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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

Activities implemented in the field of statistics**Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme plan
and of recommendations made by the Statistical Committee
at its fourteenth session to the ESCWA secretariat****Summary**

The present document sets out the statistical activities undertaken by the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) under subprogramme 4 on statistics, the information society and technology, since the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee (online, 10-11 February 2021). Those activities include issuing publications, reports and technical material in the field of statistical system management, economic statistics and national accounts, environment statistics and accounts, demographic and social statistics, gender statistics, Sustainable Development Goals data, and geospatial information. Activities also include convening meetings and conducting capacity development workshops in these areas. The document also briefly presents implementation measures taken pursuant to the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session.

The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of progress in those areas and comment thereon.

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Introduction

1. The present document sets out the statistical activities undertaken by the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) under subprogramme 4 on statistics, the information society and technology, since the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee, which was held online on 10 and 11 February 2021. Those activities include convening meetings, conducting capacity development workshops and issuing publications, reports and technical material in the fields of statistical system management, economic statistics and national accounts, demographic and social statistics, and gender statistics. The document also briefly presents implementation measures taken pursuant to the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session.

I. Management and modernization of the statistical system

2. The ESCWA secretariat focuses on strengthening institutional structures and updating statistical legislation in member States. It also continues to play a leading role in the Arab region to support the geospatial mandates of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), and works closely with UN-GGIM Arab States in assessing the capacity-building needs of Arab States in that area.

3. As part of its electronic platforms and tools, ESCWA continues to develop its own online statistical information system serving as an institutional data repository for the region, and its statistical tools for conducting analysis, linking data chains, resolving data gaps, and increasing timeliness through estimations and nowcasting. The [ESCWA data portal](#) currently comprises 52 data cubes with a total of over 1,000,000 data points grouped into over 100,000 time series, enabling the creation of dashboards from spreadsheets, charts and text elements updated in real time.

Publications, reports and technical material

1. The role of big data and geospatial information

4. Integration of geospatial information with statistical information in support of the SDG indicators ([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/TP.1](#)): the study provides operational guidelines on the integration of statistical-geospatial information infrastructure in support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators.

5. Use of big data in compilation of SDG indicators in the Arab region: challenges and opportunities ([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/TP.2](#)): the report tackles the benefits of non-conventional sources of information and data for official statistics, including through filling existing data gaps and providing valuable insights on monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. [Guidance note on strengthening geospatial information support to the census in the Arab region, 2020](#): the guidance note, developed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and ESCWA in 2020, strengthens the capacity of member States in using geospatial information for the 2020 round of censuses and the integration of geospatial information in census, both in development and humanitarian settings.

2. Enhancing institutional environment: management and coordination

7. [Guide on the generic law for official statistics in the Arab countries](#): the Guide was discussed in a special meeting held in July 2021 and feedback from member States was incorporated in the published version.

8. Translation of the [fourth edition of the United Nations Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems](#): ESCWA, in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and AITRS, translated the fourth edition of the Handbook, which guides chief statisticians, senior

managers and staff members of statistical organizations to develop and maintain national statistical capacity that is fit for purpose.

9. **Arab Register of Censuses and Surveys:** ESCWA has been maintaining the Arab Register of Censuses and Surveys dashboard that consolidates information and provides insight into various types of surveys and censuses implemented in the Arab region and their periodicity.

II. Economic statistics, national accounts, and environment statistics and accounts

10. ESCWA has continued to inform member States about planned updates to the economic statistics system, in line with the priority development areas that they had identified. Work was also undertaken to propose broader measures of progress under the 2030 Agenda with a view to meeting the growing demand for enhanced responsiveness and inclusiveness of the economic statistics system. ESCWA focused on supply and use tables, the informal economy, measuring external digital trade, addressing disparities and disseminating data using modern methods in line with digitization and globalization, statistics on climate change and disasters, and environmental accounts under the SDGs. ESCWA sought to provide guidance in Arabic and to use new data sources.

A. Publications, reports, technical material, databases and platforms

1. External Trade Data Platform for the Arab Region

11. In December 2021, ESCWA launched the External Trade Data Platform for the Arab Region, an interactive platform on external trade data and analysis in English and Arabic. The platform provides complete time series of external trade data from 2012 where commodity trade data, classified using the Harmonized System (HS 2012) detailed at the HS 6-digit level, can be visualized in an aggregated or detailed manner, by reporter, partner, economic groupings, trade flows, year, HS levels, and major commodity groups.

2. Study on measuring international digital trade in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2022/TP.1)

12. Issued in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the study provides an overview of the main statistical framework for measuring digital trade, i.e. “[The Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade](#)”. The study summarizes the data sources available to measure digitally ordered and delivered trade, the currently available data and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab countries. The final part of the study provides information, based on a questionnaire developed by ESCWA, on the production and dissemination of digital trade statistics in the Arab countries to enhance understanding of the major challenges, projects and priorities.

3. Regional guideline on statistics on the volume of road traffic (vehicle-km) with presentations of some national experiences in the ESCWA region (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/MANUAL.4)

13. The regional guideline on statistics on the volume of road traffic (vehicle-km) aims to be a practical tool and reference that helps countries in the Arab region develop statistics on the volume of road traffic by providing information on methodologies and best practices adopted internationally to collect road traffic data and develop indicators. It also presents national experiences and concludes with recommendations and actions for improving this area of statistics for the Arab countries.

4. *Methodology guide for applying supply and use tables in selected Arab countries*

14. Supply and use tables methodological guide – Application in selected Arab countries – Part 1. Morocco ([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/GUIDE/MOROCCO](#)) and Supply and use tables – Application in selected Arab countries – Part 2. State of Palestine ([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/GUIDE/PALESTINE](#)): two studies on country practices for preparing supply and use tables (SUTs) were prepared by ESCWA in 2021 and 2022 for Morocco and the State of Palestine, as both countries prepare regular SUTs and have different economic structures and software applications. The aim was to share their experiences with other Arab countries and encourage them to prepare SUTs.

5. *Price statistics: price indices and purchasing power parities*

15. **Quarterly inflation tool**: in April and June 2022, ESCWA published its recurring quarterly inflation tool, providing insights on quarterly price inflation in the region. ESCWA has also developed training material for the provision of training courses to build the capacity of member States in the field of price statistics, especially the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and its integration with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). ESCWA has also been computing a Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI), which was successfully implemented in six pilot Arab countries and is now being expanded in the remaining ones.

16. ESCWA released a new series of regional purchasing power parities (PPPs) extending until 2021, covering the COVID-19 pandemic period and providing post-pandemic PPP estimates forecasted for the year 2021. The release, entitled “[Release of new purchasing power parities for the Arab region: Real sizes of Arab economies](#)”, presents PPP results for Arab countries for the period 2018-2021.

17. **Database and online PPP converter for the Arab region**: ESCWA has developed a comprehensive database on annual PPP results and related economic indicators for a complete time series extending from 2011 to 2021 and disseminated on [ESCWA data portal](#), in addition to an online PPP converter, which can be used to convert currencies based on PPPs instead of exchange rates.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. *Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics (TAGES) meeting*

18. ESCWA held its fourth Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics (TAGES) meeting online, from 6 to 7 July 2021 to review the outcomes of the Inception Webinar for the Arab Region Towards the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA), follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the previous meeting, and explore problems encountered in compiling economic statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting report is presented to the Statistical Committee under agenda item 4 (e).

2. *Inception webinar for the Arab region towards the 2025 SNA*

19. As the 2008 SNA is being updated to ensure its continued relevance to economic analysis and policymaking, ESCWA and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) organized an inception webinar for the Arab region to serve as a consultative forum for statisticians from national statistical offices in the region and from regional and international agencies. The webinar tackled progress on SNA update and work achieved by the Task Team on Islamic Finance (IFTT). In this context, ESCWA also organized a [Webinar on the Statistical Treatment of Islamic Finance in the National and International Accounts: Supporting the Global Consultation for the 2008 SNA and BPM6 update](#), on 16 December 2021. The webinar presented and discussed the recent guidance note prepared for this purpose.

3. *Series of meetings on price statistics*

20. As part of its work on price statistics, ESCWA held the following meetings and trainings:

(a) Training Workshop on Price Statistics for the Production of Purchasing Power Parities and the Integration between CPI and PPPs in the Arab Region, on 7-8 June 2021;

(b) Regional Training Workshop on the Compilation of Price Expenditure Weights and Guidelines for the Compilation of National Accounts Expenditure Data during the Pandemic Period, on 21-22 June 2021;

(c) Subregional workshop for the computation of the Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI), on 13 July 2021;

(d) National meeting with Jordan's national statistical office on the use of web scraping in price data collection, on 26 January 2021;

(e) 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 CPI and ICP in Jordan, on 14 and 17 June 2021;

(f) 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 CPI and ICP in Egypt, on 28-29 June 2021.

4. *Second expert forum for producers and users of disaster-related statistics* (Beirut and online, 6-8 September 2022)

21. The forum, co-organized by the United Nations regional commissions, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and UNSD, was attended by more than 400 participants from 115 countries. It provided a platform for producers and users of data to exchange knowledge, learn lessons from the last two years regarding pandemics, climate change, conflict and localization of disasters, and provide recommendations on research areas for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics.

III. Demographic and social statistics

22. Since February 2021, the ESCWA secretariat's activities in the area of demographic and social statistics have focused on developing the statistical capacity of member States to bridge the data gap for demographic and social indicators, including relevant SDG indicators, through traditional and non-traditional data sources. The ESCWA secretariat continued supporting the development of statistical capacity for population and housing censuses and related statistical surveys. The secretariat, in collaboration with relevant international and regional organizations, proposed and discussed a regional strategy on civil registration and vital statistics for Arab countries to assess the current status of civil registration and vital statistics, and develop an action plan in that regard.

A. Publications, reports and technical material

1. *Assessment of GIS for the population and housing census in Iraq* (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2022/TP.3)

23. The report identifies the scope and gaps of the existing geospatial infrastructure in Iraq, provides operational guidelines on how to use the geospatial information technologies at every stage of a census, and identifies the resources and capacities for the geographic information system (GIS) implementation and monitoring.

2. *Assessment of GIS for the population and housing census
and agriculture census in Sudan*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2022/TP.2)

24. The report identifies the scope and gaps of the existing geospatial infrastructure in Sudan, provides operational guidelines on how to use the geospatial information technologies at every stage of a census, and identifies the resources and capacities for the geographic information system (GIS) implementation and monitoring.

3. *A strategic framework for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems
in the Arab region for the period 2021-2025*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/TP.9)

25. The paper includes an overview of the status of civil records in the Arab region, and their effectiveness in producing vital statistics. It tackles ways of developing civil registers, the role of technology in linking records electronically, the right to obtain legal identity, the role of Governments in the production and exchange of data, and the importance of international and regional support.

4. *Arab Society: Demographic and Social Trends, Issue No. 15*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2020/1)

26. Focusing on population dynamics, household composition, family formation, housing conditions, health, education, labour, poverty, inequality, culture and social participation, the report presents a broad illustration of Arab society and the ways in which it has been changing. Data have been drawn primarily from the national statistical offices of ESCWA member States supplemented by publicly accessible data from international agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

5. *Dissemination and use of data from population and housing census:
emerging methods and lessons learned*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/TP.3)

27. The report examines the most important experiences adopted by developed countries with regard to the dissemination of population and housing censuses, to be used and adopted as lessons learned, and to help identify products that can be provided to users in the 2020 census. The report stresses the need for countries to develop strategies for the dissemination of census products before the completion of data collection, and the importance of consulting with users to provide products that meet their expectations.

6. *Communicating population and housing census data:
developing a user-centric communication strategy*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/TP.5)

28. The technical paper focuses on the importance of population and housing census data and outputs, and the importance of communicating them with data users and officials involved in national development planning and monitoring. It emphasizes the need to consider “communication” as an integral part of the statistical production process and to proactively reach out to professional users, researchers and the general public, while stressing that the use and analysis of data is part of the official statistics role.

*7. Self-enumeration/response in population and housing census using the Internet
with reference to Arab countries: opportunities,
challenges and good practices
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/TP.4)*

29. The technical paper focuses on the development of smart applications for collecting census data with devices that use the Internet, such as laptops, tablets and smart phones. It also tackles the communication and contact strategy and its importance in the success of censuses, as well as the need to provide electronic means of data protection through encryption before sending data to the central database. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations, the most important of which is that the use of this method should be part of the census implementation methodology based on multiple sources of data, such as the use of administrative records, personal interviews and self-response using magnetic paper forms.

*8. Measuring Sustainable Development Goals indicators through population
and housing censuses and civil registration and vital statistics data
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2020/TP.10)*

30. The report, prepared by UNSD in collaboration with regional commissions, was translated into Arabic by ESCWA in view of its relevance and importance to the region. It focuses on SDG indicators that can be captured in whole or in part using two existing data collection instruments: the population and housing census (PHC) and the civil registration and vital statistics system (CRVS). It also discusses the possibilities for disaggregation of indicators by the various population groups, urban/rural areas of residence, and by age, sex, education strata, migration and disability status, and stresses the value of these sources in monitoring the SDGs at subnational level. The report also points out some limitations of the use of PHC and CRVS data for estimating SDG indicators.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. Study tour on register-based census in Oman

31. ESCWA, in collaboration with UNFPA, organized a study tour to Oman during the period 17-21 July 2022 to enable the transfer of the Omani experience in the linkage of census data and civil registry. Oman hosted a team from Egypt, Jordan and the State of Palestine consisting of statisticians, demographers and specialists in technology, programming and the electronic linking of records from government departments. The team discussed challenges and solutions regarding the use of administrative records for statistical purposes, including administrative and legal frameworks, coordination procedures, electronic linkages, national identity numbers, the availability of previous census data, methodologies and ways to adapt administrative data to statistical data according to international statistical classifications, with the aim of creating high quality integrated statistical data.

2. Assessing the quality of civil registration data and their uses

32. During the period 28-30 June 2022, ESCWA, in cooperation with UNFPA and AITRS, organized a training workshop in Jordan on demographic methods for assessing the quality and completeness of civil registration data and their uses.

3. Multiple population and housing census method: Qatar

33. In cooperation with the Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar, ESCWA organized a series of virtual sessions during the period 23 February to 20 April 2022 to present and discuss Qatar's experiences in shifting from conducting the census using traditional methods to a census based on both administrative registers and multi-census method, addressing challenges and solutions.

4. *Fourth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries*

34. ESCWA held the fourth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries online from 6 to 9 December 2021. The meeting covered an evaluation of achievements and analysis of progress in bridging the data gap in the demographic and social fields. It also focused on proposing solutions to data collection obstacles facing national statistical offices in the region, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. *Webinars on population and housing censuses*

35. During the period 17 November 2021 to 31 March 2022, ESCWA, in cooperation with the National Center for Statistics and Information of Oman, organized a series of online webinars to review and discuss Oman's experiences in conducting population and housing censuses based on administrative records. The sessions aimed to review all stages of the census process, discussing challenges and solutions.

6. *Regional workshop on the 2020 round of population and housing census: monitoring progress and the way forward*

36. To review progress and promote the undertaking of planned or hindered censuses, ESCWA, UNFPA, the Gulf Cooperation Council Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat) and AITRS organized a "Regional Workshop on the 2020 round of Population and Housing Census: Monitoring progress and the way forward", during the period 28-30 September 2021. The workshop reviewed the population and housing censuses that have been implemented and progress made in countries planning their upcoming censuses. Discussions focused on the exchange of experiences and good practices in undertaking the 2020 census round, as well as obstacles in undertaking censuses in some countries with proposed scenarios for their implementation, and ways of providing technical support and mobilizing financial resources.

7. *Series of webinars on population and housing censuses in Iraq*

37. In cooperation with the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) in Iraq, ESCWA held a series of seven webinars on population and housing censuses in the country from 21 December 2020 to 12 August 2021. The first four webinars consisted of trainings for a high-level team on definitions and concepts related to census topics, specifically housing, methods of enumeration, migration and disabilities, based on the "Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses" (third revision) issued by the United Nations. The last three webinars addressed the use of electronic applications and geospatial information systems in all stages of the 2022 population and housing census in Iraq.

8. *Regional workshop on poverty measurement and monitoring in the era of big data*

38. ESCWA organized a regional workshop on poverty measurement and monitoring in the era of big data on 22 and 23 December 2020. The workshop explored recent developments in statistical methodologies and new data sources for measuring and monitoring poverty at various levels and dimensions. It aimed to provide guidance to national statistical offices on new knowledge and methodologies to measure and monitor the SDGs, and identify opportunities, challenges and limitations of using big data for official poverty measurement in low- and middle-income countries. The workshop also explored the potential of high frequency surveys to monitor poverty over time and across small areas, targeting vulnerable groups such as refugee populations, and identified future research needs in statistical methodologies and the use of new data sources for living conditions and poverty indicators.

9. *Series of webinars on censuses in the Sudan*

39. ESCWA, in cooperation with the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Sudan, organized a series of webinars from 4 February to 2 August 2021 to provide support during all stages of the population and housing and agriculture censuses in the Sudan in line with international recommendations. The webinars provided a platform for the transfer of good practices and experiences of countries from the region and the use of technology including geospatial information in planning for the 2022 censuses in the Sudan.

10. *Regional workshop on the experience of undertaking a population and housing census based on administrative records in the Sultanate of Oman*

40. ESCWA, in cooperation with the National Centre for Statistics and Information of Oman, organized a regional virtual workshop on 11 March 2021 to share the country's experience in undertaking a population and housing census based on administrative records, as it was the first comprehensive experience of an integrated census fully based on administrative records data.

11. *Consultative meetings on developing a strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics systems in Arab countries*

41. ESCWA held online consultative meetings on developing a strategy for civil registration and vital statistics for Arab countries on 14 June and 7 July 2021. The meetings aimed to discuss the status of civil registration and vital statistics in the Arab region, and to develop an assessment strategy and a future action plan. Arab experts approved a strategic framework for advancing civil registration and vital statistics for the period 2021-2025.

12. *Webinars on population and housing census in Saudi Arabia*

42. ESCWA, in cooperation with the General Authority for Statistics in Saudi Arabia, organized a series of webinars from 10 to 18 August 2021 to provide technical advice during the planning phase of the census by reviewing progress, future steps, methodologies, concepts and methods of enumeration of population and housing in line with international recommendations and national needs. Discussions focused on the concepts of *de jure* and *de facto*, time reference, usual place of residence, education data in the household form, self-enumeration method and the role of technology for census quality control, analysis, dissemination and promotion of censuses.

IV. Leave no one behind: gender and disability statistics

43. Over the period 2021-2022, the ESCWA secretariat has provided guidance to countries on producing comparable statistics in the fields of violence against women and time-use statistics, therefore enhancing the capacities of gender experts through the implementation of its Gender Statistics Toolkit. ESCWA has also shared a large dataset on its "Leave no One Behind" platform on the [ESCWA Data Portal](#) and has initiated work on youth statistics.

A. Publications, reports, technical material, databases and platforms

1. *International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics 2016 (ICATUS)*

44. In 2021, ESCWA completed the revision of the Arabic version of the [International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics \(ICATUS 2016\)](#), a tool for statisticians to compile data on all the activities on which a person may spend time during the 24 hours in a day. ICATUS provides a framework with standardized concepts and definitions for the systematic dissemination of internationally comparable time-use statistics, regardless of the type of instruments used for data collection.

2. *New e-learning platform for gender statistics*

45. In 2021 and 2022, ESCWA has re-established its e-learning programme on gender statistics, which was launched in 2018, on a new platform of the [ESCWA e-learning portal](#) to increase knowledge and build the capacity of all stakeholders to produce high-quality gender statistics. More than 15,000 trainees have used the platform since its launch.

3. *Children and youth-SDG framework indicators*

46. In 2021 and 2022, and in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ESCWA has developed the children and youth-SDG framework of 50 children-related indicators in the SDGs. The framework covers 13 goals and 35 targets of the SDGs that are directly related to children in the scope of survival, development, protection and participation. The framework will be complemented with information on data availability and sources to guide countries in producing more timely and comparable data on children and youth.

4. *Gender statistics database and dashboard*

47. In 2021 and 2022, ESCWA has updated the Arab Gender Database from national and international sources of comparable gender-related and sex-disaggregated indicators. The database provides a comprehensive knowledge centre for gender statistics and information on various aspects of inequality between women and men. It includes 137 indicators under 10 thematic areas (population, marriage and families, health, maternal health, child health, education, employment, public life and decision-making, human rights of women and girls, and environment) for time series since 2000. The dashboard provides data visualization of 18 selected gender statistics indicators under main thematic areas such as population, marriage and families, education, employment, public life and decision-making, and human rights of women and girls.

5. *The disability database and dashboard*

48. In 2021 and 2022, ESCWA has also updated its disability database and dashboard to build a comprehensive view of statistics relating to persons with disabilities by highlighting inequalities between them and persons without disabilities. ESCWA aims to improve the compilation of comparable disability statistics and has played a distinctive role in improving the disability statistics in the region by publishing guidelines and organizing workshops to strengthen national data collection tools. The current database of 48 indicators hosted on the [ESCWA Data Portal](#) is expected to increase and cover additional indicators and areas including population and living conditions, education and literacy, employment and unemployment, access to the Internet and mobile phone, benefits and services.

6. *Ensaf newsletter*

49. Since 2021, ESCWA has published [issues 18 to 21 of the Ensaf newsletter](#), providing gender experts with information on national and regional activities to improve the production and dissemination of gender statistics, and to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. *Regional training on improving the dissemination of gender statistics*

50. ESCWA held the training virtually on 25 November 2021 to train participants on preparing national Gender Lens Pocketbooks on women and men and their living conditions, with data on selected gender-related indicators at the subnational level. Trainees were provided with an automated Excel sheet to produce the pocketbooks, which increased data comparability and coverage of the subnational level. They represented national statistical offices from eight countries, namely Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan.

2. *National workshops on gender statistics implementing the ESCWA Gender Statistics Curriculum*

51. Since February 2021, ESCWA, the Department of Statistics of Jordan and UN-Women have organized three national workshops (the second to fourth of a series) on gender statistics to raise awareness of the importance of such statistics as a planning tool to achieve change among stakeholders and researchers in the field of women and gender, and to support policymaking and monitoring. The [second workshop](#) was held from 27 to 29 June 2021, the [third workshop](#) from 6 to 8 July 2021, and the [fourth workshop](#) from 15 to 17 March 2022.

3. *Regional workshop on improving disability statistics in the Arab countries*

52. In cooperation with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, ILO and UNICEF, ESCWA organized this regional workshop in Beirut on 27 and 28 July 2022. Disability experts discussed the second round of ESCWA data collection in the Arab region; the ILO module to collect data on persons with disabilities in the labour market; and the UNICEF disability questions for youth and children. The meeting also tackled methods for measuring violence against women with disabilities as part of the [Violence Against Women Survey Implementation Toolkit](#) of ESCWA, revised in 2021. It also initiated the first working group established in the region and at the global level to develop a regional household standalone survey for persons with disabilities.

4. *National workshops on improving disability statistics in the Arab countries*

53. On 24 February 2021, ESCWA held a virtual [national workshop](#) with a team of statistical experts from the Central Organization of Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) of Iraq on the collection of disability statistics from the population and housing census. Participants discussed the regional guidelines on collecting disability data, designing a disability question form in the census, and enhancing the organization's capabilities to implement the 2021 population census to produce comparable data at the regional and global levels. Moreover, on 4 October 2021, ESCWA held an advisory meeting with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) of Egypt to provide input and guidance for implementing a standalone survey for persons with disabilities with regard to sampling design and the Washington Group questions on functioning.

5. *Participation in regional and international meetings and publications on disability statistics*

54. ESCWA was invited to speak about disability statistics efforts and activities in the Arab region in the following meetings: [A seminar organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries \(SESRIC\) on elderly and persons with disabilities in OIC member countries](#) (Dubai, 2 December 2021); [2021 Virtual Meeting of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics \(WG\), Session IV: Brief Partner Presentations](#) (online, 8 November 2021); and the [United Nations World Data Forum 2021 – Innovative responses to data collection about and by persons with disabilities in the time of COVID-19](#) (online, 5 October 2021).

V. The Sustainable Development Goals

A. Publications, reports, technical material, databases, and platforms

1. *SDG Data Collection Tool*

55. The tool is a live and dynamic document developed for the first time at the global level and in collaboration with 35 custodian agencies. It provides countries with a practical and user-friendly searchable guide to producing comparable and standardized indicators through the implementation of harmonized

methods and instruments for 188 SDG indicators. It also aims to increase data flow between countries and custodian agencies by providing the agencies' enquiry tools and data collection periodicity for each indicator. The technical material also includes methodological guidance on the recommended sources for each indicator and related metadata. It is expected that this tool will have an impact on improving the quality and availability of SDG indicators in the future, for the Arab region and other regions as well.

2. *Annual SDG Review 2022*

56. The booklet provides an overview of the region's performance towards realizing each of the 17 SDGs and key messages on each goal. It also provides time series data for available indicators, allowing for comparison between the Arab subregions, the region average and the world average. Moreover, it contains information on the level of data availability for each goal to highlight the importance of evidence strength in planning and decision making. Data was obtained from the [Arab SDG Monitor](#) as of January 2022.

3. *SDG 17 on Data*

57. The SDG 17 on Data report was prepared for the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) 2022 in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF. The report stresses that timely and usable data are essential for countries to set priorities, make informed choices, and implement better policies for sustainable development. However, large gaps in data availability still exist in several areas, especially disaggregated data. Lack of comparable and disaggregated data on vulnerable and marginalized groups is a critical development issue in the Arab region that effectively limits the countries' ability to respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to prioritize action and resources, and to design responsive measures that leave no one behind. The report presents information on good practices and measures taken by Arab Governments to combat the effects of COVID-19 on statistical operations. It also provides policy recommendations on data for ensuring an inclusive recovery and achieving the SDGs by 2030.

4. *E-handbook on SDG Framework and Metadata*

58. ESCWA has continued its work on the E-handbook on SDG Framework and Metadata, a resourceful tool that includes standardized metadata on 248 SDG indicators available in both English and Arabic. Custodian agencies implemented several updates on a large number of SDG metadata, both in format and content, and most of the metadata has been reflected in the Arabic version by ESCWA.

5. *SDG database/dashboards*

59. ESCWA has continued to develop the [Arab SDG Monitor](#), which includes an assessment of data availability for the region and for each Arab country, by nature, goal, target and indicator, and provides a tracking of SDGs according to the 5Ps (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnership). The Monitor is also a regional hub for the SDG national reporting platforms of Arab countries, with national data officially disseminated by countries and revised in consultation with ESCWA to ensure adherence to SDG standards. Revisions have had a significant impact on data availability and quality, doubling the availability of indicators and tripling data points for SDG indicators. The national data availability increased and ranged between 33 per cent and 67 per cent after ESCWA implemented the SDG data revisions. Four countries have completed and disseminated their ESCWA-powered national reporting platform on their official websites, namely Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Qatar and Somalia.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. Series of webinars on Sustainable Development Goal indicators

60. ESCWA, in collaboration with 19 United Nations agencies, held 47 focused regional capacity-building webinars to address methodological issues, coordination of national statistical systems and data flow challenges, producing 26 technical outcome reports on these webinars. A total of 115 SDG indicators were covered that were either not well understood, under-produced, or under-disseminated in the Arab region. The reports were disseminated to over 1,500 experts who attended the webinars and are shared on the [Arab SDG Gateway](#).

2. AFSD special session on addressing coordination challenges and contemporary statistical data collection methods and resources to enhance data quality for inclusive recovery and SDG achievement in the Arab region

61. Based on recent experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected operations across statistical systems, ESCWA and UNFPA organized, on 17 March 2022, a side event to the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2022, on [addressing coordination challenges and contemporary statistical data collection methods and resources to enhance data quality for inclusive recovery and SDG achievement in the Arab region](#). The session, attended by over 250 participants, discussed the status of SDG indicators in the Arab countries, including data gaps, administrative data sources, and means of coordination for better data flow and data quality. Participants stressed the importance of implementing register-based housing and population censuses in the 2020 round and promoting the use of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in the computation of disaggregated SDG indicators.

3. Series of workshops on the use of statistical data and metadata exchange

62. ESCWA, in collaboration with UNSD, organized two regional training workshops on the use of statistical data and metadata exchange for SDG monitoring and reporting in 2021 and 2022. The aim was to improve countries' skills in mapping and converting SDG data as per international standards using conversion tools, including web-based ones. The third regional workshop on data and metadata exchange for SDG monitoring and reporting was held virtually from 15 to 17 November 2021, and was attended by 68 statisticians and information technology specialists, representing 17 national statistical offices. The fourth regional workshop on the same topic was held in Beirut from 27 June to 1 July 2022, and was attended by 31 statisticians and information technology specialists, representing 15 national statistical offices.

VI. Projects funded by the United Nations Development Account and from extrabudgetary resources

The International Comparison Programme

63. ESCWA, as the regional executive agency for the extrabudgetary-funded International Comparison Programme (ICP), has invested in the knowledge and experience gained from the ICP implementation to develop a number of innovative activities, which have made the Arab region a pioneer in the field, especially as ESCWA has transformed ICP from a separate programme of work into an integrated programme for price statistics. ESCWA calculates PPPs annually, thus surpassing global ICP cycles. Since 2021, it has held a number of regional meetings, training courses and national capacity-building activities, in addition to issuing publications, reports and technical material.

64. Moreover, ESCWA has received additional funding for the implementation of the ICP under the United Nations Development Account, through a project for which it was granted the lead in implementation out of all participating regional commissions, owing to its pioneering role and achievements in the field.

Meetings and capacity-building activities

65. Activities related to the ICP include:

- (a) National ICP meeting for Lebanon's national statistical office for the introduction of the ICP special surveys and revision of the 2020 household consumption price data, on 19 January 2021;
- (b) Regional ICP meeting for launching the 2021 ICP cycle in the Arab region, on 3 February 2021;
- (c) National technical training on the implementation of price surveys for the production of national and subnational purchasing power parities, in May 2022;
- (d) Regional 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, in June 2022.

VII. Follow-up on recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session

66. At its fourteenth session held on 10 and 11 February 2021, the Statistical Committee issued several recommendations to ESCWA member States and to the ESCWA secretariat.

67. Member States are invited to report on implementation measures taken pursuant to recommendations issued at the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee ([E/ESCWA/C.1/2021/7/Report](#)) and addressed to them under agenda item 4 of the present session.

68. The following table sets out the recommendations addressed to the ESCWA secretariat and their respective implementation measures, as presented in this report and in other documents submitted to the Committee under agenda item 4.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
(a)	Disseminate national experiences on establishing and developing mechanisms for collecting statistics in traditional and emerging fields; strengthen regional cooperation and the transfer of expertise and best practices between countries; and continue translating and providing Arabic versions of important statistical publications, manuals and glossaries issued by ESCWA;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA continues to share national information on latest surveys and censuses implemented by countries to collect statistics in traditional and emerging fields. • ESCWA has also been facilitating the transfer of expertise and best practices between countries and United Nations agencies especially on Tier II indicators through the organization of SDG webinars. • Ensaf newsletter, published by ESCWA twice a year, provides information and shares good national practices and activities on gender statistics in the region. • The series of webinars and study tours on censuses aim to promote exchange of experiences, and transfer of expertise and best practices between countries. • The e-learning material on SDGs and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), translated into Arabic, contributes to the sharing of expertise.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with countries, ESCWA has been updating the Glossaries of Statistical Terms, and has revised and posted online the Arabic translation of three important United Nations documents, namely the International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS 2016), The Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical System, fourth Edition and the United Nations Disability and Development Report, 2018. • The workshop on disability statistics has provided an opportunity for countries to share their good practices through country presentations in each session. • The fourth training workshop on statistical data and metadata exchange, including practical exercises, has provided countries with the opportunity to learn from each other on how to best produce mapping and avoid loopholes.
(b)	<p>Provide assistance in using mobile data, big data, geospatial information and other non-traditional sources of data as modern data collection mechanisms, especially in crisis conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic that has negatively affected field statistical work; and focus on building the capacity of conflict-affected member States to benefit from these non-traditional data sources;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has provided technical assistance on using modern data collection mechanisms, such as mobile data, big data, geospatial information and other non-traditional sources of data, in censuses, SDG monitoring and price data collection. • ESCWA has conducted several meetings on the use of big data in price statistics and provided trainings to several countries on developing data science tools, such as price web scraping tools. ESCWA has also developed web scraping tools for Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Qatar. • ESCWA has been advocating for the use of scanner data in price statistics in several regional meetings and has been preparing for national capacity-building workshops to be carried out starting the last quarter of 2022.
(c)	<p>Build the capacity of the ESCWA secretariat in data science, software and artificial intelligence, and prioritize these areas in statistical work for the coming years, with the aim of providing support to member States in those areas;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has been working on building its internal capacity in the areas of data science, software and artificial intelligence, and has been investing in human and software resources in those areas.
(d)	<p>Continue supporting Arab countries in developing national reporting platforms for the SDGs and related indicators, and follow up on capacity-building efforts to increase the availability and quality of disaggregated data and their dissemination at the national, regional and global levels;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has continued to support Arab countries in that area, finalizing 16 national reporting platforms to date and reconciling discrepancies between national and international sources. • There has been a significant impact on data availability and quality, as the availability of indicators has doubled and data points for SDG indicators have tripled.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four countries have completed and disseminated their national reporting platforms on their national statistical office websites (Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Qatar and Somalia). • To bridge data gaps in SDGs, ESCWA is working with countries to improve data flow and management of administrative sources, which constitute around 80 per cent of the SDG data sources. In this regard, ESCWA is developing a monitoring application for reporting on SDGs (MARS) to be used by national statistical offices to lead the process of reporting and disseminating data electronically. • ESCWA, in collaboration with 19 United Nations agencies, organized 47 series of SDG webinars to address methodological issues, coordination of national statistical systems and data flow challenges for 115 SDG indicators that were either not well understood, under-produced, or under-disseminated in the Arab region. • ESCWA has further developed its e-learning courses on gender statistics, which have benefited more than 15,000 trainees. It has also organized three national training workshops on gender statistics in Jordan, for participants who have passed the e-learning tests. • ESCWA has implemented the second round of capacity building and data collection for disability of the latest household surveys. At least 10 countries are participating in this round by providing cross-tabulated analysis of disability data to produce harmonized and comparable indicators. ESCWA also organized a capacity-building workshop on new modules to collect disability data through household surveys for specific groups and ages.
(e)	Collaborate with international and regional organizations to consider adapting SDG indicators to current conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and its drastic effects on social and economic conditions, and take into account its effects on statistical work;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA, in collaboration with IOM, UNDP and UNICEF, produced a report on SDG 17 highlighting the importance of timely and usable data to set priorities, make informed choices and implement better policies for sustainable development.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
(f)	Strengthen communication between relevant United Nations organizations and countries to support the use of national data in general, and especially in calculating SDG indicators and updating them from national sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of webinars on SDG indicators were organized. • Country ownership of national data has been emphasized with the custodian agencies and reflected on the Global SDG Indicators Database, where applicable. ESCWA has identified 14 SDG indicators that were erroneously labelled as global while they are collected based on country data. ESCWA is following up with custodian agencies to change that labelling to country data. • ESCWA is working with countries to reconcile discrepancies between national and international sources to ensure the use of country data as per standardized methodologies, therefore leading to enhanced data quality assurance and availability. • In a meeting with the World Bank’s Development Data Group in Washington DC, in the presence of representatives from the International Monetary Fund and other regional agencies, ESCWA representatives emphasized the importance of using only national data in the computation and application of global PPP estimates and relevant economic indicators.
(g)	Emphasize the importance of benefiting from available data issued by national statistical offices when preparing studies or reports, and of working with them to build their capacity to provide these data at a later stage in case of gaps in national data;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has provided training to gender statisticians from national statistical offices to compile disaggregated data by localities for 40 indicators, where available, and publish them in Gender Statistics Pocketbooks. The compilation of those pocketbooks will also be published at the regional level with an assessment and plan for bridging data gaps. • ESCWA is also working with countries on developing medium-term strategies to produce unavailable SDG indicators from both household surveys and administrative records that would result in less estimation and modelling techniques by United Nations agencies. • ESCWA has developed an online tool to retrieve CPI data directly from national statistical offices to conduct the fast compilation of national CPI data on ESCWA database, avoid gaps or delays, and ensure data consistency at specific group levels. • ESCWA is updating the National Accounts Database with the latest gross domestic product figures released by national statistical offices to ensure that reports or studies are using official data and to avoid the use of estimates available on other regional or international data sources.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
(h)	Coordinate the Arab position on the agenda items for the fifty-second session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, to be held online in March 2021, and prepare a paper reflecting this position by 17 February 2021 for submission to the Statistical Commission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA followed up with the national statistical offices on their written statements regarding specific agenda items of the fifty-second session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (3a to 3m on subjects including the 2030 Agenda, economic statistics and national accounts, big data and statistical development) to coordinate the regional position on them, and liaised with the United Nations Statistical Division on preparations. ESCWA has also transmitted the regional position paper on these items to the Commission's secretariat. .
