

## **SPOTLIGHT ON MARY CHAMIE, NEWLY RETIRED FROM THE UNITED NATIONS**

Each month we "spotlight" someone who has made a difference with ICF. Dr. Mary Chamie has made that difference with both the ICIDH *and* the ICF. Owing to rules of mandatory separation from employment at the United Nations at the age of 60, Mary Chamie recently retired from her position as Assistant Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, where she headed up the Division's Demographic and Social Statistics Branch. This Branch coordinates the development of harmonized definitions, concepts and methods of statistical measurement for assessment of demographic and social concerns and is also responsible for the collection and dissemination of official national statistics related to these concerns. She supervised 22 people in that office. Data sources include population and housing censuses, related surveys and administrative registers, including civil registration systems.

High on Mary's list of interests has been the further development of statistics on human functioning and disability. Starting in the 1980s, Dr. Chamie proposed and developed the international statistical program on human functioning and disability used by the United Nations. She was extensively involved in the review of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) that ultimately led to the development of the ICF. Earlier that decade, Dr. Chamie also initiated the first review of official national statistics for the United Nations that ultimately led to a publication of the first case studies of official national disability statistics from Western Asia and Northern Africa. In turn, those case studies led to the development of a methodological and statistical database called UN/DISTAT, now used around the world. This database served as the source for the first United Nations Compendium of Disability Statistics, published in 1990. Through a special project, she also encouraged the adaptation on a trial basis of the UN Demographic Yearbook system from conventional national disability statistics compilation to a review of aging in populations. That adaptation yielded a special issue of the Demographic Yearbook in 1993, entitled Population Ageing and the Situation of Elderly Persons. Beginning in 2006, the UN Statistics Division, in consultation with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, has embarked on compiling and disseminating official national statistics on human functioning and disability through the United Nations Demographic Yearbook system; that process will recur, yielding many more similar Yearbooks in the future. That production capacity represents an important legacy of Dr. Chamie's contributions to this field and its methods.

More information about UN efforts to collect and disseminate data about human functioning and disability is available at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/disability/default.htm> .

Dr. Chamie has lived and worked for a number of years in South and Western Asia. During her professional career, she has traveled to all continents for various work assignments. Most recently, she participated in the review and development of population and housing censuses in Afghanistan and Iraq. Dr. Chamie is deeply

concerned with a wide range of statistical issues related to social and economic development and has written a number of books and articles both in her own name and on behalf of the United Nations on human functioning and disability. Moreover, Dr. Chamie's contributions also include major publications related to the health status of women, composite characteristics of youth and aging, statistical classifications and statistics on trade.

A mother of three adult children, Dr. Chamie is now ready to explore new ways of relating to the world of work. She now serves as a partner in the new firm doing business as Population Associates, Inc. Through her new role as research director of this small company, she intends to continue to lecture and work on the topic of human functioning and disability, and other topics.

When asked what has been the most interesting part of work on human functioning and disability, she replied that without a doubt it has been the people she meets who work on this topic, the thrill of being part of the enormous creativity that has occurred in thinking regarding this field, and the fact that she has had the eternal role of student while making professional contributions.

Any ICF Clearinghouse Newsletter subscribers interested in congratulating Mary on her achievements and retirement can do so with her by telephone, at (914) 473-0433, or E-Mail at [mary.chamie@gmail.com](mailto:mary.chamie@gmail.com).