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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disability statistics are essential for informing policy makers and building the case for advancement of policies and initiatives to uphold the rights of children and adults with disabilities. With the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, and the subsequent national ratification by over 130+ countries including 4 Pacific Island Countries, the call for greater emphasis on disability statistics continues to grow. The Pacific Regional Strategy for Disability highlights the need for action to increase statistical information and further requests were made at the Pacific Forum Disability Ministers' Meeting held in Papua New Guinea in October 2012.

This paper outlines existing gaps in disability statistics across the Pacific, and discusses a range of approaches to best realize the opportunities to bridge these gaps. The paper sets out internationally accepted concepts and definitions of disability, current best practices and tools for collection of disability data on children and adults, and key issues of which statistical officers need to be aware.

The definition of disability has evolved over time, and reflects a level of complexity related to the fact that disabilities sit on a 'spectrum' that impact on functioning, and the environment plays an important role. International standards like the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) developed by WHO have incorporated this complexity, and provide guidance and operational definitions for disability.

Different approaches and tools have been developed for varying statistical sources. In the case of census collection, the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability are recommended for inclusion. For survey collections, other tools developed by WHO and UNICEF are also available. There are substantial opportunities to disaggregate administrative statistical sources to identify disability population-specific data. In-county consultation, including with civil society groups such as Disabled Peoples Organisations, supports inclusion of disability data.

Key issues for disability statistics remain, including differing definitions and collection methodologies that lead to accuracy and comparability issues; capacity for disability data analysis and data accessibility and public availability.

The paper concludes by putting forward recommendations to address these issues, such as ensuring that disability statistics are relevant at the national level and comparable at the global level through basing design on international standards, like the ICF and Washington Group questions; integrating disability questions into surveys, and carrying out comprehensive disability surveys where resources permit; and publishing disability data and integrating it into public statistical reporting processes. Better availability and quality of disability information will support better policy making, enable monitoring of progress and lead to improvements in the lives of people with disabilities.