



United Nations Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific



# Improving national statistical systems for disability information in the Asia Pacific Region

Andrew J Flatt, Director, Statistics Division ,  
UNESCAP



## Subject of the presentation

Project on improving disability information systems and  
measurement in the Asia & Pacific region



## UNESCAP's major disability initiatives

Strong promoter of UN's global initiatives  
on the rights of persons with disabilities

- First Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002
- Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (2002)
- Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012



## Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF)

- Main theme of BMF: To create an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society
- Seven policy areas, 21 targets and 17 strategies are identified as priorities
- Key mandate and framework for UNESCAP's work on disability, including statistics



## Highlights of disability statistics in the Asia-Pacific region

- What are the sources of information?
- What is the prevalence in countries?
- Questions and approaches used
- Diagnosis of the main problems encountered



## Sources of data on disability

| Region              | Total | Census | Survey |
|---------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Africa              | 37    | 28     | 9      |
| Asia                | 32    | 20     | 12     |
| Caribbean           | 7     | 7      | 0      |
| Developed countries | 25    | 5      | 20     |
| South America       | 12    | 8      | 4      |
| Total               | 113   | 68     | 45     |



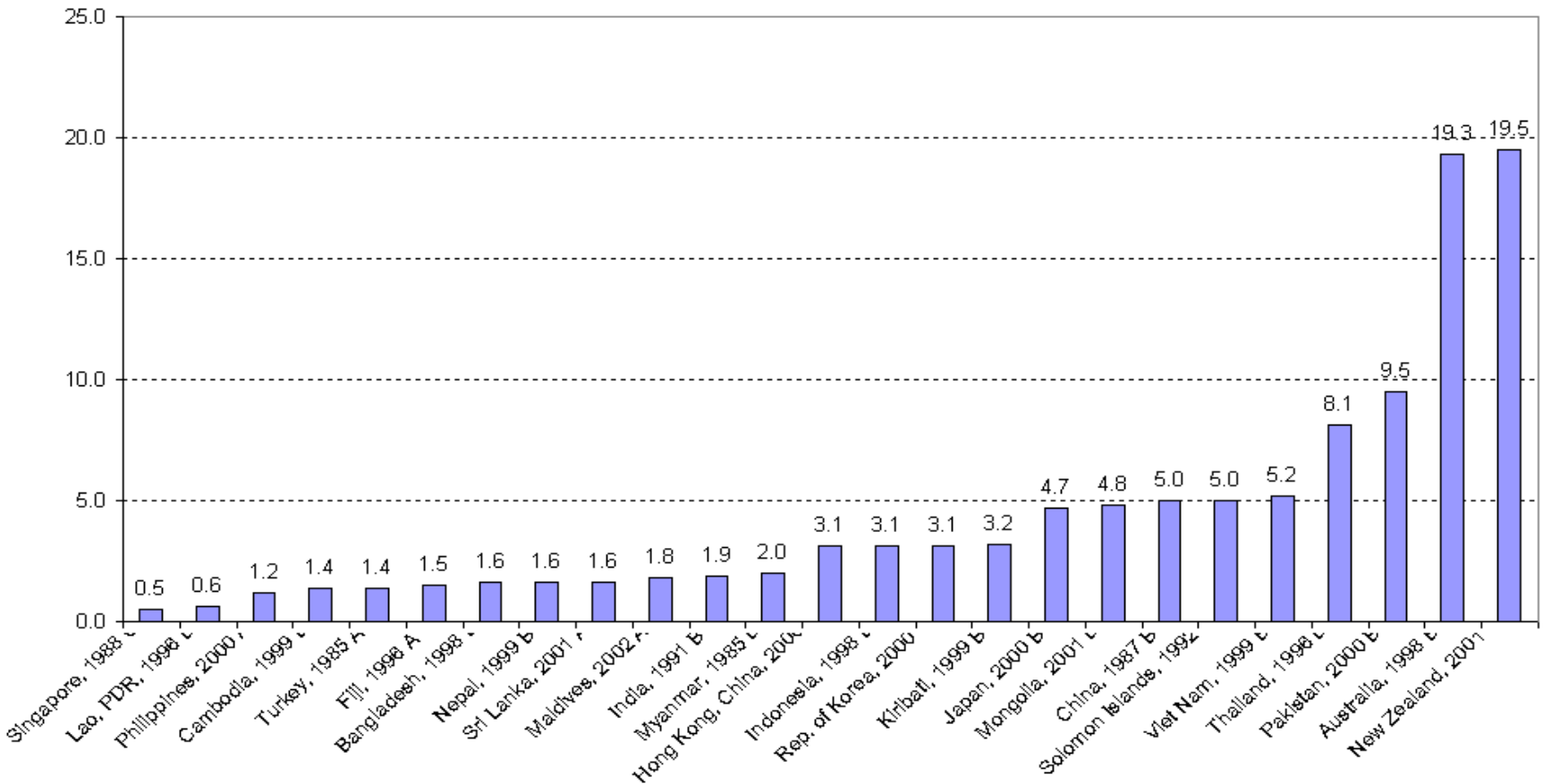
## Regional sources for collection of disability data

| Subregion                 | Population Census | Sample survey/module | Admin. register |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| East and North-East Asia  | 1                 | 5                    | 2               |
| North and Central Asia    | 0                 | 2                    | 4               |
| South and South-West Asia | 5                 | 4                    | 2               |
| South-East Asia           | 4                 | 5                    | 6               |
| Pacific                   | 3                 | 2                    | 2               |
| Total                     | 13                | 18                   | 16              |



# Prevalence of disability

Prevalence of disabled persons in Asian and Pacific countries (%)



Source: United Nations DISTAT2



# Questions used to identify persons with disabilities

Several countries have used the following type of questions

Screening question: Is there anyone in this household who is disabled?

Follow-up question: What type of disability does ..... suffer from?



# Questions used to identify persons with disabilities

Country A 1993 Survey (prevalence 18 %)

Country B 1982 Survey (prevalence 0.8 %)

Country A: “Is there anyone in the household who has any loss of sight, hearing, speech, shortness of breath, etc..

Country B: “Is there any blind/crippled/deaf and dumb/mad person in this household?



## Census information on disability

Usually identifies - the number of disabled persons, type of disability, cause of disability (sometimes)

- 1 *Does \_\_\_\_\_ have any physical or mental disability?*
- 2 *What type of disability does \_\_\_\_\_ have? (list of impairments)*
- 3 *What is the cause of the above disability? (3-8 cat.)*

Type of questions asked are impairment based and limited to a few types of disability



## Pluses and minuses of disability data from censuses

- Limited number of questions
- Tend to miss mild and moderate disability, particularly among children and elderly
- It is not possible to get data as frequently as needed
- Subnational data possible
- Demographic & socio-economic characteristics
- Possible to compare to non-disabled



## Disability information from surveys

- Type of survey: full survey, module, question
- Sample size: - from 250 to 369,816 households
- Type of information:
  - disabled persons/households
  - disability type, cause and severity of disability
  - basic demographic information (sometimes)
  - educational level, employment (sometimes)
  - income and disability pensions (sometimes)
  - use of support services, special equipment (rarely)
  - unmet needs and care-takers (rarely)



## Diagnosis of the region's disability statistics

1. Disability prevalence is underestimated
2. Focus is on a few severe impairment categories
3. Traditional view of disability (people with visible impairments or in wheelchairs)
4. Most use a generic question to identify the disabled
5. General lack of a common conceptual framework - non comparability of data (between countries, sources and over time)
6. Most countries have never had a dedicated disability survey



## Diagnosis of the region's disability statistics (2)

7. Data available not sufficient to inform policy
8. Lack of knowledge and use of international standards and guidelines
9. Strong stigma associated with disability combined with the lack of services for disabled = lack of interest in being counted
10. Data are not compiled to allow comparison of disabled and non-disabled populations



## ESCAP Project on Improving Disability Data

Goal: to improve disability statistics by applying the ICF framework and using international measurement standards

Target group: statisticians and disability experts from 10 countries

Outcome: ability to produce better disability data that covers policy needs

Partners: ABS, AIHW and WHO



# Components of ESCAP Disability Project (2004-2005)

## Phase 1:

- Training in the use of ICF for disability collection, in standard methodologies and in design of collection tools
- National action plans for improving disability information systems

## Phase 2:

- Field testing of standard sets of disability questions through identical protocols
- Evaluation of results for application to real data collections



# Milestones in the first year of the Project

- Two training workshops in ICF and in measurement methodologies
- Preparation of national action plans
- Training Manual on disability statistics (under construction)
- Hosting of the Washington Group on Disability – to develop standard sets of questions



## 2005 activities in ESCAP Disability Project

- Pre-testing of several sets of questions using standard protocols
- Translation of manual and training material for national use
- Two workshops to share results and experiences with pre-testing and implementation of national action plans



## Protocols for field testing

The question sets will cover body functions as well as activities and participation of the disabled person

A severity scale of five will be used

The common protocols will test the questions for:

- specificity and sensitivity
- reliability
- cognitive interviewing



## Disability statistics in ESCAP post-2005

1. Assisting countries in developing their disability information system
2. Offering advisory services in disability statistics
3. Hosting a forum where statisticians and others working in disability can exchange experiences
4. Contributing to the revision of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses for the 2010 Census Round
5. Initiating disability studies to understand better disability differences in population sub-groups



Thank you!