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Activities implemented in the field of statistics

Technical cooperation activities

Summary

The present document sets out the technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the field of statistics from January 2021 to September 2022, including advisory services, workshops and capacity-building activities, as well as advocacy activities to inform member States of technical cooperation opportunities and of the various types of services provided by ESCWA.

The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of the present document, and provide proposals on strengthening technical cooperation services in line with the needs and priorities of member States.

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Introduction

1. The present document provides a summary of the technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) between January 2021 and September 2022, since the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee, which was held online on 10 and 11 February 2021. The document also addresses challenges and ways to improve technical cooperation programmes and services.
2. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and closures in member States, ESCWA conducted several technical assistance missions and held webinars online. ESCWA then returned to in-person activities when this became possible, during the period January 2021–September 2022. Technical cooperation with member States is an essential tool for implementing the ESCWA programme of work, as it allows activities to be tailored according to countries' requests so as to meet their specific needs. Technical cooperation is also a key tool for supporting countries' efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); prepare their voluntary reviews; and increase their capacity to utilize modern technologies for data collection, processing, quality control and dissemination.
3. The technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA fall into the following three categories: advisory services to support countries on issues related to formulating, developing and implementing public policies; workshops, training sessions, study tours and fellowships to build capacity; and pilot field projects in ESCWA areas of specialization that are then developed into larger projects with extrabudgetary financing from donors. Within the framework of technical cooperation, ESCWA follows a multidisciplinary approach that focuses on implementation results, meaning that services are provided in an integrated manner based on ESCWA diverse experiences. ESCWA also ensures integrated planning in the technical support it provides to member States, so as to improve efficiency, increase impact, and enhance transparency and accountability.
4. Technical cooperation activities are financed from the following three main sources: the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), the United Nations Development Account, and extrabudgetary resources. ESCWA aims to achieve integration between these three sources and its normative research work funded by the regular budget.
5. ESCWA considers technical cooperation activities in statistics among its priorities, in addition to data collection, production and dissemination; ensuring coordination; and forging regional partnerships. The technical support provided by ESCWA in the field of statistics aims to support national and regional statistical systems in producing and disseminating quality statistics to develop evidence-based policies and monitor progress towards inclusive and sustainable development. Most technical cooperation activities are carried out in coordination with the regional offices of specialized United Nations organizations, other international organizations, and regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC).
6. In line with a recommendation by United Nations Member States on increasing advocacy for technical cooperation activities, and informing countries and regional organizations of the services provided by ESCWA in the statistical field, ESCWA participated in several conferences and made presentations on technical cooperation opportunities and services during the period under review. Such advocacy activities included a contribution to a webinar on the experiences of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries in producing disaster-related statistics, held by OIC and SESRIC on 16 June 2022; and a contribution to a workshop on the theme "The changing role of official statistics in Qatar: why data culture matters", held by the Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar with ESCWA support on 21 and 22 September 2022. Other contributions to regional and international conferences are set out in document E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/3(Part I), submitted to the current session of the Statistical Committee.

I. Advisory services

7. During the period under review, ESCWA supported member States in developing their institutional statistical setups, in producing social, demographic and economic statistics, and in monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. Technical cooperation activities also focused on achieving the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session on building the capacity of member States to conduct their population and housing censuses, to develop their administrative records for statistical use in the production of civil registration and vital statistics, to adopt the System of National Accounts (SNA) as a general and comprehensive framework, and to develop a national reporting platform on SDG indicators.

8. ESCWA organized many online meetings, workshops and advisory missions to that end, set out in table 1. In particular, it implemented 133 national bilateral technical webinars with 16 countries to increase the dissemination of national SDG data. In addition, regarding the update of the 2008 SNA, ESCWA work within the Joint Task Team on Islamic Finance resulted in a guidance note on Islamic finance in national accounts, which will be piloted in two Arab countries, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and included in the manual on the Global System of National Accounts 2024.

**Table 1. Advisory services in the field of statistics,
January 2021–September 2022**

Recipient	Activity
Algeria	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Seven virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (13 January 2021–30 May 2022).
	Technical guidance for the disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries (May 2022).
	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced level II (virtual meeting and email exchanges, June 2022).
Bahrain	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Eleven virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (18 January 2021–9 March 2022).
	Technical guidance for the disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries (May 2022).
Egypt	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Seven virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (24 January 2021–19 April 2022).
	Technical assistance to implement the standalone survey on persons with disabilities, with regard to sampling methods and implementing the Washington Group questions (October 2021).
	Technical guidance for the gender statistics team to complete the national gender statistics pocketbook. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (November 2021 and January 2022).
	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced level II (virtual meeting and email exchanges, June 2022).
Iraq	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Twelve virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (5 January 2021–13 April 2022).

Recipient	Activity
	Technical guidance to complete the national pocketbook on gender statistics. Three meetings were held with the gender statistics team of the national statistical office (November 2021, and January and March 2022).
	Technical guidance for the disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries (June 2022).
Jordan	Advisory services for the implementation of SNA 2008 and improvement of the scope, reliability, coverage and sustainability of national accounts (May 2021, after which a four-year plan was developed, to be implemented through an agreement between ESCWA and Jordan).
	Provision of feedback on national data for the country's voluntary national review (19 April 2022).
	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Three virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (5 August 2021–7 October 2021).
Kuwait	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Nine virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (21 January 2021–28 April 2022).
Lebanon	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (26 January 2021–6 August 2021).
Libya	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (4 August 2021–4 November 2021).
	Technical guidance for the gender statistics team to complete the national gender statistics pocketbook. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (November 2021 and January 2022).
Morocco	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced level I (virtual meeting and email exchanges, November 2021).
Oman	Technical assistance on calculating SDG indicator 12.2.2 on domestic material consumption (virtual meeting, 2 February 2021).
	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Five virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (4 November 2021–17 May 2022).
State of Palestine	Technical advice on the design and methodology to conduct a survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises (January–April 2021).
	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Three virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (16 February 2022–15 June 2022).
	Technical guidance for the national disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (November and December 2021).
	Technical guidance for the gender statistics team to complete the national gender statistics pocketbook. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (November 2021 and January 2022).

Recipient	Activity
	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced level I (virtual meeting and email exchanges, November 2021).
Qatar	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Four virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (11 August 2021–29 November 2021), and a mission was conducted to develop a national SDG framework (December 2021).
	Technical guidance for the national disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries. Three virtual meetings were held on the subject (April, May and June 2022).
	Technical guidance for the gender statistics team to complete the national gender statistics pocketbook and answer related queries. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (November 2021 and January 2022).
Saudi Arabia	Advisory services to support the establishment of a regional urban data centre for the Mecca region, including technical advice on reviewing the project documents and ensuring that implementation is in line with international specifications and standards (April 2021–January 2022).
	Technical assistance in preparing the 2020 population and housing census in Saudi Arabia (virtual meetings, 10–12 August 2021).
	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Five virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (4 August 2021–19 July 2022).
	Technical guidance for the national disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries. Three virtual meetings were held on the subject (March, May and November 2021).
	Technical guidance for the gender statistics team to complete the national gender statistics pocketbook and answer related queries. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (November 2021 and January 2022).
	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced levels I and II (virtual meetings on 7 October 2021 and 25–26 May 2022, and email exchanges).
Somalia	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Ten virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (1 February 2021–21 June 2022).
	Technical guidance for the national disability statistics team to complete the ESCWA disability statistics questionnaire and answer related queries. Two virtual meetings were held on the subject (December 2021 and June 2022).
Sudan	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Eight virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (20 January 2021–16 May 2022).
	Technical guidance for the gender statistics team to complete the national gender statistics pocketbook and answer related queries (virtual meeting, November 2021).
Tunisia	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced level II (virtual meeting and email exchanges, May 2022).

Recipient	Activity
United Arab Emirates	Advisory services on using self-enumeration via the Internet for Ajman's population census, ensuring quality, making population projections, and considering regular updates of the Population and Housing Census (March 2022).
	Providing technical advice on the use of big data in economic statistics to the Department of Economy and Tourism of Dubai (February 2022).
	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Four virtual meetings were held with the SDG country team (14 June 2021–9 May 2022).
	Technical guidance to complete requirements for participating in the third SDMX workshop – advanced level I (virtual meeting and email exchanges – November 2021).
Yemen	Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Four virtual meetings were held with SDG country team (23 August 2021–14 April 2022).
	Advisory services on developing a gender statistics framework and establishing a gender statistics database, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (March 2021–January 2022).
Regional	Contributing to the guidance note on Islamic finance statistics in national accounts, to be included in 2025 SNA, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Monetary Fund, and other international and regional organizations (2021).
Subregional	Preparing government social expenditure data for Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Sudan and Tunisia for use in the ESCWA Social Expenditure Monitor (2021–2022).

II. Workshops

9. Table 2 sets out the workshops held as part of technical cooperation services to build capacity in the field of statistics from January 2021 to September 2022.

Table 2. Workshops

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
Egypt	Series of trainings on the Statistical Leadership Programme with the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom, targeting middle management at the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.	Cairo	13–17 March 2022
	National training sessions on the use of big data tools and web scraping for automatic extraction of price data as an innovative data collection initiative for the Consumer Price Index and the ICP.	Online	28–29 June 2021
Iraq	Capacity-building for a number of census managers of the Central Bureau of Statistics on the latest developments in principles and recommendations of the United Nations on the General Population and Housing Census, Rev.3. ESCWA organized six webinars on methodologies and methods used for population censuses, including combined	Online	January–June 2021

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
	and register-based methodologies; on the use of modern technology, including geospatial information systems; and on preparing an assessment report of the geospatial infrastructure in Iraq for census uses.		
	National meeting on disability statistics. The workshop was organized for experts from the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) to assist them in planning for the population and housing census and including the Washington Group questions on persons with disability.	Online	24 February 2021
Jordan	Series of trainings on the Statistical Leadership Programme with the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom, targeting senior managers, middle managers and women in leadership at the Jordanian Department of Statistics.	Amman	17–24 October 2021
	National workshop on the use of big data and non-traditional data sources for complementing traditional price data collection, and highlighting the use of data web scraping and potential use of scanner data.	Online	26 January 2021
	National training session on the use of big data tools and web scraping for automatic extraction of price data as an innovative data collection initiative for the Consumer Price Index and the ICP.	Online	14 and 17 June 2021
	Second national training workshop to improve use of gender statistics. The workshop was organized in close collaboration with ESCWA and UN-Women to improve the production and dissemination of gender statistics, and promote the importance of disaggregated data.	Amman	27–29 June 2021
	Third national training workshop to improve use of gender statistics.	Amman	6–8 July 2021
Lebanon	National International Comparison Programme (ICP) workshop for the introduction of ICP surveys and revision of 2020 household consumption (HHC) price data.	Beirut	19 January 2021
Mauritania – Syrian Arab Republic	Technical training on price data collection and validation of the production of purchasing power parities (PPPs).	Online	7–8 June 2021
Sudan	Capacity-building for population and housing censuses and agricultural censuses on census planning, methodology and geospatial information uses. ESCWA organized five webinars on census planning, methodologies and methods used for population censuses, including combined and register-based methodologies; the use of modern technology, including geospatial information	Online	March–August 2021

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
	systems, preparing an assessment report of the geospatial infrastructure in the Sudan for census uses.		
United Arab Emirates	National training workshop on the implementation of price surveys for the production of national and subnational PPPs.	Dubai	23–27 May 2022
Yemen	Capacity-building in using STATA in governorates. ESCWA organized a two-day training on STATA for Yemen. The main topics covered were: manipulating data; descriptive analysis; bivariate analysis; and inferential statistical analysis.	Online	16–17 February 2021
GCC countries	Statistical treatment of Islamic finance in national accounts and external sector statistics. ESCWA organized this workshop in preparation for the piloting of selected GCC countries to test the recommendations included in the guidance note on Islamic finance. Qatar and Saudi Arabia volunteered to perform the testing.	Online	14–16 March 2022
Subregional	Workshop for the production of the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP).	Online	13 July 2021
Regional	Transfer of experiences in population and housing censuses from Oman and Qatar. ESCWA organized a series of detailed webinars to share the experiences of Oman and Qatar, which had conducted their population and housing censuses using either the registry approach or the combined methodology approach.	Online	February–April 2022
	ICP meeting on launching the 2021 ICP cycle in the Arab region.	Online	3 February 2021
	Training workshop on compiling price expenditure weights and disaggregating expenditure data to detailed levels, with guidance on the estimation process during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Online	21–22 June 2021
	Meeting to present new updates and developments in PPP production in the Arab region.	Online	16 May 2022
	Training on the implementation of household and non-household consumption price surveys and data entry on a special module for the calculation of price relatives.	Beirut	13–16 June 2022
	Series of 47 SDG webinars for the Arab region, in collaboration with 14 United Nations agencies, entitled “Interagency and experts collaboration to improve the production and dissemination of 115 SDG indicators from official national sources”. These webinars aimed to enhance understanding of statistical methodology and metadata, improve statistical capacities, strengthen interinstitutional coordination to invigorate the production of comparable SDG indicators and data flows, and	Online	April 2021–July 2022

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
	share and discuss country challenges in measuring SDG indicators.		
	Meeting on Arabic scientific standards. The meeting aimed to standardize the translation of Arabic words and provide an overview of progress made in Arabic glossaries and SDG metadata; to discuss the challenges and opportunities in applying standards at the national level; and to make recommendations for adopting and using standards to better plan and implement the second phase of the project.	Online	8 February 2021
	Third workshop on data and metadata exchange for SDG monitoring and reporting – advanced level I. The workshop familiarized participants with new techniques of mapping and converting SDG data as per international standards, using conversion tools including web-based ones.	Online	July 2021
	Fourth workshop on data and metadata exchange for SDG monitoring and reporting – advanced level I. The workshop familiarized participants with advanced techniques of mapping and converting SDG data, and the process of customizing a national dataset structure definition (DSD). Participants were briefed on the SDMX-RI (reference infrastructure) tool, the DSD constructor tool, and the matrix generator tool.	Hybrid Beirut and online	27 June–1 July 2022
	Workshop on improving disability statistics in Arab countries.	Beirut	27–28 July 2022

III. Challenges and the way forward

10. The Arab region is facing economic, social and environmental crises that were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which also created new challenges in the provision of data and statistics. It is therefore necessary to review the priorities of statistical work, while maintaining the role of national statistical offices as data stewards in the national context. Most national statistical offices in the Arab region have started using innovative methods for compiling and disseminating quality data, including the development of online platforms and databases. This has created an increased need for statistical capacity development, and for online statistical tools and platforms to facilitate statistical work at the national, regional and international levels.

11. ESCWA further strengthened cooperation with regional statistical agencies, such as AITRS, GCC-Stat and SESRIC, and with the League of Arab States and the Arab Monetary Fund. In the period under review, ESCWA co-organized several activities with those entities and followed up with member States on monitoring progress towards the SDGs, and on implementing innovative statistical systems in new areas of statistics. ESCWA has also invited those entities to participate in the sessions of the Statistical Committee, which could establish a platform for dialogue on regional priorities in the field of statistics, and thus increase coordination of technical cooperation activities.

12. The Statistical Committee is invited to provide proposals on the way forward in technical cooperation activities, in line with their demand-driven nature.
