



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Workshop on Improving Disability Statistics in the Arab Countries

27 - 28 July 2022

Beirut, Lebanon

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA), in close collaboration with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG), International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), has organized the Workshop on Improving Disability Statistics in the Arab Countries, July 2020.

This workshop is part of a series of workshops held since 2017, which aims to develop the capabilities of national statistical offices to collect and publish accurate and comparable disability statistics from household censuses and surveys, enhance understanding of concepts, and definitions, and learn about new methodologies to produce consistent data aligned with the regional and international standards. The workshop also facilitated discussion and sharing of good practices such as the collection of data on persons with disabilities (PWD) through different modules.

The workshop encouraged interactive dialogue and sharing of national experiences and good practices in collecting and producing disability statistics in the region including challenges, queries, and concerns.

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Background

1. Lack of reliable data and comparable statistics on persons with disabilities (PWD) are the most critical obstacles in mainstreaming disability in development. Improvements in the collection, analysis, and availability of disability statistics are crucially necessary in order to promote evidence-based policymaking and programming decisions, as well as effective monitoring. *Article 31 – Statistics and data collection requests States Parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention. The General Assembly resolution 68/261 requested countries to produce SDG indicators disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.*
2. Moreover, concerted and coordinated action is urgently needed at all levels to harmonize concepts, definitions, and methodologies in line with international guidelines and standards. *This was highlighted in the Interagency and Expert Group Meeting held in Cairo in September 2018, where ESCWA was requested in para (m) “Build statistical capacity to produce regional disability indicators, in collaboration with United Nations agencies and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics;” Moreover, the 8th Executive committee of ESCWA requested the secretariate in para (d) “Continue to provide support to Member States in collecting sustainable development indicators and reporting on progress In implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and completing the development of the Arab Portal for Sustainable Development Goals, in particular “Leaving no one behind” dashboard to be able to precisely define the categories that should be targeted...”*
3. In this regard, ESCWA in close cooperation with the Washington Group, ILO, and UNICEF, has organized the Workshop on Improving Disability Statistics in the Arab Countries from 27 to 28 July 2022, Lebanon. The workshop was part of a series of capacity development workshops held since 2017 to increase the production and dissemination of harmonized disability data in the Arab region.

Objective

4. The objective of the workshop is to enhance the capacities of member countries to compile and disseminate accurate and comparable disability statistics with harmonized concepts, definitions, and methodologies in line with international guidelines, standards, and classifications, and learn about new methodologies to produce consistent data aligned with the regional and international standards. The workshop also facilitated discussion and sharing of good practices such as the collection of data on PWD through different modules.

Logistics

5. The workshop was made accessible through the Zoom platform to enable all interested disability experts to follow the workshop remotely. ESCWA also provided simultaneous interpretation in the Arabic and English languages during the period of the workshop. The workshop presentations and resources are available at the ESCWA website, accessible at the following link: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/improving-disability-statistics-arab-countries>

Participants

6. The two-day workshop was attended by 14 participants from 12 NSOs (9 females and 5 males). ESCWA also made the workshop available online to facilitate attendance by other disability experts in national statistical offices (NSOs). In addition, online participation was recorded for seven disability experts registered from five NSOs (5 females and 2 males).

Agenda

7. The Workshop agenda covered the following items:
 - Session 1: Compiling and disseminating harmonized disability data
 - Session 2: Regional guidelines on disability statistics and international standards
 - Participants completed a hands-on exercise on the Implementation of guidelines: Dos and Don'ts
 - Participants were requested to do homework on how to improve the disability questions in future household surveys and censuses by finding the mistakes in their previous questionnaire.
 - Session 3: Collecting disability data for children
 - Session 4: Collecting disability data in labour force surveys
 - Session 5: Violence Against Women with disabilities
 - Session 6: Stand-alone survey on disability
 - Homework was sent to countries by groups to send their feedback and suggestion on Household and Family, Education, and Work characteristics.

Summary of discussions

- **Session 1: Compiling and disseminating harmonized disability data**

ESCWA informed the meeting on progress achieved in compiling disability statistics through the second-round exercise for data compilation (2021-2022)¹ in the Arab region. The data compilation exercise aims to harmonize and update data on PWD in the region, assess data availability and strengthen the capacities of member States to collect more accurate and comparable data. To facilitate and expedite completion of the ESCWA questionnaire countries requested ESCWA to adjust the questionnaire to ensure easier data extraction and compilation (unlocking the tables, reordering the tables' totals, etc.)

¹ The 1st round was in 2017-2018

- **Session 2: Regional guidelines on disability statistics and international standards**

Implementation of global and regional guidelines and recommendations enables countries to produce comparable disability statistics. ESCWA emphasizes the importance of using the “Arab Washington Group extended Short Set on Functioning” (AWG_SS+) (Annex I) as a minimum set for the region, and preferably the “Extended Set on functioning” (WG-ES), along with the four-response categories of level of difficulty.

It was also noted that compounded questions on seeing, or hearing using an assistive device like a hearing aid, may be divided into two separate questions for clarity and accuracy. Each question set should begin by asking the respondent whether “he/she wears glasses” and “he/she uses a hearing aid”,

- if no, follow with the question “do you have difficulty seeing” and “do you have difficulty hearing?”
- if yes, follow by the question “do you have difficulty in seeing when wearing your glasses” and “do you have difficulty hearing even when using your hearing aid?”

The participants discussed the relevance of adding “cause of disability” and “age of the onset” and whether they have any contribution to preventive measures. It was explained that the objective of the Washington Group questions on functioning is to identify the population with disabilities for disaggregation which will also provide a prevalence estimate. Therefore, if space allows, it is more important to ask the extended set to capture the majority of PWD. If additional space is available, questions on cause and onset of disability, participation barriers and facilitators, and additional functioning items may be added, but should be placed after the WG question set.

It was emphasized that using international classifications and standards is important to produce analyses in different topic areas in order to comparably assess the well-being and demographic and socio-economic characteristics of PWD in comparison to those with no disability across multiple aspects of life. It was noted that the ESCWA “[SDG Data Collection Tool](#)” can be a useful and practical guide to implementing harmonized methods and instruments for 188 SDG indicators. In addition, it is highly recommended to follow the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) for defining the educational attainment levels and International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) for work status and other related classifications.

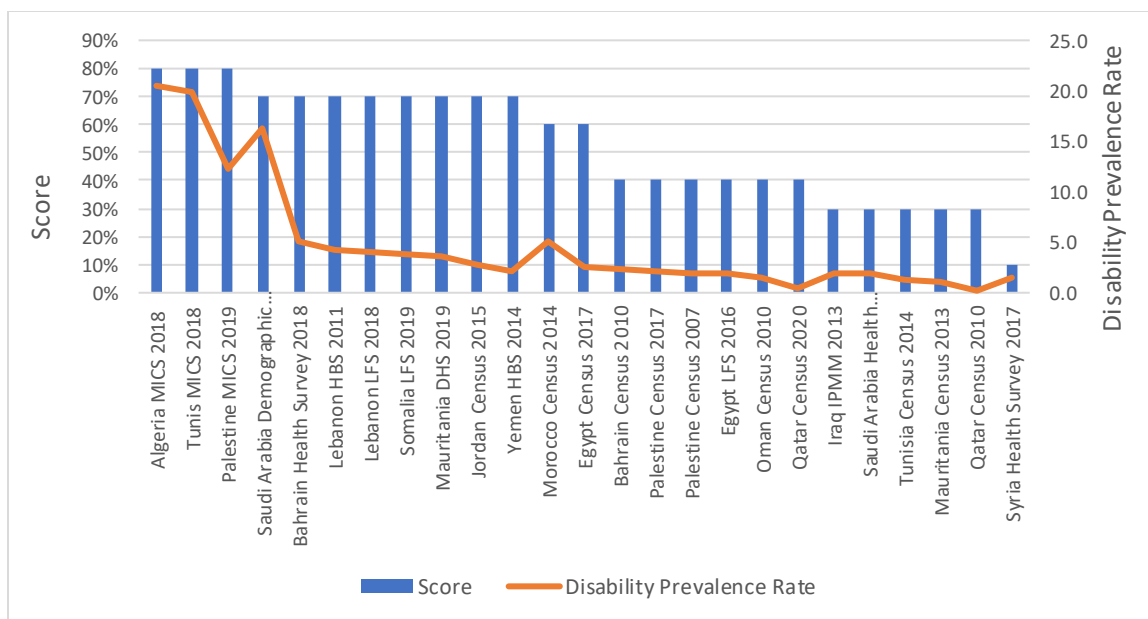
The participating countries discussed the importance of implementing international standards that need to capture better a more comprehensive group of PWD and provide more information on their wellbeing. In this regard, the meeting highlighted the importance of following the guidelines and standards when planning future data collection tools to produce quality statistics on PWD. The meeting also stressed the positive relationship

between the number of difficulty domains included in a survey and the size (prevalence) and characteristics of the population with disabilities. The more domains included in the data collection, the more likely that the population with disabilities identified will represent the population of interest. This is often reflected in an increase in the prevalence rate due to the larger scope in capturing PWD.

The group exercises reviewed the following data collection tools on PWD: Qatar Census 2020; Egypt Census 2017; Syria Health Survey 2017; Jordan Census 2015; Oman Census 2020; Sudan Census 2008; Lebanon LFS 2018; Palestine Census 2017; Algeria MICS 2018; Iraq LFS 2021; Somalia LFS 2019; and Morocco Census 2014. In light of the findings the meeting stressed on the following recommendations:

- Place the WG module at the beginning section of the census questionnaire
- Add the introductory statement “The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities.” before asking questions on difficulties
- Do not add the word “disability” in the questionnaire or title of a section or anywhere in the survey
- Apply the eight domains of the “Arab Washington Group extended short set on functioning” (AWG_SS+), as a minimum for the Arab region
- Avoid merging two difficulties such as difficulty using fingers and difficulty using arms
- Do not add unrecommended domains (pronunciation and others)
- Apply the four response categories of level of difficulty after each question and do not omit any of them or add other categories
- Avoid adding (I do not know, I do not remember, did not respond,,,) as these will be counted under missing information.
- Additional questions such as “cause of disability” or any other item should be placed after the WG set

The participants were aware that improvements in the implementation of the regional guidelines and recommendations would contribute to better capturing of PWD as shown in the chart below illustrating the score results for implementing the set of guidelines (Annex II) and the prevalence rates of countries.



- **Session 3: Collecting disability data for children**

Collecting data on children is important to raise awareness, advocate for their rights, quantify their needs to prioritize interventions and monitor progress and outcomes. Therefore, countries were encouraged to collect data on children with disabilities (2-4 and 5-17 years old) using UNICEF WG Module on Child Functioning. It is not advisable to include children below 2 years. The questions on children aged 2-4 years include 8 domains, and the questions on children aged 5-17 years include 12 domains. These questions are tested to capture all children with disabilities and using all the questions of the two modules will produce more reliable results on disability prevalence for children than using the WG-SS for these age groups.

- **Session 4: Collecting disability data in labour force surveys**

Disaggregation of key labour market indicators by disability status provides useful evidence for designing policies for disability inclusion. However, it does not tell anything about the reasons for the gaps in labour market outcomes between persons with and without disabilities. Therefore, ILO in collaboration with the WG developed a LFS Disability Module (LFS-DM) that collects information on the obstacles faced by PWD persons in the labour market. Countries were encouraged to use this module to compile information on the situation of PWD in the labour market, to understand their needs and obstacles they face. It's important to implement the employment module as is with the four responses category at least every 5 years for all household members of working age .

- **Session 5: Violence Against Women with disabilities**

ESCWA recommend that countries use the AWG-SS+ in VAW Surveys to monitor violence against those with disabilities, determine the form of violence (physical/ sexual/ psychological), identify places they are most vulnerable, analyze causes of VAW in general and for women with disabilities in particular, identify the problems and challenges faced by violated women with disabilities and find ways to address them. Available indicators would provide a comprehensive knowledge base that will assist decision-makers and policymakers in preparing plans, and implementing more effective programs and providing necessary services. The [ESCWA VAW Toolkit](#) includes a complete set to implement a VAW survey: VAW Questionnaire; Question by Question; Instruction Manual for Field Workers; Facilitator Manual for Training Field Workers; and Analysis Plan.

- **Session 6: Stand-alone survey on disability**

It is important to obtain more detailed data on those with disabilities and understand their socio-economic circumstances and well-being including needs and challenges. Four working groups were established to contribute on the draft outline of ESCWA Stand-alone survey. Those four groups are composed of the following:

- Housing and Family Characteristics- Algeria, Egypt, and Palestine
- Education Characteristics- Lebanon, Somalia, Morocco, and Syria
- Work Characteristics- Qatar, Jordan, Sudan, Iraq, and Oman

More discussions and activities will follow and in in close consultation with the WG to develop a regional stand-alone survey on disability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

8. The participants of the Workshop on Improving Disability Statistics in the Arab Countries agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

- Countries with newly collected data on disability statistics are encouraged to share data as per the ESCWA Questionnaire to be part of the regional and global databases and publications. Countries can also opt to make available to ESCWA household surveys' microdata that include compiled data on PWD to facilitate the generation of the required statistics during the data collection rounds in the region. ESCWA will only publish data after confirmation of statistics with the participating countries.
- Further improve in the application of the global and regional guidelines to improve the collection and dissemination of comparable disability statistics as per the "[Regional guidebook to improve disability data collection and analysis in the Arab countries](#)", and the Washington Group questions on functioning.

- Countries are encouraged to apply the eight domains of the “Arab Washington Group extended short set on functioning” (AWG_SS+), as a minimum for the Arab region, which includes seeing, hearing, mobility, communication, cognition, self-care, and upper body functioning (hands, fingers, and arms).
- Countries are encouraged also when possible to apply the “[Washington Group Extended Set on Functioning](#)” (WG-ES) which includes in addition to (AWG-SS+) the anxiety, depression, pain, and fatigue questions.
- Countries may disseminate disability prevalence at two levels:
 - As per the standard cut-off at two levels as per the Washington Group recommendations: persons with disabilities are those “with a lot of difficulty” or “unable at all” in at least one domain.
 - If needed, and to meet the needs of the policymakers for a higher disability prevalence to include an additional cut-off at 3 levels; persons with difficulties are “with some difficulty”, “with a lot of difficulties” and “unable at all” in at least one domain.
- It is important to apply international standards and classifications to harmonize data collection and production and to provide comparable information on the living conditions and well-being of PWD. To list a few, it’s important to apply the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) for educational attainment levels, the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) for employment status and be guided by the UNSD metadata standards for the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, especially in areas of poverty, violence, access to drinking water and sanitation, the Internet, mobile telephone, transport, and benefits.
- Apply UNICEF WG Module on Child Functioning (2-4 and 5-17 years) in future MICS or health-related surveys to reflect the multitude of domains and reduce the risk of missing out on children with different functional difficulties. Countries must make every effort to apply the standards as recommended and do not apply any changes on the standard questions and response categories or changing cut-offs.
- Apply ILO WG Labour Force Survey (LFS) Disability Module in future LFS to disaggregate the standard labour market indicators by disability status and identify the barriers that PWD face, their needs or use of workplace accommodations, and their attitudes in the labour market. The module can be included in any data collection with the employment module, at least every 5 years.
- It is highly recommended for countries implementing the VAW surveys to add the AWG-SS+ to enrich the analysis on those women with disabilities and the violence they face.

- Countries are encouraged to join actively in the working group established by ESCWA to develop a regional standalone survey on PWD. The regional questionnaire aims to understand the wellbeing and socio-economic situations of PWD, their needs and daily challenges, access to resources and services etc..
- More effort and time should go on training the field staff on collecting disability data from the field. Countries are encouraged to seek ESCWA advice and training by identifying their training needs for disability data collection.
- Benefit from technical support to countries provided by ESCWA, in collaboration with specialized United Nations agencies, in collecting and analyzing data on PWD through surveys and censuses.
- It was also agreed that the ESCWA 2nd Round Questionnaire on Disability Statistics will be adjusted to ensure easier data extraction and compilation by the countries (unlocking the tables, reordering the tables' totals, etc.) The questionnaire will be resent to countries to allow them to complete the data by end of August 2022.

Evaluation

9. A total of 14 participants provided their feedback. When asked about whether the workshop objectives were met, 100% of the participants gave an excellent and good rating. In terms of presenters' inputs, all respondents rated the presentations, exercises, and resources as excellent and good. All participants rated the discussions and the support provided during the workshop as excellent and good. Finally, 93% of the participants rated the logistics and organization of the workshop as excellent and good, and 7% as fair.

Resources

Guidelines, Tools and Publications

- [ESCWA Disability Framework: 115 indicators to bridge the gap between policy and statistics](#)
- [UNESCWA & Washington Group Regional Guidelines to Improve the Production of Disability Statistics](#)
- [ESCWA VAW Toolkit](#)
- [Module on Child Functioning: Questionnaires 2-4 & 5-17 years](#)
- [ILO LFS model questionnaire and its implementation and variable derivation guides](#)
- [Arab SDG Gateway](#)
- [SDG Data Collection Tool](#)
- [The Washington Group website](#)

E-learning

- [UNICEF E-learning on child disability](#)
- [Morocco Field Worker Training on Disability Questions](#)
- [Humanity & Inclusion Learning Toolkit on Collecting Data for the Inclusion of Persons with disabilities](#)

Workshops

- [ESCWA virtual meeting on Disability Statistics, Virtual, 29 September 2020](#)
- [Disability Statistics in the Arab Region: Expanding the coverage to leave no one behind, Amman, Jordan, 29-31 October 2019](#)
- [Regional Seminar on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the International Convention and the Sustainable Development Plan 2030, Cairo, Egypt, 13-14 January 2019](#)
- [Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals, Cairo, Egypt, 18-20 September 2018](#)
- [Workshop on Improving Disability Statistics in the Arab Countries, Casablanca, Morocco, 17-20 April 2017](#)
- [Expert Meeting on Disability Measurement in Support of SDGs, Muscat, Oman, 14-16 March 2017](#)

Group Photo



Annex I

Arab Washington Group extended Short Set on Functioning" (AWG_SS+)

"The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities."

Seeing

(a) Do you have difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

*If "Cannot do at all" to (a), skip to **the next section (Hearing)**.*

(a)_1 Do you wear glasses to see far away?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

[If Yes, include glasses clause in (a)_2]

(a)_2 Do you have difficulty clearly seeing someone's face across a room [even when wearing these glasses]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

(a)_3 Do you wear glasses for reading or to see up close?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

[If Yes, include glasses clause in (a)_4]

(a)_4 Do you have difficulty clearly seeing the picture on a coin [even when wearing these glasses]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

HEARING

(b) Do you have difficulty hearing, even when using a hearing aid?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

If "Cannot do at all" to (b), **skip to the next section (Mobility).**

(b)_1 Do you use a hearing aid?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

If "No" to (b)_1, skip to (b)_3 and omit [hearing aid clause] in (b)_3 and (b)_4.

If "Yes" to (b)_1, continue with (b)_2 and include [hearing aid clause] in (b)_3 and (b)_4.

(b)_2 How often do you use your hearing aid(s)?

- 1) All of the time
- 2) Some of the time
- 3) Rarely
- 4) Never

(b)_3 Do you have difficulty hearing what is said in a conversation with one other person in a quiet room [even when using your hearing aid(s)]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

If "Cannot do at all" to (b)_3, **skip to the next section (Mobility).**

(b)_4 Do you have difficulty hearing what is said in a conversation with one other person in a noisier room [even when using your hearing aid(s)]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

MOBILITY

(c) Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

(c)_1 Do you use any equipment or receive help for getting around?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

If "Yes" to (c)_1, continue with (c)_2

If "No" to (c)_1, skip to (c)_3

(c)_2 Do you use any of the following?

- a) Cane or walking stick?
- b) Walker or Zimmer frame?
- c) Crutches?
- d) Wheelchair?
- e) Artificial limb (leg/foot)?
- f) Someone's assistance?
- g) Other (please specify):

If respondent only answers "Wheelchair" to (c)_2, **skip to next section (Communication)**.

Other aid equipment skip to (c)_6

(c)_3 Do you have difficulty walking 100 meters on level ground, that would be about the length of one football field or one city block [without the use of aid]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

If "Cannot do at all" at (c)_3, skip to (c)_5.

(c)_4 Do you have difficulty walking half a km on level ground, that would be the length of five football fields or five city blocks [without the use of aid]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

(c)_5 Do you have difficulty walking up or down 12 steps [without the use of aid]?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

Skip to next section (Communication).

(c)_6 Do you have difficulty walking 100 meters on level ground, that would be about the length of one football field or one city block, when using your aid?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

If "Cannot do at all" to (c)_6, skip to **next section (Communication)**.

(c)_7 Do you have difficulty walking half a km on level ground, that would be the length of five football fields or five city blocks, when using your aid?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

COMMUNICATION

(d) Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

(d)_1 Do people have difficulty understanding you when you speak?

1) Yes

2) No

*If “No difficulty” to (d) and “No” to (d)_1 then **skip to next Section (Cognition).***

(d)_2 Do you use sign language?

1. Yes

2. No

COGNITION (remembering or concentrating)

(e) Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?

1) No difficulty

2) Some difficulty

3) A lot of difficulty

4) Cannot do at all

(e)_1 Do you have difficulty remembering, concentrating, or both?

1) Difficulty remembering only

2) Difficulty concentrating only

3) Difficulty with both remembering and concentrating

If ‘Difficulty concentrating only’ skip to (e)_4

(e)_2 How often do you have difficulty remembering?

1) Sometimes

2) Often

3) All of the time

(e)_3 Do you have difficulty remembering a few things, a lot of things, or almost everything?

1) A few things

2) A lot of things

3) Almost everything

(e)_4 How much difficulty do you have concentrating for ten minutes?

1) A little

2) A lot

3) Somewhere in between a little and a lot

If difficulty concentrating for ten minutes 'somewhere in between a little and a lot of difficulty' continue with (e)_5 Else, **Skip to next section (Self-care).**

(e)_5 Is difficulty ...

- 1) Closer to a little?
- 2) Closer to a lot?
- 3) Exactly in the middle?

Self-care

(f) Do you have difficulty with self care, such as washing all over or dressing?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

Upper body

(g)_1 Do you have difficulty raising a 2 litre jug of water or soda from waist to eye level?

- 1) no difficulty
- 2) some difficulty
- 3) a lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all

(g)_2 Do you have difficulty using your hands and fingers, such as picking up small objects, for example, buttons or a pencil, or opening or closing containers or bottles?

- 1) No difficulty
- 2) Some difficulty
- 3) A lot of difficulty
- 4) Cannot do at all