
Subject: Recommendation from International Disability Alliance

Posted by [orsolya](#) on Fri, 11 Apr 2014 17:13:54 GMT

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International Disability Alliance (IDA) is a network of global and regional organizations of persons with disabilities advocating for full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), and for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in national, regional, and international development work.

We at IDA are pleased that USAID has requested input from civil society and other stakeholders on revising its Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) questionnaires. We recognize that the data collected from these questionnaires provide information that is essential not only to helping USAID prioritize its own efforts in "ending extreme poverty and promoting the development of resilient, democratic societies" (USAID Mission Statement), but also in the day-to-day work of governments, civil society, and academia.

We strongly urge the DHS Program to incorporate a few questions to the Household Questionnaire designed to better measure the incidence of disability. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics has created a "Short Set" of questions designed specifically to be efficiently included as a small part of larger census-like surveys administered over large populations or subgroups. In just six questions concerning difficulties an interviewee (or proxy) may have with activities such as seeing, walking, or communicating, the Short Set is able to provide estimates of the incidence of various disabilities, as well as data on the intensity of difficulties with activities that subjects may encounter. The Washington Group, a branch of the United Nations Statistics Division, developed this survey over a number of years, and it has been thoroughly tested for validity and ease-of-use in dozens of countries. The six questions of the Short Set can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/washington_group/WG_Short_Measure_on_Disability.pdf

Combined with other data compiled in the Household Questionnaire, the Washington Group's Short Set of questions into the Household Questionnaire would provide information invaluable in a very wide range of tasks critical to development practice including 1) evaluating how well groups or subgroups of persons with disabilities are faring compared to their neighbors; 2) better directing development resources towards those most at risk; 3) budgeting; and 4) the success (or failure) of these efforts. A paucity of data, and the widespread use of methodologies that have undercounted persons with disabilities (Mont, Daniel, "Measuring Disability Prevalence," Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 0706, The World Bank, 2007), we believe, have led to an artificially low prioritization on removing barriers to full participation of persons with disabilities in the policies and practices of governments, development agencies, and other actors. Without good data, we cannot "reach the neediest, and find out whether they are receiving essential services." (High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development", page 23) Increasingly however, the collection of accurate, internationally comparable, and disaggregated data on disability is recognized as a key to fully implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and in going forward with a disability-inclusive post-2015 development agenda.

The outcome document of the General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development (2013), for example, called for improved "disability data collection, analysis and monitoring for development policy planning, implementation, and evaluation" and underlined "the

need for internationally comparable data and statistics disaggregated by sex and age, including information on disability." (Paragraph 4 (i)) State parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), meanwhile, undertake to collect "statistical and research data [in order to] formulate and implement policies to give effect" to the Convention.

While USAID should also consider opportunities to use disability data collection tools, such as UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, and the Model Disability Survey being developed by WHO and the World Bank, in other contexts, the Washington Group Short Set provides a low-cost, off-the-shelf instrument that can be seamlessly integrated into the DHS Household Questionnaire. Given the human and economic cost of efforts that fail to address the needs of the most impoverished people that are the subject of USAID's work, it is clear that DHS should incorporate disability questions into the new version of the Household Questionnaire.
