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From the Editor

Welcome to the January 2005 edition of the Statistical Newsletter. The last quarter of 2004 was an interesting period with many events.

Three of the events highlighted in this edition of the Newsletter are about poverty statistics and population and housing censuses. The 2004 International Conference on Official Poverty Statistics and the Workshop on Poverty Statistics in Asia and the Pacific held in October in Manila, Philippines, had great significance for the regular reporting of official poverty statistics and improving the quality and comparability of poverty statistics in the region. The Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses hosted by the Statistics Division in December in Bangkok, Thailand, proved to be an important step in successfully preparing for the 2010 round of censuses.

The Statistical Newsletter has been distributed electronically for a year now. As mentioned in previous newsletters, a printed compilation for the year 2004 will be made available this month. As always, we are eager to receive your comments and to hear from you how we can better suit your needs.

We wish you enjoyable reading!

First Forum for Asia/Pacific Statisticians (APEX-1)

As announced in the previous Newsletter the First Forum for Asia/Pacific Statisticians will be held in Bangkok from 3-4 February 2005. For more information, please consult the *Forum for Asia/Pacific Statisticians* web site: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/apex>

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Economic and
Social Commission
for Asia and
the Pacific

2004 International Conference on Official Poverty Statistics: Methodology and Comparability, 4-6 October, Manila

The 2004 International Conference on Official Poverty Statistics (ICOPS), organized at the initiative of the Philippine Government, in cooperation with UNESCAP, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and various stakeholders of poverty statistics, drew together some 70 participants from 18 countries: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Fiji; Indonesia; Iran; Lao PDR; Macao, China; Maldives; Mongolia; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Viet Nam. Several international organizations also attended: UNESCAP, UNSD, UNDP, ILO, UNFPA, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank.

Recognizing the uneven level of statistical capacity of the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and the diversified means of measuring poverty statistics among countries, the conference primarily aimed to establish a “convergence mechanism” for discussing and assessing the preparedness of the NSOs in generating official poverty measurements and to formulate an integrated work plan for institutionalizing the regular compilation of official poverty statistics by NSOs for the periodic assessment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The conference focused on: (i) the sharing and discussion of selected country practices and methodologies for the measurement of poverty for official reports; (ii) the presentation and discussion of concepts and methodologies on other poverty measurement concerns; and (iii) the discussion and formulation of an integrated plan for the regular compilation by the national statistical agencies of official poverty statistics.

During the course of the three-day conference, participants shared experience through the presentation of country papers focusing on methodologies and practices in official poverty estimation. The conference also featured several presentations from academic institutions on other methodological issues, in particular small area estimation and poverty mapping.

In the final session all participating countries endorsed the integrated ICOPS action plan compiled by the Philippine secretariat on the basis of inputs from the participating countries. The action plan involved the regular reporting of official poverty statistics and the adoption of measures designed to improve the quality and comparability of poverty statistics in the region over the next decade. Participating agencies committed

themselves to supporting this action plan through various means.

General information on the conference and country papers can be found at:

<http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/conference/default.asp>.

UNSD/UNESCAP Workshop on Poverty Statistics, 7-8 October, Manila

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) launched a project to prepare a publication entitled “Handbook on Poverty Statistics: Concepts, Methods and Policy Use” in 2003. The purpose of this Handbook is to assist countries in designing and implementing a system of poverty measurement that satisfies their national policy needs as well as the increasing international demand for poverty statistics and related data.

A broad consultative process has been put in place to prepare the Handbook, including the establishment of a steering committee that oversees the project, four regional workshops and expert group and panel meetings. Two regional workshops - one in the Latin America and Caribbean region and one in the Economic Community of West Africa Region – had preceded the Workshop on Poverty Statistics in Manila, Philippines on 7-8 October 2004. This third regional workshop was organized by UNSD in close collaboration with UNESCAP and the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines (NSCB).

The workshop was attended by about 55 participants representing 18 countries and territories, and several international organizations, universities and research institutes.

The objective of the workshop was to compare in detail the diverse methodologies for poverty measurement being practised in the participating countries and territories and to explore possibilities for improving the accuracy and comparability of poverty estimates. Its results included several tangible outputs in the form of a meta-data questionnaire on practices in poverty measurement and data collection, a questionnaire on the food-based approach to poverty estimation, and a workshop report.

The workshop built on the discussions of the International Conference on Official Poverty Statistics (ICOPS), and then focused on some key methodological issues highlighted in country practices during the ICOPS. The two-day programme was split into three sessions. The first session introduced the

UNSD poverty statistics project and provided an overview of poverty statistics practices in the Asia and Pacific Region. The second session focused on special topics in poverty measurement practices: caloric threshold and adult equivalent scales, construction of the food basket, reference population, food poverty line, and total poverty line. Finally, the third session considered several issues in poverty analysis: update of poverty estimates over time, sub-national variations in poverty estimation, unmet basic needs, and measurement issues in household surveys.

Current practices embody a large degree of similarity with some variations as well. However, the participants endorsed the idea of “trading off” some of their country-specific particularities for greater comparability of poverty statistics in the region. Also, they expressed the wish that the UNSD Handbook on poverty statistics provide practical guidance to address specific measurement issues. They felt that any standards to be suggested in the Handbook should be broad rather than narrow, and should contain a number of options from which countries could choose.

An integrated regional action plan for the generation of official poverty statistics for the Asia-Pacific region was proposed at the ICOPS, and the participants of the workshop endorsed this action plan. It could serve as an instrument that would potentially and incrementally narrow the data gap – both in terms of availability and quality - among countries in the long term. The action plan would also be a tool for raising awareness, for assisting countries to better plan their statistical activities with the required consistency in view of better comparability, and for mobilizing the required financial resources to increase the efficiency and productivity of their poverty measurement activities. It was proposed that UNSD and UNESCAP assist with mobilizing resources for technical assistance to address the key difficulties faced by countries in their current practices of poverty estimation.

In conclusion, the regional workshop facilitated the systematic collection of detailed methodological information on poverty measurement from the participating countries, and gave strong support to medium- and long-term work by UNSD in this field.

More details on the UNSD project on the preparation of the Handbook on Poverty Statistics can be found at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/poverty/default.htm>.

Regional Workshop on Monitoring the Implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF), 13-15 October 2004, Bangkok

This three-day workshop was organized by the Emerging Social Issues Division of UNESCAP as a result of efforts to enhance the understanding of policy makers and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) about the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF) towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. UNESCAP members and associate members adopted this framework in 2001 as policy guidelines for the renewed decade of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012.

The objectives of the workshop were to build government capacity vis-à-vis models and tools to assess and monitor progress on the BMF priority/strategy areas, and to develop effective national policies on disability. The workshop also aimed at training and motivating both governments and NGOs to incorporate goals and targets of the BMF into their policies, programmes and projects.

The workshop was attended by 102 experts from 25 countries of the UNESCAP region, including resource persons, representatives from three UN agencies, two Human Rights Institutions, NGOs and other entities.

One of the sessions on the first day of the workshop focussed on an “Overview of Indicators for Monitoring the BMF”. A working document on proposed indicators of progress in implementing the BMF was introduced to the participants, addressing three major topics: i) roles of disability data and statistics in identifying indicators to monitor the BMF implementation; ii) issues in identifying the indicators; and iii) outline of the indicators.

The Statistics Division of UNESCAP then presented an overview of developments and challenges regarding disability statistics and data collection. It explained that building a core set of indicators to monitor the BMF would be successful only when the statistical disability information systems would be further developed so that suitable indicators at an acceptable level of quality could be made available. Most countries in the region had begun only recently to collect disability data and were little aware of international standards and frameworks. This short history of disability data collection and the multidimensional concept of disability, compounded by the lack of experience, contributed to the non-comparability of national disability prevalence rates

which ranged from 0.5 to 20 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region. In response to this situation, UNESCAP was implementing a two-year project (2004-2005) aimed at strengthening national statistical capacities to produce good quality and comparable statistics on disability. It was clear that the BMF indicators would benefit from the outcome of this project.

The presentation also outlined examples of statistical indicators that could be used for monitoring and suggested some general rules for the development of disability information systems in support of the BMF. Some of these rules were: to build as much as possible on pre-established statistics and indicators currently compiled by National Statistical Offices (NSOs); to follow international standards for definitions, classifications and methodological work.

The two presentations provided a framework for the discussion in one of the three working groups. The outcome of this specific working group on the development of indicators for monitoring the BMF was a proposed core set of indicators, which was presented at the final plenary session on the last day of the workshop. These "Proposed Core Indicators" were split into two parts: preconditions for BMF implementation and monitoring progress in implementing BMF targets and strategies. Each indicator would compare progress with regard to all 58 UNESCAP regional members and associate members for the respective variable to the extent data are available.

In their joint statement at the end of the workshop the participants *inter alia* reaffirmed the importance of monitoring the implementation of the BMF by the national institutional mechanisms and the national forum of NGOs/DPOs until the end of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons.

The complete joint statement and final report, along with the "Proposed Core Indicators" have been posted at: <http://www.worldenable.net/bmf2004/Default.htm>.

Training Workshop on Data and Indicators to Monitor Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Indicators) and the Habitat Agenda, 1-5 November, Bangkok

The first Asian Training Workshop on Data and Indicators to Monitor Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Indicators) and the Habitat Agenda was organized jointly by UN-HABITAT and the Statistics and Poverty and Development Divisions of UNESCAP for statisticians of National Statistical

Offices (NSOs) from selected countries in the region. Over 25 statistical experts representing 15 countries and experts from United Nations agencies including the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) attended the workshop.

Home to the two most populous countries in the world, Asia must be able to look at its continuing urbanization with informed eyes in order to develop appropriate and specific policies to counter the negative economic, social, and environmental effects of urbanization on the most vulnerable members of its societies. The aim of this workshop therefore was to improve understanding of the MDGs and the Habitat Agenda, in order to strengthen national capacities to produce statistics, indicators and analyses for monitoring implementation at national and city levels. As such the workshop was an activity in line with UNESCAP efforts to focus its work towards the achievement of the MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region.

The MDGs, targets and indicators were introduced during the first day of the workshop, followed by an assessment of country experiences with MDG indicators and data collection programmes, such as household surveys and population censuses. The eight MDGs and their associated indicators were discussed during the next four days. Plenary sessions started with a presentation on methodologies and tools to monitor progress towards reaching specific targets, while for the practical work participants were divided into small groups to produce country and city estimates for selected indicators. The last day was focussed on how to localize MDGs and on specific indicators related to secure tenure and the right to adequate housing. The Habitat Agenda Indicators were reviewed and a list of agreed indicators to measure security of tenure was produced.

The national statisticians shared their work and experiences with urban experts and planners in a joint session with the "Expert Group Meeting on Operational Definitions of Urban/Rural and Urban Agglomeration for Monitoring Urban Settlement" during the fourth day of the workshop. The operationalization of definitions of urban and rural zones and urban agglomerations for the production of harmonized city level statistics was discussed in practical terms. Methodological problems encountered in the collection of data in terms of city boundaries as well as opportunities and challenges were also discussed. This multi-disciplinary discussion certainly enhanced the value of the workshop.



Training Workshop on Data and Indicators to Monitor Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Indicators) and the Habitat Agenda, 1-5 November, Bangkok, Thailand

Front Row: Ms Patricia Alexander (UNESCO), Ms Asa Jonsson (UNESCO), Ms Nampung Chirdchuepong (Thailand), Mr Andrew J. Flatt (UNESCO), Ms Lene Mikkelsen (UNESCO), Ms Aumarawan Tewthanom (Thailand), Mr Moh'd Ali Watanyar (Afghanistan), Mr Roberto Pagan (UNESCO), Ms Chotima Juthakorn (Thailand), Ms Sarika Seki-Hussey (UNESCO); **Second Row:** Mr Eduardo Moreno (HABITAT), Ms Liu Wei (China), Mr Mohanty Sanjay Kumar (India), Mr Shu Kyein (Myanmar), Ms Nurit Yaffe (Israel), Mr Esmatullah Ramzi (Afghanistan), Ms Bideriya Tserenhand (Mongolia), Ms Hyun Jung Park (Rep. of Korea), Ms Azmah Mohd. Yasin (Malaysia), Ms Suren Navchaa (UNFPA Mongolia); **Third Row:** Mr Radha Krishna G. Chhetry (Nepal), Mr H. Borah (India), Mr Cao Nhu Nguyet (Viet Nam), Mr S.K. Gupta (India), Mr Joel Jere (UNESCO), Mr Aminul Arifeen (Bangladesh), Mr Ilpo Survo (UNESCO), Mr Hor Darith (Cambodia), Mr Wynandin Imawan (Indonesia); **Last Row:** Mr John Frederick De Guia (Philippines), Mr Bai Xianhong (China), Mr Mai Van Cam (Viet Nam), Mr Chol O Han (UNESCO), Mr Robert Johnston (UNSD), Mr Eric Hermouet (UNESCO), Mr Gora Mboup (HABITAT), Mr Ahmad Avenzora (Indonesia), Mr Kioe Sheng Yap (UNESCO)

Second UNSIAP Workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, 23-24 November, Bangkok

There have been three major developments since the initial workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training was held in November 2002. First, an evaluation of UNSIAP was undertaken in early 2003. This evaluation recommended among others that UNSIAP should position itself to be the natural coordination agency for statistical training in the region and strengthen partnerships through better consultation arrangements, place a stronger focus on assisting statistical training capability, and move quickly into distance education and e-learning.

Second, the UNSIAP/UNDP project entitled "The Millennium Development Goals Initiative in Asia and the Pacific" was launched. Finally, the first meeting of the PARIS21 (Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century) Task Team on

Training for Official Statisticians was held on the day before the workshop. The PARIS21 Secretariat requested UNSIAP to run this Task Team, which would deal with all questions related to statistical training and promote regional and global partnerships in training of official statisticians. The leadership of UNSIAP in this Task Team places it at the forefront of coordinating and influencing statistical training activities in the UNESCO region, as well as in other regions of the world.

These three major developments have important ramifications particularly in relation to training for official statisticians in the region and therefore also for the Second UNSIAP Workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific. Seventeen countries were represented at this workshop along with seven participants from UN specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and other entities.

The two main objectives of the workshop were: (i) to maximize the synergies from closer collaboration

among organizations involved in statistical training; and (ii) to agree on guidelines for assessing the role statistical training institutes and their training activities play in national development in the Asia-Pacific region.

Presentations on what training resources and programmes were available in the countries, in UNSIAP and in PARIS21, EUROSTAT and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and a discussion on what would be possible areas for collaboration provided a framework for the discussions in the following sessions.

The paper "A Network for Partnership of National Statistical Agencies and National Statistical Training Institute of Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region" was presented to the participants as an outline for a discussion on how organizations involved in statistical training could partner and drew up synergies. The paper provided a description of the current state of statistical training in the region; laid down the building blocks for a network to link National Statistical

Agencies and Statistical Training Institutes; outlined the basic features of participating agencies and institutes; described the critical elements of the network; and explored financing options for the network. After the presentation of the paper, participants split up in working groups to come up with recommendations for a productive statistical training network among agencies involved in this area.

The discussion on how organizations involved in statistical training could account for results and assess training activities they undertook was opened with the presentation of the paper "Guidelines for the Assessment of the Results of Statistical Training Institutes and their Training Activities in National Development in the Asia-Pacific Region". Working groups further examined a framework for assessment of training institutes and their activities and discussed the guideline, which resulted in recommendations for improvement of the guidelines.

Several suggestions for next steps were raised; they included: agreeing on more details and guiding



Second UNSIAP Workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, 23-24 November, Bangkok, Thailand

Front Row: Ms Patricia Alexander (UNESCO), Mr Gonzalo Jurado (Consultant), Ms Ch. Davaasuren (UNSIAP), Mr Gervacio G. Selda (Philippines), Mr Tomas P. Africa (UNSIAP), Mr Andrew J. Flatt (UNESCO), Ms Fatimah Abdul Hamid (Brunei Darussalam), Mr Hamidreza Navvabpour (Islamic of Iran), Ms Lene Mikkelsen (UNESCO); **Second Row:** Mr Mohammad Esa (Observer), Mr Hwang Hyun-Sik (Republic of Korea), Ms Aritita Tekaleti (Observer), Mr A.K. Yogi (India), Mr Joel Jere (UNESCO), Mr Leong Meng Chao (Macao, China), Mr Bijoy Raychaudhuri (ILO); **Third Row:** Mr Muljono Muah (Indonesia), Mr Clifford Snell (Systat Software Asia Pacific Ltd.), Mr Alain Lery (INSEE), Mr Jonathan Palmer (Australia), Mr Gilles Rambaud-Chanoz (PARIS21), Mr Maarten Boon (EC), Mr Muagututia R. Sefuiva (Samoa); **Last Row:** Mr Frederick Baker (FAO), Mr Chol O Han (UNESCO), Mr Fung Hing Wang (Hong Kong, China), Mr Garth Parry (SPC), Mr Timoci Bainimarama (Fiji), Mr Dieter Stentzel (InWEnt), Mr Blaise Ehounoubakrohi (UNESCO), Mr Ian Ewing (New Zealand)

principles on what the network would try to achieve as well as outlining the accompanying roles and responsibilities of the members; and defining global objectives and success criteria. Two of these objectives would be the creation of a library of shared resources covering popular course titles and the establishment of an actively used e-learning infrastructure.

Background information on the workshop, the country presentations, the two papers and outcomes of the working group discussions have been posted at: [http://www.unsiap.or.jp/completed_prog/workshop/for_ging_ws_04\(thai\)/index.htm](http://www.unsiap.or.jp/completed_prog/workshop/for_ging_ws_04(thai)/index.htm).

2004 Asia-Pacific ICT technical meeting, 30 November – 2 December, Wellington

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) statistics provide vital information on the performance of businesses and are indicators of the knowledge economy. ICT statistics assist both the business sector in planning its future directions and the government in facilitating policy decisions.

With the increasing need of ICT statistics collection in the Asia-Pacific region, technical conferences and other forms of information exchange become increasingly important. The 2004 Asia-Pacific ICT Technical Meeting was hosted by Statistics New Zealand from 30 November to 2 December and was attended by about 20 participants representing: Australia; China; Hong Kong, China; Singapore; New Zealand; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and the Statistics Division of UNESCAP. Two meetings of this kind had previously been held in Brisbane, Australia in 2000 and in Hong Kong, China in 2002.

The main objective of the 2004 Meeting was to ensure comparable frameworks and understanding in ICT statistics among Asia-Pacific countries. It provided an opportunity for participating agencies to discuss issues related to the development of ICT statistics, to share their experience in building comparable data collections and to disseminate knowledge on ICT statistics.

The meeting proceeded through a number of presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- Country reports of Hong Kong, China; China; Australia; Singapore; and New Zealand on their current ICT statistical programmes and future ICT statistical activities;
- OECD and UNESCAP work in the area of ICT statistics;

- Classification of ICT occupations and the approach the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is taking towards the classification of ICT occupations in the new Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO);
- ABS ICT Satellite Account Framework;
- IT Security and practices in measuring IT security and SPAM email in Hong Kong, China; Singapore; and Australia;
- ABS Integrated Business Characteristics Survey Project including the so-called “longitudinal analysis” for deriving micro measures of the impact of ICT on business practices;
- Practices in China in the development of a comprehensive framework of statistical indicators to measure the uptake of ICT in various sectors from government, business to households;
- Knowledge-Based Economy and Society (KBE/S) Indicators;
- Issues related to the definition and comparability of measures of “broadband” access to the internet.

The Statistics Division of UNESCAP and OECD jointly presented their work in the area of ICT statistics and their supplemental roles in the “Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development”. They informed the participants about global and regional plans for promoting the development of ICT statistics and initiated a discussion on a core list of ICT indicators. This core list of indicators will be part of the Asia-Pacific input to the side-preparatory meetings for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis, Tunisia in November 2005.

The different topics resulted in high-profile methodological discussions about current trends and issues measuring ICT and the Information Society.

Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses, 9-10 December 2004, Bangkok

The 2010 round of Population and Housing Censuses is likely to be the largest statistical operation ever undertaken. Such large and costly statistical exercises as censuses can only be justified if their outputs serve multiple purposes, are of reliable quality and are delivered on time. The forthcoming round of censuses is critical because of growing national and international data demands, including those relating to the Millennium Development Goals. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Population and Housing Censuses was a modest yet significant step to launch the UNESCAP Regional Census Programme and to successfully prepare for the forthcoming censuses.

The purpose of the EGM was to set regional priorities for the upcoming round of Population and Housing Censuses in light of the experiences from the previous round. Specifically the EGM was to define the critical and emerging issues to be considered, define priorities, identify goals and propose concrete actions to be carried out in the region in partnership with UNESCAP. Based on the recommendations of the meeting the UNESCAP secretariat would formulate a Regional Census Programme to be carried out over the next four years, which could feed into the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses initiated by the United Nations Statistics Division. Another expected outcome of the EGM was agreed modalities for partnerships to carry out the 2010 round of censuses.

The EGM was attended by statisticians and officials from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and census organizations responsible for planning and implementing various aspects of census taking.

Participants came from 18 countries and territories and from various international agencies and organizations.

The meeting was divided into four sessions. The first session gave an overview of what the 2000 round of censuses had taught, as well as of what had been the experiences and lessons learnt in countries. A discussion paper "The 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in the UNESCAP Region: Lessons Learnt and Emerging Issues" and a summary of country statements gave information on the status of the implementation of the censuses in the UNESCAP region and highlighted some of the experiences and the problems encountered.

Issues important to the region and critical issues for the next census round were identified in the second session. Four discussion groups focused on the following topics: (i) analysis, dissemination and utilization of census data; (ii) using the census for measuring priority issues, e.g. gender equality,



Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses, Bangkok, 9-10 December 2004

Front row: Ms Cheng I. Wan, Ana (Macao, China), Ms Mary Chamie (UNSD), Mr Muhammad Saeed (Pakistan), Mr Radha Krishna G. Chhetry (Nepal), Mr Andrew J. Flatt (UNESCAP), Ms Lene Mikkelsen (UNESCAP), Ms Paula Monina G. Collado (Philippines), Ms Luisa T. Engracia (Consultant), Ms Jirawan Boonperm (Thailand), Ms Navarat Opanapun (Thailand); **Second row:** Ms Chan Yuen-wai, Annie (Hong Kong, China), Mr Devender Kumar Sikri (India), Ms Norfariza Hanim Kasim (Malaysia), Ms Fatimeh Rabiee (Islamic Republic of Iran); **Third row:** Mr Hideo Ishihara (Japan), Mr Nam-hoon Kim (Republic of Korea), Mr Sunaryo Urip (Indonesia), Mr Hoang Xuyen (Viet Nam), Mr Thipsavanh Intharack (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Mr Joel Jere (UNESCAP), Mr Darith Hor (Cambodia), Mr W.L.D.P.D. Alwis (Sri Lanka), Ms Pattama Amornsirisomboon (Thailand); **Fourth row:** Mr Bijoy Raychaudhuri (ILO), Mr Naoki Kurihara (Japan), Mr Li Xiru (China), Mr Hongwen Yu (China), Mr Roberto Pagan (UNESCAP); **Last row:** Mr Chol O. Han (UNESCAP), Mr Ajay Tandon (ADB), Mr Seiffe Tadesse (UNESCAP), Mr Gerald Haberkorn (SPC), Ms Margreet Barkhof (UNESCAP), Mr Ilpo Survo (UNESCAP), Mr Ghazy Mujahid (UNFPA), Ms Bayanchimeg Chilkhaasuren (Mongolia), Mr Avirmed Amarbal (Mongolia)

mortality, poverty mapping, disability, migration, religion, etc.; (iii) planning and financing the next censuses; and (iv) effective use of Information Technology and Geographical Information Systems for census operations, e.g. mapping, data collection, data capture, processing and dissemination. The Expert Group concluded the session with the recommendation that one of the key activities for the Regional Census Programme should be the establishment of specific work groups, which could deal with the above topics of common concern and discuss listed issues in depth among national experts.

The revision of the United Nations "Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses" was the subject of the third session. The Expert Group recognised the fundamental value of this publication as a common resource for statisticians and specifically for those involved in census taking. Produced jointly by national statisticians from all regions the "Principles and Recommendations" had universal value and contributed to improving the quality of censuses and the efficiency of the census operations. Topics relevant to the region were discussed in four working groups and a plenary session. The Expert Group recommended several areas for improvement of or new inclusions in the "Principles and Recommendations". The topics discussed related to: (i) demographic, social and disability characteristics; (ii) geographical and internal migration characteristics; (iii) census products and data utilization; and (iv) relationship between population and housing censuses and other statistical activities including population registers.

The fourth session brainstormed on possible partnerships and resulted in several suggestions and recommendations on how countries in the region and relevant intergovernmental agencies could be working in partnership with UNESCAP during the 2010 round of censuses. The Expert Group inter alia recommended: the creation of a "census newsletter" as a vehicle for exchange of experiences; the setting up of web-based census instruction materials and e-discussion groups to support training and the exchange of experiences in the field of censuses; and the organization of a workshop by UNESCAP/UNSIAP in participation with interested countries to discuss issues related to using modern training tools for training of enumerators and supervisors for censuses. Also, the Expert Group requested UNESCAP to establish a forum where census stakeholders could meet as partners and discuss issues of concern and share experiences, and to act as a coordinator of ad-hoc technical assistance in census operations and other exchanges between the countries.

The Expert Group agreed that the establishment of a country driven Regional Census Programme covering the most critical issues for the upcoming round of censuses would greatly benefit the UNESCAP membership and would contribute to the strengthening of information systems in Asia-Pacific as well as to the development of a regional network of national census experts.

The meeting documentation and reference materials are available from the UNESCAP web site at: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/census2004/index.asp>.

UNSIAP Inception Seminar/Workshop on Upgrading Statistical Capabilities on MDG Indicators, 13-15 December 2004, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

This Seminar/Workshop was the second major event in the implementation of the data/statistical capability-building component of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Initiative in Asia and the Pacific, a regional project supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNSIAP in collaboration with UNESCAP Statistics Division is implementing the specific component on building data/statistical capability. A first Expert Group Meeting on Training Design for Upgrading Statistical Capabilities on MDG Indicators in September 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand had preceded the Inception Seminar/Workshop on Upgrading Statistical Capabilities on MDG Indicators in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India (see also the October 2004 issue of the Statistical Newsletter).

Some 40 heads of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and MDG focal points from UNDP offices participated in the second workshop. The two main purposes of the workshop were to strengthen commitment of NSOs to provide timely, relevant and reliable statistics for producing MDG indicators and to enhance coordination linkages between the NSOs and UNDP MDG focal points in the preparation of national MDG reports.

As a result the participants would have: (i) increased knowledge and appreciation of the main statistical challenges related to the targets and indicators and the MDG reporting process; (ii) identified benefits for and prioritized needs of their respective national statistical systems in relation to the production of data and statistics for MDG indicators, and ensured that the proposed training design and materials for a two-week sub-regional training course on statistics for MDGs were relevant to these; (iii) agreed on measures to enhance coordination linkages between NSOs and

UNDP MDG focal points; and (iv) put in place key elements of an action plan for improving the availability of MDG indicators including timeliness, required levels of disaggregation as well as their reliability.

The question “Why Should NSOs Care?” about statistical challenges and initiatives in producing MDG indicators resulted in a list of convincing reasons why NSOs should indeed care. It was the institutional mandate of the NSOs to collect MDG-related statistics. They were also a sustainable source/provider of reliable and relevant data and should be attuned to existing and emerging data needs. Furthermore, the production of MDG indicators offered opportunities for capacity building and for promoting human development. NSOs could play a key role in modifying and selecting locally relevant indicators, while the MDGs in themselves provide a blueprint for national development.

The meeting made many valuable comments on the contents, objectives and outline of the previously designed two-week sub-regional training course and came up with proposals for adoption. The roles and specific contributions of NSOs and the UNDP/UN Country Teams in the national MDG report process were discussed and the participating countries drew up elements of action plans, designed to minimize data gaps relating to MDG indicators, in the final session.

The meeting documents can be found at: http://www.unsiap.or.jp/mdg_project/inceptionindex.htm.

Missions of UNESCAP Statistics Staff

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

Manila, Philippines (2-9 October): To attend the 2004 International Conference on Official Poverty Statistics (4-6 October 2004); and the Third Regional Workshop on Poverty Statistics (7-8 October 2004), and related meetings.

Chiba, Japan (17-21 October): In conjunction with Mr Urs Nagel of the Programme Management Division, to facilitate a logical framework and programme planning workshop for UNSIAP.

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India (13-15 December): To represent UNESCAP and participate as a resource person in the UNSIAP Inception Seminar/Workshop on Upgrading Statistical Capabilities on MDG Indicators.

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

Brisbane, Australia (30 November-2 December): To attend and present a paper on Improving disability statistics in the Asia-Pacific region at the 36th Conference of the Asia-Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health.

Canberra, Australia (3 December): To consult with the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the Handbook on Disability Statistics.

Geneva, Switzerland (20-21 December): To consult WHO on the joint Project on Health and Disability Statistics.

Ms Patricia Alexander, Regional Adviser on Poverty Statistics, visited the following countries:

Timor-Leste (27 November - 7 December): To provide assistance to the National Directorate of Statistics for the second poverty assessment 2005; and to assess capacity in poverty statistics.

Viet Nam (8-15 December): To provide assistance to the General Statistical Office (GSO) on the Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey; to participate in a workshop on National Statistical Indicators System; and to attend the Fifth Tripartite Meeting of National Statistical Offices of Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Cambodia.

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

Mongolia (15-26 November): To provide advisory services to the National Statistical Office on the compilation of the Industrial Production Index and Statistics of the informal sector

Bangladesh (3-15 December): To review and assess economic statistics produced by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and prepare a medium-term plan of technical assistance.

Mr. Roberto Pagan, Statistician, went to:

Wellington, New Zealand (30 November - 2 December): To attend the 2004 Asia-Pacific ICT Technical Meeting and to make a presentation, in conjunction with the OECD representative, informing participating countries of global and regional plans for promoting the development of ICT statistics; and to advocate wider country participation at future Asia-Pacific Technical Meetings.

Visitors to the UNESCAP Statistics Division

1. **Mr. Ronnie Anderson**, Director, Statistics Sweden, International Consulting Office, Stockholm, Sweden.
2. **Mr. Sten Backlund**, Area Manager, International Consulting Office, Stockholm, Sweden.
3. **Mr. Aye Win**, National Information Officer, United Nations Information Center, Yangon, Myanmar.
4. **Mr. Gilles Rambaud-Chanoz**, Head of Unit, Detached to the Secretariat of PARIS21/OECD, Statistical Office of the European Communities, Paris, France.
5. **Ms. Lynn MacDonald**, MDG Adviser, Poverty Reduction Group, UNDP New York.
6. **Mr. Abu Selim**, Senior Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Pyongyang.
7. **Mr. Romulo Garcia**, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP New York.
8. **Mr. Shahidur Khandker**, Lead Economist, World Bank Institute, Washington.

Publications released by the UNESCAP Statistics Division

- *Statistical Indicators for Asia and the Pacific, Volume XXXIV, No.3, September 2004*
- *Statistical Newsletter, No. 135, October 2004*
- *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific, October 2004*

Staff Movements

Ms. Thasana Sortrakul, Statistics Assistant, retired at the end of November after 35 years of dedicated service with the Statistics Division, in which she delivered tangible contributions to the statistical publication programme of UNESCAP. We wish Ms. Thasana good health and also success in her future undertakings.

Ms. Margreet Barkhof joined the UNESCAP Statistics Division in December to temporarily fill the vacant position of Associate Statistician in the Statistical Information Services Section. Ms. Barkhof gained experience in the field of socio-economic research and analysis, data collection and development of databases in her previous work with the ILO in Lao PDR and WFP in Latin America. She holds a degree in Human Geography, with a specialization in rural development and Geographical Information Systems.

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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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