



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/24/5(Part I)
13 March 2006
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Twenty-fourth session
Beirut, 8-11 May 2006

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REPORT
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005**

Summary

Pursuant to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) resolution 267 (XXIII) of 12 May 2005, the Executive Secretary hereby submits to the Commission a performance report on the programme of work during the biennium 2004-2005.

This report provides the highlights of results achieved in the biennium 2004-2005 and lessons learned with regard to the work of ESCWA in addition to results achieved under the expected accomplishments and lessons learned for each of the six substantive subprogrammes. For the first time, the report also includes the results achieved under the Executive Direction and Management.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Highlights of programme results for the biennium 2004-2005	3
Executive Direction and Management.....	5
SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF REGIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	7
SUBPROGRAMME 2. INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICIES.....	9
SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND FORECASTING FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	12
SUBPROGRAMME 4. REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION.....	14
SUBPROGRAMME 5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	16
SUBPROGRAMME 6. COMPARABLE STATISTICS FOR IMPROVED PLANNING AND POLICY DECISIONS	18

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005

1. The work of ESCWA was carried out within the recent mandates provided by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and in line with the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and in response to the expressed needs of its member countries.
2. ESCWA intensified its efforts to improve further the quality of its analytical work. Internal and external peer reviews and the wide media coverage of its flagship publication, namely, the *Survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region*, confirmed the improved quality in this biennium. In order to assist policymakers on issues of policy significance and in meeting the MDGs, ESCWA made available in-depth analyses of macroeconomic variables, trends and forecasts. ESCWA was instrumental in joint efforts of the United Nations agencies in the Arab region in the preparation of "The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2005", which provided an overview of progress made in Arab countries towards the stated aim of achieving the MDGs by 2015, and highlighted key challenges and issues and the way forward.
3. Despite detrimental external factors and the effects of the security situation in the region on its work, ESCWA achieved notable progress and concrete results in 2004-2005 with regard to its four priority areas, namely: (a) managing water and energy; (b) managing social policies; (c) managing globalization; and (d) managing technology and the three cross-cutting issues of the advancement of women, statistical capacity-building and assistance to countries emerging from conflict.
4. In the area of managing water and energy, ESCWA continued to actively engage the member countries in terms of adopting Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), supported by a manual on IWRM; and implementing the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation through advocacy, capacity-building and increased understanding on water and energy conservation policies, the use of cleaner fuels and renewable energy. Moreover, operating through the joint secretariat with the League of Arab States (LAS) and with the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA), the work of ESCWA was instrumental in reaching a common Arab position for the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13) and preparing for the fourteenth session. This involvement was acknowledged by the Council for Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE). Additionally, through its work, ESCWA increased awareness of the environmental dimension of these resources.
5. Work on managing social policies focused on integrated social policies and integrated population policies. ESCWA issued a comprehensive regional report on integrated social policies in Arab countries, which aimed at serving as a basis for initiating pilot projects and building the capacity of member countries in this area. Support for knowledge sharing was provided to vulnerable groups, including youth and people with disabilities, through the launch of two websites targeting such groups. Furthermore, efforts by ESCWA to integrate the concepts of secure tenure and good urban governance led to the adoption of local urban initiatives and the establishment of nine local urban observatories in the region.
6. In terms of managing globalization, ESCWA provided a forum for trade officials and ministers to coordinate their negotiation positions in preparation for the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (Hong Kong, 13-18 December 2005). Moreover, ESCWA kept these officials and ministers abreast of recent developments and of the positions of other developing and developed countries by providing technical briefings in Arabic that were posted on a dedicated website. The capacity on WTO issues of 70 officials from member Governments was enhanced through capacity-building workshops and seminars. Equally, as an important building block for managing globalization, ESCWA cultivated increased regional integration through regional trade and transport facilitation. The Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq entered into force in May 2005; and the execution of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq was pursued through the adoption of an action plan and the initiation of implementation in five countries. An additional two countries established national transport and

trade facilitation committees in line with recommendations by ESCWA. Moreover, efforts by ESCWA resulted in the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq dated 12 May 2005, thereby paving the way towards the integration of the main transport systems. The work on transport facilitation has been recognized by LAS, which decided to consider widening such agreements to encompass all Arab countries.

7. In the field of managing technology, ESCWA initiated three initiatives targeting common information and communication technology (ICT) standards to improve connectivity, namely: the Arabic character coding, the Digital Arabic Content Initiative (DAC) and the Arabic Domain Names System (ADNS). Under ESCWA leadership, multi-stakeholders established the Arabic Domain Names Task Force that produced an Internet draft, which was subsequently endorsed in May 2005 by the pan-Arab Working Group for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Additionally, ESCWA assisted two member countries in formulating ICT policies aimed at improving their telecommunications infrastructure, networks and services. Moreover, the work of ESCWA led to the adoption of a list of ICT indicators by the global Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies for Development, and to increasing awareness of key stakeholders on various ICT applications to assist the poor. Most of these areas are covered in the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society (RPoA), which was developed by ESCWA and has been largely adopted by the related pan-Arab Regional Plan. Furthermore, ESCWA focused on the consistent follow-up to the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS-I) and on preparations for the second phase (WSIS-II).

8. With respect to the first of the three cross-cutting issues, namely, the advancement of women, ESCWA provided assistance to national machineries of women in formulating gender-sensitive policies and in reporting progress achieved in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). ESCWA, in partnership with an international non-governmental organization (NGO), organized a series of four workshops aimed at increasing the political role of women in Iraq. These workshops attracted 22 out of the 87 female Members of Parliament of that country and 17 out of the 55 members of the drafting committee charged with drafting the new Constitution of Iraq. Equally, in partnership with a private firm in Saudi Arabia, ESCWA worked on two pioneering projects and succeeded in building the capacity of a total of 309 women in that country working in social welfare organizations. Within that context, ESCWA received a commendation by the High-Level Approving Panel of the UN 21 Awards for Excellence in executing the project, entitled "Activating social welfare work of women NGOs in Saudi Arabia".

9. In the area of statistical capacity-building, ESCWA contributed towards improving national capacities in the production of valid, comparable and harmonized statistics as a means for policy formulation and monitoring the achievement of the major goals of international conferences, including the MDGs. This was carried out through training workshops on statistics covering the following fields: energy, trade, migration, international economic and social classification, information society measurement and development indicators. For the first time, statistics on the water resources of member countries were disseminated through the twenty-fourth issue of the *Statistical abstract of the ESCWA region*. Moreover, through the International Comparison Programme (ICP), ESCWA improved the capacity of 35 statisticians working on price statistics and national accounts. Additionally, a set of 27 indicators was developed by ESCWA to monitor different aspects of social development that feed into monitoring and reporting on the MDGs.

10. Assistance to conflict-stricken countries and territories, including Iraq and Palestine, focused on capacity-building and networking. Within the framework of the Iraqi Networking Academies (INA) Project, ESCWA procured equipment for the establishment of four regional networking academies and conducted related training courses. This Project won the "Against All Odds" award for 2005, which was provided by CISCO Systems, the manufacturer of hardware and software systems. Additionally, ESCWA enhanced the management skills of 98 officials in Iraq from nine ministries and municipalities through training workshops.

11. In Palestine, ESCWA, LAS and the Palestinian Authority jointly organized the Arab-International Forum on Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Towards an Independent

State (Beirut, 11-14 October 2004), which articulated a Palestinian consensus on a vision for rehabilitation and development. That vision was subsequently incorporated in the Medium Term Development Plan 2006-2008, as acknowledged by the Palestinian Authority. The Forum provided the platform for deliberations on how to mitigate the socio-economic repercussions of the occupation, and forged networking arrangements between Palestinian NGOs and Arab and international counterparts. Moreover, ESCWA enhanced the capacity of staff of the Palestine Standards Institution (PSI) on standardization.

Lessons learned

12. The critical situation in the region, especially in Iraq and Palestine, left its impact on the programme of work of ESCWA. Additionally, developments in Beirut between mid-February and December 2005 resulted in delays in the implementation of outputs owing to the need to reschedule a number of meetings away from Beirut and to the closure of ESCWA on two occasions.

13. A challenge that is common among subprogrammes is the need to mobilize further extrabudgetary resources required to enhance the analytical work by operational activities. While ESCWA was able to mobilize more extrabudgetary resources in 2004-2005 compared to the previous biennium, these were provided mainly for assisting Iraq and Palestine in their rehabilitation efforts. Efforts are therefore needed to diversify extrabudgetary resources to cover other priority areas.

14. Another challenge is the need to promote knowledge sharing, including increased electronic dissemination of publications, reports and technical material to reach a wide range of end-users and stakeholders. This necessitates the development of an information technology (IT) strategy and investment plan for upgrading equipment required to enhance the capacity of the Internet loading system of ESCWA and the redesign of its web pages.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT

15. For the first time, ESCWA is reporting on accomplishments under the Executive Direction and Management in accordance with the new global requirements introduced by the States Members of the United Nations.

Expected accomplishment 1: Programme of work is effectively managed and supported by staff and financial resources.
--

Results

16. Despite the critical situation in the region, the level of output delivery reached 90 per cent for the biennium. Compensating for the constraints on output completion imposed by the instability in Beirut between mid-February and July 2005, output delivery increased significantly towards the end of the biennium, supported by timely recruitment and deployment of staff. ESCWA improved the time for recruitment to professional posts to an average of 146 days from an average of 190 days in 2002-2003, thereby moving closer to the recommended target of 120 days set by the Office of Human Resources Management in United Nations Headquarters. Furthermore, ESCWA was able to raise more extrabudgetary funds than expected, which enabled the implementation of 58 additional outputs. The bulk of these additional outputs were technical cooperation workshops and projects that contributed to enhancing the capacity of ESCWA member countries.

Expected accomplishment 2: Identification of emerging issues that require attention by member States.
--

Results

17. Three current priority issues in the Western Asia region were identified by the secretariat and brought to the attention of member countries at the twenty-third session of the Commission, namely: (a) peace and

security and their impact on economic and social development; (b) the achievement of the MDGs in ESCWA member countries; and (c) social policies in the ESCWA region. Three round-table high-level meetings culminated in the adoption of the Damascus Declaration on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals; and two resolutions were passed, respectively, on social policies and on the development and regional cooperation under unstable conditions. A total of 13 other resolutions tackling diverse salient issues of concern to the region were also adopted by the Commission and brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council. Moreover, eight member countries adopted and signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq.

Expected accomplishment: Timely deployment of operations to the field.

Results

18. As of 31 December 2005, the average time required to respond to requests for services of regional advisors was five working days, which represents a drop of two fewer working days from the previous biennium. However, such factors as the nature (multidisciplinary versus single discipline), requirements/stipulations and cost of implementing requests received influence this average. Since the beginning of 2004, ESCWA received a total of 403 requests from member countries and regional and international organizations for regional advisory services in the areas of social development, science and technology, WTO issues, communications, water, environment, energy, national accounts and gender. ESCWA was able to implement 85 per cent of such requests.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced policy coherence in the management of the activities of the United Nations in the areas of, among others, economic and social development, and peace and security.

Results

19. A number of activities were undertaken in cooperation with United Nations entities and organizations that further enhanced inter-agency policy coherence in salient socio-economic development issues that had positive outcomes and that could form strong foundations for further cooperation. ESCWA places special emphasis on activities that conclude with tangible results and have a positive impact on enhancing coordination among United Nations bodies at the policy level. The Regional Coordination Group (RCG) serves as a mechanism for enhancing policy coherence and coordination of the social and economic activities of the United Nations system in the ESCWA region. One outcome of this close collaboration among United Nations agencies operating in the Arab region, which resulted from the RCG meetings, was the publication of a joint report, entitled "The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2005". This report covered all 22 Arab countries and constitutes a substantial basis for future inter-agency coordination and the formation of long-term synergies.

20. Other concrete accomplishments resulting from inter-agency collaboration include the annual report by the Secretary-General on the "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan"; the implementation of eight projects at the regional and interregional levels; the organization of the Arab-International Forum on Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Towards an Independent State (Beirut, 11-14 October 2004); the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS: Partnership for Building the Arab Information Society (Damascus, 22-23 November 2004); and the Arab Population Forum (Beirut, 19-21 November 2004). All these outputs resulted in concrete initiatives, declarations and/or programmes of action.

Lessons learned

21. The publication of a joint report on the MDGs by all the United Nations entities operating in the Arab region represents an important development that needs to be institutionalized.

SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF REGIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

22. This subprogramme is implemented by the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) and aims to promote regional integration and cooperation among member countries based on a concerted approach in the areas of sustainable management of water and energy and the production sectors. There are four expected accomplishments under this subprogramme. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of these.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased ability of member countries to formulate integrated policies for the efficient and sustainable management of water and energy sectors, with due consideration to the needs and role of women.

Results

23. ESCWA activities in 2004-2005 contributed towards increasing the recognition of the importance of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the ability to formulate related policies. Seven institutions in four countries, mainly ministries of water resources and irrigation, adopted IWRM measures, compared to four institutions in 2003, although the target of 10 institutions was not reached. Demand for a manual on IWRM by ESCWA and the training of trainers on IWRM application and for similar capacity-building activities was received from 12 ESCWA member countries, several Arab countries in North Africa and Sudan. The Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET) contributed to increased national and regional knowledge sharing on IWRM as reflected by daily requests for related material and for translating the IWRM Manual from English into Arabic.

24. Two ministries in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia adopted energy conservation policies and formulated projects for their applications, compared to one ministry in 2003. Another three ministries in Egypt, Kuwait and the Syrian Arab Republic adopted initiatives aimed at using cleaner fuels; and two others in the United Arab Emirates and Yemen are currently implementing new renewable energy projects. Additionally, the capacity of 35 officials in Yemen was enhanced in photovoltaic systems design, installation and operation to assist in their participation in planned Government solar electrification projects.

25. Working jointly with LAS and UNEP/ROWA, ESCWA played a vital role, which was acknowledged by LAS, in reaching a common position among Arab countries prior to the meeting of the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-14).

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased regional cooperation in the management of shared surface and groundwater and energy networks.

Results

26. In partnership with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany (BGR), ESCWA contributed towards enhancing the capacity of concerned officials by publishing two manuals on IWRM and organizing workshops on water dispute management for delegates from Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition to the agreement between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic for the management of water resources in the Al-Kabeer Al-Janoubi River Basin reached in 2003, important strides were made on the basalt aquifer shared between Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to the management of these resources and the necessary implementation mechanism. However, this has not yet resulted in the signing of an agreement between these two countries.

27. The revised target of two memorandums of agreement signed by member States has not been achieved owing to the political instability that has prevailed in the region. Through ESCWA's advocacy and outreach work, the members of AWARENET increased from 15 institutions at the end of 2003, to 65 at the end of 2005. This Network plays an important role in increasing regional cooperation on IWRM and in sharing

information at the local and national levels. Saudi Arabia joined the Regional Promotional Mechanism for Sustainable Energy Systems, thereby bringing the total to 13 member countries and achieving the set target. The Mechanism promotes and facilitates the exchange of information and of practices among members. Furthermore, ESCWA facilitated the contact between Egypt and the United Arab Emirates to replicate the lessons learned from wind farms in Egypt; and between Egypt and Palestine at Al-Arish for grid interconnection between them.

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased capacity of member countries in the formulation and implementation of policies and policy measures for sustainable development.

Results

28. Work concentrated on providing support to the implementation of the Arab Initiative and the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). ESCWA assisted environmental ministries and institutions in 13 member countries in adopting guidelines on the integration of environmental dimensions into development policies, thereby meeting the set target. The study by ESCWA on “Governance for sustainable development in the Arab region: Institutions and instruments for moving beyond an environmental management culture” was adopted by the ministers of Arab States and endorsed by LAS and the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR). Moreover, the work of ESCWA contributed to improved coverage by Arab journalists of environmental issues, and increased the awareness of policymakers on the importance of public participation in environmental issues and on improving access to related information.

29. Additionally, the work of ESCWA contributed to raising the awareness and building the capacity of 86 stakeholders from 13 ESCWA member countries on rural development, reversing land degradation and improving on-farm water-use efficiency, as evidenced by the feedback by stakeholders to assessment questionnaires. The ESCWA methodological framework for the assessment of land degradation assisted countries to respond to the commitments under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Within that context, Jordan and Lebanon formally confirmed their commitment to adopt the framework and requested ESCWA’s assistance for training.

30. Furthermore, ESCWA achieved the set target in terms of raising awareness on water scarcity issues and the need for improving on-farm water-use efficiency. The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute published a paper by ESCWA, which reflected the experience of the region with regard to water-use efficiency in agriculture, as part of the keynote papers of the International Conference on Water, Land and Food Security in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions (Bari, Italy, 6-11 September 2005).

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced national capacities for improving productivity and competitiveness and in improving the performance of SMEs with a view to poverty reduction.

Results

31. Diagnostic studies by ESCWA on apparel manufacturing clusters in Jordan and Lebanon revealed increased awareness among small firms of opportunities created by joint action aimed at improving competitiveness, and demonstrated the important role of networking in improving the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Two field projects in Lebanon and Morocco contributed to local cluster initiatives to support SME competitiveness. In South Lebanon, the pilot project on the development of the honey sector led to improved collaboration between beekeepers, thereby leading to new production techniques, better harvests and additional income.

32. In the Casablanca area of Morocco, ESCWA helped a small cluster of dyeing and washing firms to finance and operate jointly a wastewater treatment facility, thereby reducing costs and improving their environmental performance. While Morocco is not an ESCWA member country, it is covered in the extrabudgetary project on Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade

Area. A number of meetings were organized within the framework of that project, which contributed to greater understanding on the use of SIA tools aimed at assessing the impact of free trade on sustainable development, particularly those affecting the achievement of Goal 1 of the MDGs.

33. ESCWA is promoting micro-enterprise creation through the establishment of pilot facilities that target agro-food processing in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. ESCWA supported its member countries in the establishment of a number of virtual research and development networks and of a web portal that promotes contact and knowledge sharing between institutions and experts. Equally, assistance was provided to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic in establishing national science, technology and innovation observatories; to Bahrain in establishing a technology park; and to the Syrian Arab Republic in establishing two incubators, of which one is currently operational and one is in the process of becoming operational, that support the creation of SMEs in the area of technology.

Lessons learned for subprogramme 1

34. The mainstreaming of the gender component was difficult to implement owing to unavailability of gender-disaggregated data and the lack of relevant information in the region. ESCWA will encourage and assist countries to develop such data in the water and energy sectors. Organizing more awareness-raising and capacity-building workshops in support of analytical and normative work to increase impact need to be strengthened. While this will meet the needs of member countries and enhance ESCWA visibility, it will require the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICIES

35. This subprogramme is implemented by the Social Development Division (SDD) and the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) and aims to achieve regional cooperation in the advocacy and promotion of comprehensive and integrated social policies that are specific to the region, culturally sensitive and have practical orientation. There are five expected accomplishments under this subprogramme. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of these.

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced ability of member countries to formulate integrated social policies and programmes that incorporate advantageous cultural values.
--

Results

36. ESCWA promoted the concept of integrated social policies and the formulation of integrated social policies in the region through awareness raising, advocacy and knowledge sharing, and through the comprehensive regional report, entitled "Towards integrated social policies in Arab countries: framework and comparative analysis". Based on the work of ESCWA, five member countries requested assistance either in formulating a suitable strategy on integrated social policies aimed at directing national social policies and plans, or in determining the mechanisms to formulate such plans. ESCWA signed a memorandum of understanding with Bahrain in December 2005 to provide policy advice and technical support in this area.

37. Additionally, Jordan, Oman, Palestine and Saudi Arabia requested ESCWA's assistance in determining the suitable mechanisms to be used in designing, implementing, and evaluating their social policies. While the number of countries that are formulating integrated social policies has remained at three, the number of countries that have initiated the process has reached the set target of eight. Moreover, 11 officials from member countries agreed on measures for the adoption of social policies during the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 29-31 March 2005), thereby bringing the total to 24 and exceeding the set target by 6.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased networking mechanisms for social development among partners and actors in the development process at the regional, national and local levels.

Results

38. ESCWA assistance to the conflict-stricken countries and territories of Iraq and Palestine focused on networking and capacity-building through management training workshops. In addition to capacity-building for officials in Iraq, ESCWA is implementing the Iraqi Networking Academies (INA) Project.

39. The Arab-International Forum on Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Towards an Independent State (Beirut, 11-14 October 2004), which was organized by ESCWA in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and LAS, succeeded in articulating a Palestinian consensus on a coordinated vision for rehabilitation and development. This vision constituted the basis for the Medium Term Development Plan 2006-2008, as acknowledged by the Palestinian Authority. The Forum launched a multilateral process to enhance Arab-Palestinian partnerships and helped to forge networking arrangements between Palestinian NGOs and Arab and international counterparts, and provided the platform for deliberations on how to mitigate the socio-economic repercussions of the occupation.

40. Moreover, ESCWA enhanced the capacity of staff of the Palestine Standards Institution (PSI), Government and private sector institutions on standardization, technical regulations and inspection by conducting three workshops in 2005 with a total of 80 participants. Additionally, ESCWA increased networking mechanisms between Governments and civil society institutions by facilitating the formation of six new joint committees, namely, one in Jordan, three in Lebanon and two in the Syrian Arab Republic, thereby doubling the set target. The number of local and regional NGOs participating in community development work increased from 15 to 23, which exceeded the target of 20. Successful initiatives and the application of community development projects culminated in a resolution by the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, which adopted ESCWA's policies and programmes on local community development and encouraged the replication of such initiatives. This resulted in the initiation of a project on local community development in Yemen.

<p>Expected accomplishment 3: Increased capacity of policymakers for mainstreaming gender and reducing gender imbalances.</p>
--

Results

41. The number of ESCWA members that have adopted a gender mainstreaming approach in national policies increased from three in 2003 to five in 2005, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic. This increase, which meets the set target, can be attributed to awareness-raising and capacity-building activities by ESCWA, including lobbying for national machineries, media campaigns, information dissemination, advisory services and workshops. Assistance was provided to national machineries for women in formulating gender-sensitive policies and in reporting to CEDAW.

42. Positive impact of ESCWA activities is evidenced by letters of appreciation received from countries with respect to the quality and effectiveness of the technical assistance, and by the increase from one request in 2003 to eight requests in 2005 for technical assistance and advisory services for capacity-building (Iraq, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic) and in reporting to CEDAW (Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar and Syrian Arab Republic). Moreover, through long-term efforts by ESCWA and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Oman and the United Arab Emirates acceded to CEDAW, thereby bringing the total to 18 Arab countries.

43. Furthermore, the work of ESCWA resulted in the adoption of the Beirut Declaration on Arab Women Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace of July 2004, which maps the road for the national machineries for women in the next decade. The political participation of women in Iraq reached the highest level in the region, with women winning 86 seats or 31.5 per cent in the parliamentary elections of January 2005. It is worth noting that 22 out of the 87 female Members of Parliament of that country and 17 out of the 55 members of the drafting committee charged with drafting the Constitution of Iraq have participated in a series of ESCWA workshops aimed at increasing the role of women in building a new Iraq. ESCWA

contributed to the establishment of two regional women networks, namely: the Arab Network for Women in Science in Bahrain in April 2004; and the Arab Network for Women and ICT in Egypt in April 2005. Moreover, ESCWA publications had a total of 21 citations in the report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on “Progress of Arab women”, and 14 citations in “The fourth annual report of Arab NGOs: Empowerment of women” by the Arab Network for NGOs.

Expected accomplishment 4: Improved capacity of policymakers in formulating poverty reduction policies, measures, mechanisms and programmes to implement projects aimed at providing the population with opportunities for productive employment.

Results

44. Three recommendations on poverty and unemployment were adopted by the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development, thereby meeting the set target of six. Work during 2004-2005 focused on supporting vulnerable groups, including women, youth and people with disabilities, in order to enhance their opportunities for productive employment. In partnership with a private firm in Saudi Arabia, namely, Abdul Latif Jameel Group, ESCWA worked on two pioneering projects and succeeded in building the capacity of a total of 309 women in that country working in social welfare organizations. These projects were entitled “Enabling women in Saudi Arabia to join the labour market through the training of vocational trainers” and “Activating social welfare work of women NGOs in Saudi Arabia”, the latter of which received a commendation by the High-Level Approving Panel of the UN 21 Awards for Excellence. Within that context, some 60 per cent of women NGOs involved in the project adopted a training manual by ESCWA on basics and principles of NGO management, and 30 per cent of these NGOs adopted four training manuals on vocational skills.

45. Additionally, ESCWA launched two websites focusing on advocacy to empower disabled persons and youth, entitled, respectively, “Net Forum for the Blind” and “Arab Youth Directory”. These websites succeeded in raising awareness, sharing experiences and increasing connectivity among these groups, as evidenced by the increase in the number of hits from 3,000 to 8,600 between 2004 and 2005 for the Forum, and from 2,500 hits per month in December 2004 to 33,700 hits by the end of 2005 for the Directory. Moreover, the Braille Computer Training Centre, which was established during 2002-2003 with ESCWA’s assistance at the Al Hadi Institution for the Deaf and Blind in Lebanon, became self-sustaining and proved beneficial to a total of 110 blind and visually impaired persons.

Expected accomplishment 5: Improved ability of policymakers to address, in their strategies, population issues and critical issues with regard to good urban governance and security of tenure.

Results

46. Advocacy efforts by ESCWA on the importance of formulating integrated population policies and strengthening related institutional framework contributed to the adoption of integrated approaches for formulating such population policies in three additional countries, namely, Oman, Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic, thereby meeting the planned target. Equally, the number of local urban initiatives adopted by Governments to integrate the concepts of secure tenure and good urban governance increased from zero to nine, which represents almost a five-fold increase on the planned target. The nine cities of the region that have promulgated decrees for the establishment of local urban observatories are as follows: Greater Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Jeddah, Sanaa and, in the Syrian Arab Republic, Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs.

47. One of the main outcomes of the High Level Arab Meeting on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Urban Governance (Cairo, 15-18 December 2005), which was organized by ESCWA, was the Cairo Declaration that called for the initiation of the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance at the national and local levels. As a result, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Sudan adopted the Regional Campaign, while Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates welcomed it and called for ESCWA’s support in adapting this initiative to their national needs.

Lessons learned for subprogramme 2

48. Discussions with member countries have pointed out the need to intensify operational activities in support of the implementation of integrated social policies. To meet the needs of beneficiaries, it is important to introduce a better screening and selection process for trainees and to increase the participation of women in workshops.

49. ESCWA's assistance to conflict-stricken countries was able to reinforce its comparative advantage as a regional organization able to foster partnerships and networking mechanisms between different parties. Efforts need to be exerted to ensure the sustainability and continuous maintenance of ESCWA specialized websites by adding new features and updates, which entails the mobilization of financial resources.

**SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND FORECASTING
FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

50. This subprogramme is implemented by the Economic Analysis Division (EAD) and aims to increase the capacity of member countries, coordinate their economic policies and achieve economic development by providing a quantitative assessment of economic and financial data and trends. There are four expected accomplishments under this subprogramme. Set forth below are the results achieved under three of these. The fourth expected accomplishment was not achieved owing to the unavailability of related data and information in the production sectors.

Expected accomplishment 1: Utilization of macroeconomic variables and trends, and main trends in the production sectors of the economy by decision-makers in achieving development goals.

Results

51. Publications were produced aimed at providing in-depth analyses with macroeconomic variables and trends to serve policymakers and Government officials in using those publicized outcomes and engage policy dialogue with national and regional stakeholders, thereby achieving development goals. Given the importance of policy intervention to achieve the MDGs, "The impact of economic variables on the social dimension of development: education and health" identified a direct and significant impact of per capita spending on both health and education on the different health and education indicators and the accumulation of human capital. Another analytical study demonstrated that the economies of the region have not been integrated into the global economic system. It recommended that the development of sound and efficient financial markets and institutions is an essential strategy for economic survival and as means of sustaining economic growth.

52. Feedback from end-users on the benefits derived from ESCWA activities in this regard was actively sought. This feedback reflected an increase of 20 per cent in terms of satisfaction. The response target was achieved by 50 per cent in the Workshop on the Role of Indebtedness in Regional Economic Development (Beirut, 6-7 December 2004), at the end of which 87 per cent of participants responded to the questionnaires and indicated that they had benefited from the Workshop. Electronic dissemination of all studies via the ESCWA website ensured that the information reached a wider audience.

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved availability, accessibility and analysis of economic and financial data and indicators, including on regional integration.

Results

53. Compared to the previous biennium, the flagship publications have had significantly more impact and feedback. The quality of analytical content of the two issues of the *Survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region* improved substantially, as indicated by internal and external peer reviews. Various media across the region covered the launch of both issues of the Survey and quoted the

main results. The electronic dissemination of the flagship publication resulted in an increased number of readership, which was estimated from the number of downloads. Specifically, there were 2,788 downloads of the Summary of the Survey 2003-2004 during eight months in 2004; and some 2,000 downloads of the Survey 2003-2004 in both its summarized and full-text versions during six months in 2005, namely, from January to June 2005. This represents a significant increase in outreach.

54. The use of the annual Survey was confirmed by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, ESCWA achieved its target of disseminating four analytical indicators, namely, GDP growth rates, per capita GDP growth rates, gross oil export revenues and international trade. Through staff missions, electronic publications and the initiation of readership surveys, efforts were made to share these indicators with regional stakeholders in order to develop policy dialogue.

Expected accomplishment 3: Improved availability to member countries and business associations of relevant data and analysis of productivity and productivity trends.

Results

55. This expected accomplishment could not be reported on given the unavailability of data on production statistics in ESCWA member countries. Two outputs linked to this expected accomplishment on annual indices of production were terminated for 2004-2005 and discontinued for 2006-2007.

Expected accomplishment 4: Improved capacity of member countries to assess their comparative economic situation at the regional and international level, and improved capacity of decision-makers in member countries for timely intervention.

Results

56. Through analytical studies and forecasts on complex macroeconomic issues, ESCWA contributed to improving the knowledge and capacity of member countries. Within that context, seven essential scenarios were developed and disseminated, which represents an increase of more than three-fold on the target. The second issue of "Global forecasts and predictions for the ESCWA region: The roles of investment and public expenditure in economic growth" used a panel vector autoregression model to ascertain the main determinants of GDP growth in the countries under review, and used the findings to forecast levels of public expenditures that allow optimal GDP growth.

57. Two issues of "Economic trends and impacts" analysed the developments in the financial systems of the region with regard to the revised capital requirements of Basel II and the banking sector lending behaviour and efficiency. These issues are of clear policy significance for policymakers in the region. Moreover, ESCWA issued a technical paper, entitled "World economic situation and prospects, 2005: Analysis and forecasts for Western Asia", that provided an early projection of the economies of the region during 2004 and 2005. The electronic dissemination of the first issue recorded 4,693 downloads in 2005. This is one of the highest numbers of downloads of ESCWA publications, which indicates successful contact with the targeted audience.

Lessons learned for subprogramme 3

58. The intensive use of electronic dissemination of the flagship publications was a success, as indicated by the number of downloads. An external peer review provided constructive suggestions and feedback to improve the Survey, including a need to increase the focus of the publication by dedicating each issue to a prominent theme or subject of importance to the region. The challenge is to contribute to the capacity-building of member countries through training workshops on forecasting modelling and other technical tools.

SUBPROGAMME 4. REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION

59. This subprogramme is implemented by the Globalization and Regional Integration Division (GRID) and aims to facilitate transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital to meet the challenges posed and the opportunities offered by globalization. There are four expected accomplishments under this subprogramme. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of these.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries.

Results

60. Maintaining the momentum of the work in the previous biennium, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq entered into force in May 2005; and efforts by ESCWA resulted in the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq in May 2005. ESCWA continued to follow up with member countries on the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, and on national and regional transport facilitation measures that are considered the cornerstone for increased interregional trade and integration, including through the establishment of trade and transport facilitation committees at the national level.

61. The relevance of the work of ESCWA in the fields of transport and trade facilitation has been recognized by the Council of Arab Transportation Ministers of LAS, which decided to consider the expansion of ESCWA's Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) and agreements on international roads and railways to all Arab countries. A total of six ESCWA member countries initiated steps aimed at establishing national trade facilitation committees, which represents double the set target. Equally, six countries formulated linkages with regard to interregional transport linkages, thereby meeting the set target. In terms of the three transport agreements, there were 28 signatories and 12 ratifications, compared to the target of 16 adoptions/ratifications and against a baseline of 8. Consequently, the target was exceeded by 75 per cent if the measure of adoption is used, while it is 25 per cent below target if the more stringent measure of ratification is used.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased awareness among member countries of the challenges to their economies and opportunities created by the new regional and international trading systems.
--

Results

62. ESCWA assisted in creating a regional agenda for trade and globalization on the political level by providing a forum for officials in the fourth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 7-8 March 2005), as well as for the Arab Ministers of Trade. This contributed towards preparing member countries and coordinating their negotiating positions for the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (Hong Kong, 13-18 December 2005). Moreover, ESCWA has maintained a specialized website where updates, technical briefings and major documents are translated and provided in Arabic.

63. Through capacity-building activities and seminars, ESCWA enhanced the capacity of 696 participants from member countries. Out of that total, 31 per cent were high-level officials and 69 participants were women officials, compared to 25 by 31 December 2003, thereby almost reaching the target of 70 female participants. Additionally, the contribution of ESCWA was manifested in the number of accessions to related international conventions and laws issued in compliance with the requirements of the WTO agreements. Specifically, a total of 14 laws was promulgated by 31 December 2005 in eight ESCWA members, namely, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, compared to six such laws in four countries in 2003. Within that context, ESCWA worked in close

cooperation with WTO, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries (GUCCIAAC).

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased attractiveness of member countries for domestic, intraregional and foreign investment.

Results

64. ESCWA followed up on the implementation of the International Conference on Financing for Development by assessing the progress made by member countries in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus through two studies and an expert group meeting. ESCWA focused on two areas of the Monterrey Consensus, namely: (a) the mobilization of international resources for development, namely, foreign direct investment (FDI) and other private flows; and (b) external debt relief and debt management.

65. ESCWA activities contributed to the adoption of seven policies/measures in four member countries with regard to legislation to facilitate FDI, namely: one in Egypt; two in Qatar; two in the Syrian Arab Republic; and two in the United Arab Emirates. This exceeded the set target of three such policies/measures. Additionally, three countries opened up certain sectors of their economies for foreign investment, namely, the telecommunications sector in Bahrain and the financial market sector in both Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The Development Account Project on “Strengthening expertise and networking in the field of FDI in ESCWA member countries”, which was implemented by ESCWA in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), assisted Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic in establishing national databases using internationally accepted methodology that measure and monitor the inflow of FDI, thereby assisting Governments in formulating investment policies. This Project bolstered the skills of 150 officers in terms of FDI data-collection and the use of specialized software. At their request, three additional countries, namely, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, received training for an additional 104 data-collection officers.

66. With regard to debt issues, ESCWA examined the debt situation of two indebted member States, namely, Jordan and Lebanon, and provided capacity-building through a regional workshop on debt analysis.

Expected accomplishment 4: Increased export capacity of ESCWA member countries.

Results

67. With a focus on intraregional export capacity, ESCWA monitored the fulfilment by member countries of the scheduled implementation steps of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA). ESCWA implemented a number of activities related to this issue that dealt with trade facilitation, assessment of the implications of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements on GAFTA, the latest global movement towards bilateralism and away from regionalism and multilateralism, and assessment of the impact of free trade zones.

68. The “Annual review of developments in globalization and regional integration in the countries of the ESCWA region”, issued by ESCWA, provided member countries with the latest regional developments in this regard. Such activities supported the efforts of member countries in tackling new approaches to regional integration, including the sectoral approach, and improved their position in the multilateral trading system. The number of procedures, policies and measures implemented by member countries in compliance with GAFTA doubled to four by December 2005.

Lessons learned for subprogramme 4

69. The challenges are to follow up with member countries on the implementation of interregional transport linkages, to ensure that the national transport and trade facilitation committees become effective mechanisms for implementing efficient trade and transport procedures, and to continue the implementation

of the provisions of transport agreements. ESCWA needs to work more closely with member Governments in order to identify suitable participants in national training workshops and national teams, thereby increasing the impact of workshops and projects.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

70. This subprogramme is implemented by the Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) and aims to increase the national capacities and regulatory framework in the development process, including the implementation of relevant WSIS-I recommendations and their effective participation in its second phase. There are five expected accomplishments under this subprogramme. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of these.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased response of member countries to integrated information and communication technology policies, strengthened institutional capacities and regulatory framework in the development process, including the implementation of the relevant WSIS-I recommendations and their effective participation in its second phase.

Results

71. ESCWA activities during 2004-2005 focused on following up on the outcome of WSIS-I and preparing member countries for its second phase (WSIS-II). As a result of the work of ESCWA, member countries are more disposed to the implementation of the relevant WSIS recommendations. Specifically, a total of seven countries, which represents one more than the set target, clearly indicated their commitment to the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action. These are Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syrian Arab Republic; and other ESCWA member countries have indicated a willingness to commit to the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society in 2006.

72. The Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society (RPoA), which was finalized in November 2004, constitutes an important milestone in the implementation of WSIS recommendations and provided the basis for the pan-Arab Regional Plan of Action for WSIS, which was finalized in September 2005. Almost 65 per cent of the projects included in the Arab Plan originated from the RPoA by ESCWA. Moreover, the success of ESCWA in preparing member countries for WSIS-II, by way of meetings, preparatory conferences, round-table discussions and workshops, was reflected in the active participation of all ESCWA member countries and their adoption of the Tunis Commitment. In addition, six countries installed booths at the exhibition, and five organized side events.

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved connectivity in and between member States.

Results

73. Through the work of ESCWA, key stakeholders in the region increased their knowledge and awareness of various issues involved in improving connectivity in and between member States, including affordability, sector reform, regional peering and unified standards. Furthermore, ESCWA assisted Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic in formulating ICT policies through advocacy, knowledge/information sharing and advisory services. Five countries, namely, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic, formulated ICT policies aimed at improving telecommunications infrastructure, networks and services, thereby exceeding the target of four countries.

74. Additionally, ESCWA achieved the goal of three initiatives targeting common ICT standards to improve connectivity, namely: the Arabic character coding, the Digital Arabic Content Initiative (DAC) and, most recently, the Arabic Domain Names System (ADNS), which was initiated and led by ESCWA. Under ESCWA leadership, multi-stakeholders from the region established the Arabic Domain Names Task Force

that produced an Internet draft to specify guidelines/standards for the development of ADNS aimed at covering regional needs and at providing wide-scale access to ICT. This draft was subsequently endorsed in May 2005 by the pan-Arab Working Group for WSIS. ESCWA played a major role in providing substantive and comprehensive input on the technical and operational aspects for the intended ADNS.

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased positive impact on selected fields of development through wider utilization of promising information and communication technology applications and success stories.

Results

75. Two initiatives were launched that involve ESCWA and promote ICT applications in member countries, namely, a knowledge management project document for the Dubai Municipality in the United Arab Emirates, and the Iraqi Networking Academies (INA) Project, thereby reaching the planned target. ESCWA advisory services to the Dubai Municipality led to the preparation of a project document on knowledge management, which will be launched in 2006 in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Within the framework of the INA Project, ESCWA provided training for 12 trainers from four universities in Iraq, procured equipment for the establishment of four regional networking academies and six local networking academies, and conducted related training courses in three universities for 20 participants in each course. This Project won the "Against All Odds" award for 2005, which was provided by CISCO, the manufacturer of hardware and software systems.

76. More countries are implementing promising ICT applications, with Oman representing the latest country that ESCWA has helped with ICT policies for a knowledge-based economy. The number of countries with declared ICT policies/strategies reached six, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic, thereby exceeding the set target.

Expected accomplishment 4: Improved promotion of the role of ICTs in increasing the competitiveness of enterprises, and improved access to information and communication technology of the poor strata of the population in the region in order to reduce the digital divide.

Results

77. Across the region, NGOs and other institutions concerned with poverty reduction and employment creation increased their awareness of the various ICT applications for socio-economic development. ESCWA initiated two field projects aimed at empowering individuals and supporting community development and that put forth a business model intended for replication. Specifically, the three multipurpose technology community centres (MTCCs) in Akkar, North Lebanon, which were established by ESCWA in 2003, provided training for 279 trainees on basic computer skills as a measure to increase employment opportunities.

78. The MTCC model is being replicated, albeit with minor modifications, in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, thereby meeting the set target. Additionally, ESCWA developed a website to provide information on available projects that target employment creation and poverty reduction for stakeholders and the Governments of the ESCWA region (the website is available at: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/mtecpr/>).

Expected accomplishment 5: Improved availability, accessibility and usage of national and regional data and information in socio-economic fields.

Results

79. The work of ESCWA led to the adoption by member countries of a list of ICT indicators, which was included in the list of core ICT indicators by the global Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. A technical working group on ICT indicators involving all 13 ESCWA members has been formed at the initiative of ESCWA and communicates online on various development and capacity-building issues.

Additionally, ESCWA built the capacity of national statistical officials and other users through the Workshop on Information Society Measurements: Core Indicators, Statistics and Data Collection (Beirut, 7-10 June 2005). At the global level and in recognition of its leading role in this area, ESCWA was requested to draft the principles and recommendations concerning ICT topics in the "Global United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses" for the 2010 round, which covers the period 2005-2010.

80. The development of the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) was finalized for 15 database modules, with six modules populated with data on water, agriculture, energy, science/technology, ICT and environment, thereby fulfilling the target of six. ESIS was published on the Internet in November 2005 (available at: <http://esis.escwa.org.lb/>), and data quality increased significantly given the filtering functions of the system on invalid values or redundant statistics.

Lessons learned for subprogramme 5

81. Fund-raising for the implementation of some of the projects under the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society (RPoA) could contribute towards reducing the digital divide. Moreover, there is a need for more workshops, field projects and advisory services to help member countries and increase the impact of the work of ESCWA.

SUBPROGRAMME 6. COMPARABLE STATISTICS FOR IMPROVED PLANNING AND POLICY DECISIONS

82. This subprogramme is implemented by the Statistics Coordination Unit and aims to improve the statistical capabilities of the countries in the region and the timely availability of comparable statistics, thereby allowing for informed decision-making. There are four expected accomplishments under this subprogramme. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of these.

Expected accomplishment 1: Improved national capacity for the production and dissemination of quality statistics.
--

Results

83. At the sixth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 6-8 October 2004), all 13 ESCWA members adopted five measures for harmonizing and improving the quality of statistics on population and housing censuses, trade in services, information society indicators, the application of the System of National Accounts 1993 (SNA 93) and the MDGs. ESCWA workshops and work contributed towards improving knowledge and skills on merchandise trade statistics, social indicators, the production of comparable social statistics, energy statistics, international economic and social classifications, and migration statistics. The workshops were well received by member countries and two countries, namely, Egypt and Qatar, requested follow-up and country-specific training. Moreover, Jordan and Palestine indicated that ESCWA training on the use of DevInfo software would be used to develop a country-specific application on MDG indicators.

84. Additionally, ESCWA established a working group to develop a set of questions on migration statistics based on international concepts for collecting relevant data in order to improve the availability and use of migration statistics.

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved capacity of member countries for the implementation of comparable national accounts.

Results

85. By the end of 2005, all the member countries with the exception of two ESCWA members were applying the SNA 93 to varying extents. The annual *National accounts studies of the ESCWA region*

included updated indicators on GDP at current and constant prices and other financial statistics by country. ESCWA continued to build the capacity of member countries in collecting and producing purchasing power parities (PPPs), which is an adjusted price index that is useful for comparing GDP statistics among countries. Currently, 11 member countries are benefiting from the 2003-2006 round of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) by receiving advice and training on the implementation of international statistical standards and relevant software.

86. Moreover, through five regional workshops and four national coordinators meetings, ESCWA improved the knowledge and skills of 35 official statisticians working in the area of price statistics and national accounts, and who were acquainted with the three modules of the ICP Tool Pack software. The eleven participating countries were provided with the necessary hardware and software for building a price index database, namely, personal computers that were equipped with the ICP Tool Pack and with the Structured Product Description (SPD) software.

<p>Expected accomplishment 3: Improved capacity of member countries for the production and utilization of sectoral statistics and indicators to measure productivity and efficiency and monitor development policies in these sectors and, in particular, sustainable development indicators and statistics in new areas such as gender and poverty.</p>

Results

87. The target of 20 per cent increase in coverage of sectoral indicators on energy and water from the 2003 baseline was reached. ESCWA developed questionnaires on water and environment, with the related metadata on methodologies and definitions in Arabic and English, that raised the response of statistical offices to such questionnaires from zero in the previous biennium to eight. The ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) includes six operational modules, which contain sustainable development statistics on energy, water, environment and agriculture, and incorporate selected time series indicators of importance to international conferences and summits.

88. Additionally, the merchandise trade module contains values of detailed commodities trade statistics by Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HCDCS) for 10 countries with their trade partners. A total of 10 out of the 13 ESCWA members implemented the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3 (ISIC-R3), with three countries providing input to the Arabic version of the Revision. Moreover, all ESCWA members adopted HCDCS in their compilation and dissemination of merchandise trade statistics. This resulted in improving the availability, quality and production of comparable statistics on trade published by ESCWA, as reflected in the thirteenth and fourteenth issues of the *External trade bulletin of the ESCWA region*.

<p>Expected accomplishment 4: Increased production and utilization by member countries of a core of social indicators needed for monitoring social development policies.</p>

Results

89. Following efforts to build the capacity of countries to produce and use social indicators, ESCWA developed a set of 27 indicators that were adopted by all member countries aimed at monitoring different aspects of social development. This represents more than double the set target of 12 social indicators. These indicators were organized and stored by ESCWA on the social statistical information system (the website is available at: <http://ssis.escwa.org.lb/ssis>); and consists of four modules that provide selected indicators on population, labour force, vital statistics and indicators of the MDGs, and classified by sex, age group and other variables as appropriate. These modules allow the data to be stored in one system and facilitate the preparation of statistical reports.

90. Additionally, ESCWA continued to build the capacity of countries in the production of comparable social statistics. As evidenced by the evaluation questionnaires of the relevant workshops, activities have

been well received and have enhanced the statistical capacity of participants in terms of collecting and producing statistics based on international concepts and classifications.

Lessons learned for subprogramme 6

91. There are still many gaps in the area of statistics, particularly in official financial statistics. In general, the development of a harmonized statistical system among member countries is still in the early stages, and efforts as well as resources are needed to unify methodologies used in national statistical offices. Equally, monitoring and reporting on the MDGs remains a challenge owing to the shortage of data on poverty, unemployment and the informal sector. Through close interaction with member countries, ESCWA could further enhance the statistical capacities in these areas and promote transferable knowledge by organizing more training for trainers.

92. The availability of manuals and pamphlets in Arabic has increased the usefulness of training and enhances discussions and participation. The benefit to member countries significantly increased when officials participating in ESCWA workshops had the right expertise. Dissemination of best practices could also contribute towards increasing interaction among national statistical offices.
