philippines), Ms. Daw Win Win Tin (Myanmar), Ms. Hjh Aisah Haji Sani (Brunei), Ms. Hajah Fatimah Haji Abdul Hamid (Brunei), Ms. Bee Leng Tan (Singapore), Ms. Leticia D. de Leon (Philippines), Mr. Bouanguene Chanthabouly (Lao PDR); **Third Row:** Mr. Nasir Syarbaini (Indonesia), Mr. Chol O Han (UNESCAP), Mr. Nguyen Van Pham, (Viet Nam), Ms. Isabela Heng (UNSD), Ms. Sabine Warschburger (UNSD), Mr. San Sy Than (Cambodia), Mr. Soung Tin (Myanmar), Mr. Yavang Vachouma (Lao PDR), Ms. Lay Lian Chow (Singapore), Mr. Hairol Nizam Abdul Hamid (Brunei); Ms. Zuraidah Mad Ali (Malaysia); **Fourth Row:** Mr. Nguyen Duc Thang (Viet Nam), Ms. Sigrid Kremser (UNESCAP), Mr. Justin Fisher (UNESCAP), Mr. Raymundo J. Talento (Philippines), Mr. Candido J. Astrologo (Philippines), Ms. Luckana Yuvaprakorn Thailand), Ms. Malee Wongsaroje, (Thailand), Mr. Richard Roberts (UNSD), Ms. Kentan Md Dali (Malaysia), Ms. Wanida Mahakit (Thailand), Ms. Kulluck Lertpatarapong (Thailand), Mr. Arizal Ahnaf (Indonesia); **Back Row:** Mr. Phan Tuan Pham (UNSD), Mr. Abdul Hadi Jehmica Abdullah (Malaysia), Mr. Nguyen Truong Son (Viet Nam), Mr. Agus Suherman (Indonesia), Mr. Luis Matias (Philippines), Mr. Eric Hermouet (UNESCAP), Mr. U Win Maung (Myanmar), Mr. U Khin Maung Ba (Myanmar), Mr. Oeur Sophal (Cambodia), Mr. Try Sothearith (Cambodia), Mr. Tomas P. Africa (SIAP), Mr. Sarin Prasidh (Cambodia), Mr. Ho Siow Keng (Malaysia), Mr. Bahrum Haji Kadur (Brunei), Ms. Pui Mun Wong (Singapore), Ms. Pey Bing Lee (Singapore)

The indicators database compiled during the project is to be published by November 2003. It covers 58 indicators (of which 40 are part of the Millennium Development Goal indicators). Aimed at statisticians and non-statisticians, the analytical publication not only contains statistical indicator data but also presents methodological notes, the limitations and weaknesses of each indicator, and their relevance in relation to policy-making.

In discussing the achievements under this objective, the seminar identified areas for future work in the area of development indicators. It noted the need for further harmonization and stressed the importance of countries' willingness in participating in such data compilation work. The analysis of the evaluation questionnaires also indicated priority areas for future work: education, labour market/economics, demographic, health/nutrition and environment/energy.

Strengthening statistical organization and management was the third priority identified, with 4 seminars organized as main activities covering the following subjects: user relations, marketing and dissemination;

organization and management of statistical systems; promotion and dissemination of census statistics; and selected good practices. A number of study tours took place to Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines.

Analysis of the evaluation questionnaire revealed some significant progress in all the areas addressed under this priority. Cambodia, for example, illustrated some achievements of the project, demonstrating how the organization of briefings given to establishments for the 2002 economic census greatly improved response rates. Regular meetings with data users were also being organized, and inter-ministerial and inter-agency committees to coordinate statistical activities within governments had been created.

Building on these achievements, the seminar suggested areas for future work; these include advanced technological infrastructure for statistical organizations (notably web site management). It also suggested that more resources be made available to include middle management in such activities as workshops and study tours.

The last identified priority of the project was to improve the use of information technology. More specifically this project element aimed at upgrading technology to create a platform for communication and data exchange. Major activities under this fourth priority were: the procurement of IT equipment, a workshop on website management, technical advisory services and a number of study tours.

The seminar highlighted a few notable achievements of these activities with new websites created or improved; better networking infrastructure; and improved capacities in those areas. It also identified future priorities: more hands-on training on web site development and new technologies such as database and data warehouses and XML (Extended Markup Language). The seminar also stressed the need for regular meetings on the management of statistical information systems and the importance of building capacities for IT staff in measuring the e-economy.

On a general note, the seminar recognized the flexibility of the original project plan as a major factor contributing to the success of the project. Such flexibility was achieved through the establishment of a steering committee which took executive decisions on the focus of training events and the allocation of budget resources within the project framework. The steering committee was composed of the Heads of Statistical Offices of the ASEAN countries.

Further information on the workshops and seminars held as part of the project are available from the UNSD and UNESCAP web sites at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/> and <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/techmeet.htm>

Workshop on Improving Disability Data for Policy Use, 23-26 September, Bangkok

The workshop on improving disability data for policy use was held consequent to a recommendation of the Committee on Statistics during its last session (13th session, November 2002) when it *"stressed the importance of improving disability statistics using the latest methodological work in that field and requested ESCAP to undertake activities to assist countries in the region in implementing recommendations in relation to statistics contained in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action"*. See Statistical Newsletter No. 128, January 2003.

The workshop was attended by participants from Afghanistan; Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran; Kyrgyzstan; Macao, China; Malaysia; Philippines; Thailand; and Viet Nam. Most of the countries were represented by participants both from

the national statistical offices and the governmental policy making bodies in the areas of disabilities or social welfare. The meeting, organized jointly by the UNESCAP Statistics Division and Emerging Social Issues Division, was also attended by representatives of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD).

The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF) was adopted in October 2002. The BMF requested Governments to develop their systems of disability-related data collection so that relevant statistics disaggregated by type of disability and population group can support policy making. Pursuant to this global objective, the workshop aimed more specifically at:

- Providing information on standard disability concepts, definitions, classifications and methods, to promote their use, to improve coverage of people with disabilities, and to share best practices in collecting information and using it for policy;
- Introducing the new International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization;
- Enhancing mutual understanding among producers and users of disability statistics on the need for policy relevant data and the possibilities for collecting these data;
- Informing about the UN's work on disability statistics and the work of the Washington Group on disability measurement, and providing a regional input to their development work;
- Formulating a set of recommendations which could lead to the development of a regional framework for action for improving disability statistics and measures in the region during the 2003-2012 decade.

The workshop opened with an overview of disability data, methods and standards. The overview, based on the results from a regional survey about disability data collected in censuses, surveys and administrative records, showed that censuses were the most common source of information on disabilities. However, because censuses are carried out infrequently and can allow only a limited set of disability-related questions, countries are increasingly relying on additional surveys to better measure disability levels and impacts. Administrative registers, although offering detailed



Front row: Ms. Catalina Fermin (Philippines), Mr. Stephen King-leung Pang (Hong Kong, China), Mr. Vaskar Saha (India), Mr. R. Rangasayee (India), Ms. Thelma Kay (UNESCAP), Ms. Keiko Okaido (UNESCAP), Mr. Andrew J. Flatt (UNESCAP), Ms. Lene Mikkelsen (UNESCAP), Mr. Qiu Zhuoying (China), Ms. Kanlaya Kamonwatin (Thailand), Ms. Yee Ling Anna Chan (Macao, China), Ms. Veng Si Tang (Macao, China); **Second row:** Ms. Pattariya Jarutat (Thailand), Mr. Setareki Seru Macanawai (Fiji), Ms. Verenaisi Rokobale Sawana (Fiji), Ms. Joanne Hillermann (Australia), Mr. Xingyan Wen (AIHW), Mr. Rukanuddin A. Razzaque (Resource Person), Mr. Justin Fisher (UNESCAP), Ms. Siti Zakiah Muhamad Isa (Malaysia), Ms. Xiao Li (China), Ms. Naoko Ito (APCD), Ms. Suntaree Puaves (Thailand); **Third row:** Ms. Asel Sabyrova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Amalia Sevilla (Philippines), Mr. Ngy San (Cambodia), Mr. Davood Abbasi (Iran), Mr. Jeremiah Banda (UNSD), Mr. Ibram Syahboedin (Indonesia), Ms. Julianty Pradono (Indonesia), Mr. Hisao Chiba (APCD), Ms. Raimah Mahamad (Brunei), Ms. Aiko Akiyama (UNESCAP), Ms. Nonglak Ngowiwatthai (Thailand); **Last row:** Mr. Chol O Han (UNESCAP), Mr. Yem Suong (Cambodia), Mr. Blaise Ehounoubakrohi (UNESCAP), Mr. Jerrold Huguet (UNESCAP), Mr. Ferdinand Lepper (ILO), Ms. Pimpa Kachondham (Thailand), Mr. Nenad Kostanjsek (WHO), Mr. Joel Jere (UNESCAP), Mr. Eric Hermouet (UNESCAP), Ms. J. Hanco (FAO), Ms. Nguyen Kim-Xuan (UNESCAP), Ms. Kay Nagata (UNESCAP), Mr. Ilpo Survo (UNESCAP), Ms. Megumi Shinji (NRCPD), Mr. Ziaullah Zia (Afghanistan), Ms. Rossarin Gray (Thailand), Mr. Nguyen Phong (Viet Nam), Mr. Halip Purnama, (Indonesia), Mr. Qaseem Wardak (Afghanistan)

information about a person, can rarely be used for statistical purposes because their coverage is not complete and usually relies on a self-description process.

Participating international agencies reported on their respective activities in the area of disability statistics. UNSD informed the workshop of its work in preparing methodological guidelines, promoting and improving the collection of disability data and improving the use of existing data. Notably, UNSD is maintaining a disability global statistics database (DISTAT2) with basic disability information collected from each country's surveys or censuses. The data however are not comparable across countries due to differences in definitions, classifications, survey methodologies, and designs. The workshop was also reminded of the UN global recommendation to include disability as a topic in population censuses and that disability questions to be included in such censuses should follow the principles described in the UN publication *Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics*.

The ILO informed the meeting of its initiatives in

response to the need for statistics that cross-classify disabilities and employment. ILO has undertaken a survey of its member countries to examine what data are collected in countries on the employment of disabled persons. As part of the initiative, ILO has carried out an analysis of methodologies used by countries to compile these statistics. The first results of the survey are to be discussed at the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in Geneva in November 2003.

During the discussion, some concerns were raised that conventional data collection such as censuses and labour force surveys may not properly capture the employment status of disabled persons. It was proposed that other instruments such as time-use surveys or surveys on the informal sector might be used.

UNESCO presented its Education for All (EFA) strategy which includes a module aiming to reach the most neglected groups, in particular disabled children of school age. A UNICEF study indicates that less than 10% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school. In order to remedy that situation, UNESCO is

promoting the inclusion of children with specific needs in the process of overall monitoring and evaluation for national education policies, and is including a 'special needs' module in annual school surveys and other forms of educational surveys.

The second day of the workshop was devoted to the presentation of the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). The ICF was adopted at the 54th World Health Assembly in 2001. The ICF is wider in scope and more multidimensional than its predecessor classification. It considers disability as a continuum with health and defines it as a decrement of health that anybody can experience to some degree. Consequently, the model changes from one concerned with a minority population to one that bridges the medical model (impairment, care) and the social model (human rights, environment, social integration). The ICF framework addresses both malfunctions of the body and the impact that these malfunctions have on a person's daily activities.

The workshop was given a pragmatic approach to the ICF model on how to formulate questions for surveys and censuses. The WHO recommendation for an ICF based disability questionnaire is that it should have 4-5 screening questions followed by a set of more detailed questions (usually between 8 and 30 questions). These questions should focus on activity and participation using the WHO Disability Assessment Schedule (WHO-DAS II). To ensure good data quality, the screening questions must have the ability to pick up positive cases (sensitivity), the ability to differentiate true from false cases (specificity), good performance in terms of stability of the response (reliability); the ability to report true cases (validity) and the ability to adjust for self-reporting biases (cross-population comparability).

Continuing on a pragmatic approach, the workshop also heard of some countries' experiences in applying the ICF model to disability surveys. The workshop was informed of the ICF Users' Manual developed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and of how the ICF is utilized both as a standardization tool for those working in disability-related subjects and as a measurement instrument and mapping tool. The Indonesian National Institute of Health Research and Development (NIHRD) also presented its experience in using the ICF framework for the first time for the 2001 Health Survey (Surksenas). Finally, the Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Centre (SNMRC) in Thailand presented its recent undertaking of developing a national disability database based on the new ICF concepts.

The workshop concluded its four-day session by providing a set of recommendations for governments, international and national agencies, including

UNESCAP and SIAP. Only the highlights of these recommendations are being reported here.

The workshop recommended that governments take action to implement the BMF recommendations relating to disability data, particularly through the collection of disability data on a regular basis and to strengthen the participation of disabled persons in the mainstream society and in the regular monitoring of progress towards the BMF. It also recommended that governments initiate the implementation of the ICF as a framework for conceptualizing and measuring health and disability. Notably, the workshop also called for governments to set up focal points to assume responsibility for the coordination of disability data collection, analysis and dissemination, in close consultation with ministries, disability organizations, and other stakeholders.

For agencies responsible for data collection in countries, the workshop recommended the collection and dissemination of adequate information about persons with disabilities to support policy needs. It notably called for these agencies to initiate the implementation of the ICF so as to provide common definitions and terminology as well as to improve data comparability nationally and internationally and in that regard it called for concerned agencies to encourage education of staff in ICF application and concepts. The workshop also recommended using the upcoming round of population censuses to collect information on disabilities, following the UN recommendations as closely as possible in the formulation of questions concerning disability, and taking into account ICF definitions.

The workshop recommended that UNESCAP and SIAP, in collaboration with the WHO, organize training courses on the use of ICF as a framework for disability information. It emphasized the need to hold subregional courses involving both data producers and users of disability statistics so that a sustainable number of trainers and resource persons with expertise on ICF are locally available in the region. It also invited UNESCAP and SIAP to constitute a disability statistics forum to provide regional impetus to the fulfilment of the BMF recommendations. The objective of this forum should be to promote the implementation of the ICF and to develop a set of protocols, based on good practices, for use in the development, collection and analysis of disability data.

Importantly, the workshop also called for the WHO, the Washington Group on Disability Measurement and other interested parties to embark on a regional action plan for implementing the ICF. The main components of such an action plan would include awareness building and promotion of the ICF; developing, testing and piloting ICF based disability surveys; outlining policy implementation strategies and implications for

ICF-based disability data; developing ICF training tools for use by producers of disability statistics; and establishing a working group of interested countries to formulate and coordinate the implementation of the plan.

For further information on disability statistics:

Workshop web site: www.worldenable.net/escapstats

WHO ICF: <http://www.who.int/classification/icf/>

UNSD: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/disability/>

Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Mapping and Monitoring Using Information Technology, 18-20 August, Bangkok

The expert group meeting was organized jointly by the UNESCAP Poverty and Development Division (PDD), the Information Communication and Space Technology Division (ICSTD) and the Statistics Division. The participants constituted a multidisciplinary group consisting of policy-makers, scientists, statisticians, information technology and development practitioners from 12 developing countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Lao's People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. The meeting was also attended by the following organizations: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

Poverty mapping has been promoted as a powerful tool for targeting poverty reduction programmes in many country worldwide. In the Asian and Pacific region, a few countries have initiated work on poverty maps while others have yet to decide whether such tools are needed. The lack of understanding and expertise in producing such maps has hindered their widespread and effective use in most countries of the region. The expert group meeting was organized by UNESCAP in response to requests from countries for technical assistance in the field of poverty mapping. The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- To review the status of methodologies and policies regarding production and use of poverty maps using information technology in selected countries in the region
- To examine a number of country case studies to highlight the requirements and challenges of developing and using poverty maps

- To identify key issues for determining applicability of various methods for producing poverty maps and discuss how such methodologies can be tailored to national/local capabilities and resources
- To assist in defining UNESCAP's role in the promotion of poverty mapping techniques using information technology, in line with its efforts to support member countries in achieving the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs).

The background papers and country case studies presented in the meeting elaborated on various aspects of producing and using poverty maps and their impact. The meeting reviewed the various approaches to poverty mapping, grouping them in 3 categories based on production and use.

The first type of poverty map, known as small area estimation, concerns maps which estimate human welfare (consumption, income, health and other variables) of the entire population from household survey and census data using econometric modelling. This approach allows the classification of households by their poverty status, their aggregation at various levels (districts, sub-districts and villages) and their spatial representation on visual maps using information technology. A second type of map uses Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing to map physical and ecological characteristics, such as status of land, forest, rainfall, watershed, or road infrastructure, which are known to have a strong association with poverty. A third type of poverty map is derived from composite indexes. The indexes are built from a set of variables (mainly non-income) with data generated at a community-level and relying on population census. The index can then be represented spatially on maps.

The meeting agreed that these approaches could be used individually or jointly to identify geographical locations with high rates of poverty incidence and where poverty alleviation programmes should be directed as a priority.

The discussions during the meeting highlighted the multidisciplinary and multi-institutional approach needed for the production and use of high quality poverty maps. Accordingly, the meeting recommended the establishment of coordination mechanisms between appropriate agencies to institutionalize the process of generating and using poverty maps.

The expert group meeting also suggested that UNESCAP prepare a compendium of poverty mapping methods. The compendium should include the work of various international and UN agencies and a thorough comparison of the different approaches to poverty mapping to find the relative strengths, weaknesses and costs of each approach. UNESCAP could also act as a focal point to develop a network of poverty mapping

experts and users in the region, as the exchange of experiences among countries will facilitate the production and use of poverty maps.

The meeting recommended that the training needs of each country be assessed so that programmes can be designed at both regional and national level. Such training and workshops on poverty map production and uses should focus on building the capacity of government departments, universities, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

Meeting documents from the workshop are available from the UNESCAP web site at:

http://www.unescap.org/pdd/calendar/pov_map/

First Session of the Subcommittee on Statistics

Following the restructuring of the UNESCAP conference structure, the first session of the Subcommittee on Statistics will be held in Bangkok from 18 to 20 February 2004. The tentative provisional agenda for the first session includes: issues in poverty measurement, disability statistics, integrating gender in statistics, statistics on the informal sector and the International Comparison Programme (ICP). The Subcommittee will also examine statistical training issues, including the role of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP).

Publications released by the Statistics Division

- *Statistical Indicators for Asia and the Pacific, Volume XXXIII I, No.2, June 2003*
- *Statistical Newsletter, No. 130, July 2003*

Missions of UNESCAP Statistics Staff

Mr. Andrew J. Flatt, Director, Statistics Division undertook a mission to:

Geneva (7-10 September): To chair the second session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) and represent UNESCAP at the meeting.

Ms. Lene Mikkelsen, Chief, Statistics Development Section, undertook missions to:

Berlin (17-20 August): To attend the 54th session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and to attend the Assembly of the International Association of Official Statistics (IAOS).

Nouméa (15-19 September): To represent UNESCAP at the Regional Conference of Statisticians of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

Ms. Patricia Alexander, Regional Adviser on Poverty Statistics, undertook missions to:

Timor Leste (2-9 August): To attend and make a presentation at the National Human Development Report Workshop and to advise the National Statistical Office (NSO) on poverty data.

Thailand (20,22 and 28 August): To provide assistance to the National Statistical Office in preparing workshops on poverty data and gender issues in statistics.

Afghanistan (5-23 September): To assist the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) during a joint mission of the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Department for International Development (DFID)(UK) to prepare a Master Plan for Technical Cooperation in Statistics; and to direct a workshop on MDG indicators for MOWA staff and other line ministries.

Mr. Pietro Gennari, Regional Adviser on Economic Statistics undertook a mission to:

Afghanistan (5-18 September): To assist the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in the areas of economic statistics and gender issues in statistics.

Visitors to the Statistics Division

1. **Mr. Julian H. Payne**, Managing Director, SEAREP Ltd., Makati City, Philippines
2. **Mr. Fred Vogel**, Global Coordinator, International Comparison Programme, World Bank, Washington DC
3. **Mr. Nuri Ozsever**, Consultant on the UNESCAP/UNDP institutional strengthening and capacity building project in Maldives.
4. **Mr. Jonathan Palmer**, Chief Information Officer, Australian Bureau of Statistics
5. **Mr. Kazi Rahman**, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Regional Commissions New York Office
6. **Ms. Shavitri Singh**, Consultant on issues of gender in statistics in preparation of the forthcoming 2004 population census in Timor Leste

Staff Movements

Mr. Pietro Gennari joined the ESCAP Statistics Division at the beginning of August 2003 as Regional Adviser on Economic Statistics. Mr. Gennari is an economist who has over 15 years of working experience in applied economic statistics at the national statistical office and national research institute for business cycle analysis in Italy. During this period he has developed extensive experience in managing large sample surveys and has been participating in international working groups aimed at improving harmonization and international comparability of economic indicators; he is also well acquainted with interpreting, analysing and writing reports on economic data for policy-making.

Mr. Justin Fisher left the Statistics Division in September to join the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.

Ms. Sigrid Kremser and **Mr. Keita Ebisu** completed their internship programmes, in August and September 2003 respectively.

Obituary

Dr Tito A. Mijares. It is with deep sorrow that we announce the untimely demise of Dr Tito A. Mijares who passed away on 18 August 2003. Dr Mijares was a leading figure in the statistical community of the Asian and Pacific region. He had attended and chaired many statistics conferences in many parts of the world, both in his personal capacity as well as representing his native country, Philippines. A former director of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), he served as member of the United Nations Statistical Commission, member of the Steering Committee of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) Research Center, member of the Food and Agriculture Organization Committee of Statistical Experts, and member of the ISI Statistical Computing Council.

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News items, articles and viewpoints on statistical matters from readers who wish to contribute to the *Statistical Newsletter* are most welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit and publish manuscripts in accordance with the editorial requirements of this publication. All correspondence should be addressed to:

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