



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/C.1/2024/3(Part I)
29 July 2024
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)



Statistical Committee
Sixteenth session
Manama, 22-23 October 2024

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 fifteenth session to the ESCWA secretariat

Summary

This 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 fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee, held online and in person at the United Nations House in Beirut on 16 and 17 November 2022. Those activities include developing new statistical products and tools, databases and platforms, statistical publications and briefs, reports and technical material in the fields of statistical system management, economic statistics, demographic and social statistics, gender statistics, Sustainable Development Goals data, and use of big data and geospatial information in official statistics. Activities also include convening meetings and conducting capacity-development workshops in these areas. The document briefly presents implementation measures taken pursuant to the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fifteenth session.

The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of progress in those areas and provide comments as it deems necessary.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. Management and modernization of the statistical systems	2–11	3
A. Publications, reports and technical material.....	4–7	3
B. Meetings and capacity-building activities.....	8–11	4
II. Economic statistics, national accounts, and environment statistics and accounts	12–25	5
A. Publications, reports, technical material, databases and platforms	13–20	5
B. Meetings and capacity-building activities.....	21–25	6
III. Demographic and social statistics	26–34	7
A. Publications, reports and technical material.....	27–28	7
B. Meetings and capacity-building activities.....	29–34	8
IV. Leave no one behind: gender and disability statistics.....	35–47	9
A. Publications, reports, technical material, databases and platforms	36–42	9
B. Meetings and capacity-building activities.....	43–47	10
V. Sustainable Development Goals.....	48–55	11
A. Publications, reports, technical material, databases and platforms	48–54	11
B. Meetings and capacity-building activities.....	55	12
VI. Follow-up of recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fifteenth session.....	56–58	12

Introduction

1. This 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 fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee, which was held online and in person at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 16 and 17 November 2022. These 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, gender and disability statistics, and Sustainable Development Goals data. The document also briefly presents implementation measures taken pursuant to the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fifteenth session.

I. Management and modernization of the statistical systems

2. The ESCWA secretariat focuses on strengthening institutional structures, updating statistical legislation, and modernizing the statistical systems in member States. It also continues to play a leading role in the Arab region in supporting the geospatial mandates of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), and works closely with UN-GGIM in assessing the capacity-building needs of Arab States in that area. In addition, ESCWA has established a geostatistical laboratory which consolidates Arab geostatistical data from diverse sources, transforming raw data into valuable insights that drive smarter decisions and achieve a greater impact. The laboratory has been nominated for the 2023 United Nations Secretary-General Awards under the [UN 2.0 Quintet of change](#) category through the [Leave No Location Behind](#) initiative.

3. ESCWA has integrated its online statistical information system into its [Arab Region Data and Policy Support Hub](#), an artificial-intelligence-powered policymaking decision support tool that serves as an institutional data repository for the region. ESCWA developed this tool to enable the creation of regional and national platforms and dashboards from databases covering all areas of social, economic and environmental development.

A. Publications, reports and technical material

1. *Guide on the generic law for official statistics in the Arab countries*

4. In consultation with member States, ESCWA has revised and finalized part 2 of its “Guide on the generic law for official statistics in the Arab countries” and has developed a [simulator](#) for countries to implement self-assessments of their national laws to facilitate the assessment of existing laws and the drafting of new ones. The simulator highlights articles that need to be improved, and ensures that all articles of the Guide are covered. The results can also be used by national statistical offices (NSOs) to support the implementation of new laws.

2. *Monitoring Application for Reporting on SDGs*

5. To improve the coordination of national statistical systems, manage data flows from countries and bridge data gaps, ESCWA has developed the Monitoring Application for Reporting on SDGs (MARS). Participating countries have established or improved national networks of providers of data on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). MARS was piloted in Qatar and developed with the constructive feedback of the authorities in that country. In 2023, MARS was launched in both Bahrain and Qatar. Three additional countries — Oman, Somalia, and the United Arab Emirates — are also planning to launch MARS once the training of their respective national networks of SDG data providers is complete. An online workshop was held with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics on 10 July 2024. At this session, staff were introduced to MARS and explored opportunities for using it. More countries are expected to follow.

3. *Glossaries of statistical terms*

6. A new glossary on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) has been added to the ESCWA Statistical Terms Glossary. About 250 new SDMX statistical terms have been added to the over 14,000 statistical terms already defined and translated by ESCWA in order to improve standardization, and thus support the statistical community in the region and worldwide in adopting the same statistical terminology.

4. *Regional hub for national microdata from household surveys and censuses*

7. In collaboration with member States, ESCWA is establishing a regional hub for national microdata from household surveys and censuses, which will feature data from many areas such as disability, gender and employment. The hub will allow the results of surveys carried out in the past two years to be analysed and shared, such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and Labour Force Surveys in Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, the State of Palestine and Somalia.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. *ESCWA participation at the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission in New York*

8. ESCWA organized closed meetings with Arab delegations at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 27 February 2023, during the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, and on 26 February 2024, during the fifty-fifth session, to finalize regional positions and discuss agenda items to voice points of concern and interest to the Arab region. As a result, the heads of the delegations of Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, the State of Palestine and Qatar spoke on behalf of the region at the Statistical Commission's plenary sessions on nine important agenda items and decisions, including on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, inclusive representation at the Commission, the SDGs, national accounts, the population and housing census, data science, food security statistics, business statistics, and the International Comparison programme (ICP).

9. ESCWA also participated in the proceedings of these sessions and in relevant side events, which tackled the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, SDG indicators, national accounts, population and housing censuses, climate change statistics, environmental-economic accounting, household surveys and economic statistics.

2. *Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee* (Online, [8 February 2023](#) and [7 February 2024](#))

10. The Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee met on 8 February 2023 and 7 February 2024 in preparation for the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Member States discussed the papers of the sessions and coordinated regional positions on items and resolution under discussion. The meetings were organized and facilitated by the ESCWA secretariat.

3. *Webinar on data science and big data for official statistics and the Sustainable Development Goals* (6-8 November 2023)

11. The webinar provided participants with an introduction to the fundamental concepts of data science and big data for producing official statistics and monitoring progress towards the SDGs. Participants discovered hands-on tools for big data analytics and discussed the potential of non-traditional data sources to serve as SDG indicators using case studies.

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

12. ESCWA continued to inform member States about planned updates to the global and regional economic statistics systems, in line with the priority development areas that they had identified. Work was also carried out to propose broader measures of progress under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a view to meeting the growing demand for economic statistics systems to become more responsive and inclusive. ESCWA focused on price statistics, trade data and measuring digital trade, quantifying South-South cooperation, energy and environment statistics, and using modern methods and new tools for automated data collection.

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

1. Arab trade in 2023: trends and highlights (forthcoming)

13. This statistical brief describes export and import trends in the Arab region during 2023, highlighting the importance of intraregional trade. It also tackles emerging issues in the region such as the food trade deficit, trade in green technology products, and success stories in non-traditional exports.

2. External Trade Data Platform for the Arab Region

14. This platform, developed by ESCWA, provides standardized time-series trade data for 22 Arab countries since 2022. It follows the same classification for all countries, with customized visualizations that capture intraregional trends and regional trade performance. Available in both Arabic and English, the platform is visited and cited frequently by a large number of users.

3. Arab Inflation Monitor

15. This platform provides statistics on inflation and price fluctuations in Arab countries. Information on inflation and price fluctuations is important for corporate transactions, investments and decisions by Governments and the private sector.

4. Beyond the budget: investigating food accessibility, affordability and nutrition amid the food price crisis in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2023/WP.10)

16. This paper examines the unprecedented surge in food prices in the Arab region, which have been driven by various factors including the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. It focuses on critical aspects such as food affordability, accessibility and nutrition amid rising prices. All of these hold immense significance in the context of SDG 2 on ending hunger. The paper notes that several Arab countries experienced significant spikes in food prices between 2019 and 2023, with Lebanon recording the most substantial increase. The situation raises concerns about the affordability of essential food items and the growing number of people potentially falling below the poverty line.

5. Purchasing power parity data for 2021

17. New purchasing power parities (PPPs), which provide a standardized way of assessing relative buying power in different economies, were released on 30 May 2024 by the International Comparison Program (ICP) for the reference year 2021. The data on Arab countries were provided by ESCWA, including updated figures on gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income in PPP terms as opposed to exchange rate, and affordability within the countries, measured by the price level index. With the release of this new series of

PPPs, the Arab region leads the way in providing recent estimates and valuable up-to-date information for researchers and policymakers about economic challenges.

6. *Islamic finance in the 2025 manual on national accounts*

18. ESCWA has been leading work on Islamic finance in national accounts in the region since 2017, with a series of capacity-development workshops, in addition to methodological work on concepts, measurements, and classifications, and technical advice to national statistical offices that volunteered for hands-on experimentation. These efforts have led to the addition of a separate chapter on Islamic finance in the new manual on the 2025 System of National Accounts (chapter 26) and the seventh edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (chapter 7).

7. *Assessment of physical damage caused to buildings by the war on Gaza:
October 2023 – April 2024
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2024/TP.4)*

19. This technical paper was prepared in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the United Nations Satellite Centre of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. It assesses the physical damage caused to buildings in support of the overall rapid damage and needs assessment and the post-war needs assessment. The conclusions of the paper will inform reconstruction and recovery efforts.

8. *Study on statistical business registers in Arab countries
(forthcoming)*

20. This study will provide practical guidance on how to establish, maintain and modernize statistical business registers, with some examples from Arab countries. It will address specific issues pertinent to less developed statistical systems, which are often characterized by a large informal sector and limited data sources.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. *Testing of Islamic finance in national accounts*

21. A series of meetings were held by ESCWA, the Statistical Centre of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) and the Islamic Finance Task Team to discuss the calculation of appropriate reference rates for accounting for Islamic finance in the countries working towards including it in their national accounts on a pilot basis (Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the State of Palestine). The outcomes of these tests will be included in the chapter on Islamic finance in the manual for the 2025 System of National Accounts.

2. *Meetings of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians*

22. To improve user consultation and communication with the statistical and policy communities as an essential workstream for the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians, a series of consultations was organized jointly with ESCWA and other United Nations regional commissions to understand the priorities of national statistical offices and the structure of their national statistical systems. Aside from its informal meeting of 2023, the network held separate preparatory meetings with all regional commissions, including ESCWA. A series of meetings were organized in 2023 and 2024 on housing and the United Nations data strategy.

3. *Online training course on water accounts for the Mediterranean partner countries
(April-May 2024)*

23. Under the new MEDSTAT V Programme, funded by the European Union and managed by Eurostat, ESCWA and the United Nations Statistical Division co-organized a training course consisting of three interactive live webinars to train participants in water accounting as laid out in the System of Environmental-

Economic Accounting (SEEA) – Central Framework and to present country experiences in compiling water accounts in countries that are part of the Euro-Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation programme.

4. *Third Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics and associated events*
(Bangkok, Thailand, 5-9 June 2023)

24. ESCWA and other regional commissions co-organize an annual global forum on disaster statistics, in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. At the third edition, participants discussed country experiences in the use and production of disaster-related statistics to monitor national and global disaster risk-reduction commitments or guide risk-informed development with a view to identifying replicable good practices. The forum helped in identifying priority research topics and priority needs of countries to inform capacity development and technical support. The fourth edition will be held from 28 October to 1 November 2024, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

5. *Miscellaneous: 2022 United Nations Big Data Hackathon*
(Dubai, United Arab Emirates, November 2022)

25. In this 72-hour hackathon, the ESCWA Data Eye team, formed in partnership with the American University of Beirut, succeeded in launching Spoonful, a web application aimed at optimizing in-kind food parcel distribution. Agencies can use Spoonful to check the real-time price of their usual basic commodity brands, request Spoonful's more effective choices, and identify vulnerable districts within a country.

III. Demographic and social statistics

26. 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 has continued to support the development of statistical capacity for population and housing censuses and related statistical surveys. ESCWA, in cooperation with international and regional organizations, also performed a mid-term review of the approved regional strategy on civil registration and vital statistics for Arab countries.

A. Publications, reports and technical material

1. *State of labour force statistics in Arab States*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2024/TP.3)

27. This report presents a detailed analysis of the status of labour force statistics in the Arab region, based on an online survey conducted by ESCWA in January 2023. The survey, which received responses from national statistical offices in 18 member States, focuses on data collection and dissemination methods in labour force statistics.

2. *Arab Society: Demographic and Social Trends, issue No. 16*
(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2022/2)

28. This publication presents a broad illustration of Arab society and the ways in which it has been changing, focusing on population dynamics, household composition and family formation, housing conditions, health, labour, poverty and inequality, education, culture, social participation and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. *Fifth and sixth meetings of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics*
(Beirut, 7-8 March 2023 and online, 3-4 July 2024)

29. The fifth and sixth meetings of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics discussed the work of ESCWA on supporting the promotion and modernization of demographic and social statistics in Arab countries. Participants also reviewed the availability of data on basic demographic and social indicators in Arab countries, and reconsidered the basic list of relevant sustainable development indicators in Arab countries, discussing tools for collecting data for these indicators and formulating proposed solutions to fill data gaps. Meeting reports will be submitted to the Statistical Committee in its current session under agenda item 4 (d).

2. *Regional workshop on the 2020 Population and Housing Census round: Experiences of selected Arab countries*
(online, 25-26 June 2024)

30. This meeting was organized by ESCWA, the United Nations Population Fund and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRIS) to facilitate knowledge exchange among countries on census methodologies used during the 2020 round of the Population and Housing Census, promote collective learning, and use the identified insights and best practices to refine the approach that will be followed in the upcoming 2030 census round.

3. *Mid-point review of the strategic framework for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems 2021-2025*
(Amman, 28-29 May 2024)

31. The main objective of this regional workshop was to monitor and review progress made in the implementation of the Arab civil registration and vital statistics regional strategic framework (2021-2025). Participants shared experiences that could be used to accelerate the realization of the framework's objectives over the remaining period until 2025.

4. *Special session: Data in conflict and humanitarian settings in the Arab region*
(Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, Beirut and online, 7 March 2024)

32. The special session discussed ways of continuing the production of statistical data and maintaining functional national statistical systems in conflict and humanitarian settings. Participants explored a methodological framework based on using multiple data sources for strengthening statistical data and operations in such contexts.

5. *Regional workshop on population projections and microdata files*
(Rabat, 4-8 September 2023)

33. This workshop was organized by ESCWA, the United Nations Population Fund Arab States Regional Office and AITRIS, in collaboration with the High Commission for Planning of Morocco, the National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics in Morocco and the Micro/Single Data Qualification Programme for Public Use of the University of Minnesota, United States of America. The aim was to improve participants' capacity to produce accurate and timely official statistics in support of evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of the SDGs.

6. *Regional training session on the implementation of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes in the Arab region*
(Tunis, 4-6 July 2023)

34. This regional training session, organized by ESCWA, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and AITRIS, in cooperation with the Tunisian National Institute of Statistics, introduced participants to the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes, its main use and strengths, and the challenges experienced in implementing it.

IV. Leave no one behind: gender and disability statistics

35. Over the 2023-2024 period, the ESCWA secretariat has provided guidance and methodological tools to member States on producing comparable statistics in the fields of violence against women and time-use statistics. ESCWA has also shared a large dataset on the “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. *Handbook on the Arab Gender Indicator Framework 2023 (AGIF23)*
([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2023/HANDBOOK.2](#))

36. This handbook serves as a useful information guide for statisticians, policymakers and other stakeholders for producing and disseminating comparable gender indicators highlighting priority gender issues in the region. The framework of 115 indicators covers priority areas in the Arab region linked to strategic objectives outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Handbook also provides an assessment of data availability and metadata resources to produce and disseminate comparable official statistics in line with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

2. *National gender lens pocketbooks 2022*
([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2022/POCKETBOOK.1](#))

37. In collaboration with ESCWA, seven national statistical offices produced national gender lens pocketbooks for 2022, which were issued in June 2023. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan participated in this endeavour. The pocketbooks provide a visual statistical portrait of gender-related indicators disaggregated by cities and governorates, and monitor the progress of 40 key gender indicators.

3. *Ensaf newsletter*

38. ESCWA has been regularly publishing 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. During the reporting period (since November 2022), ESCWA published issues 22, 23 and 24 of the newsletter.

4. *Gender statistics database*

39. In 2023 and 2024, 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 more than 100 indicators in 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.

5. *Disability in the Arab region: an overview (third edition)*
(forthcoming)

40. ESCWA, in collaboration with member States, has produced a third edition of its flagship report on disability in the Arab region. The report has three parts. The first presents a regional comparison of the prevalence of disability in countries and their demographic profiles. The second provides information on the socioeconomic situation of persons with disabilities in comparison with those with no disabilities. The third includes profiles for each country, illustrating data from the latest surveys and censuses that have been covered in the report.

6. *Regional guidelines on improving the production of disability statistics II*
(forthcoming)

41. ESCWA, in collaboration with the Washington Group, has produced a second edition of its regional guidelines on improving the production of disability statistics. The publication is intended to improve the production and dissemination of harmonized disability data, including the collection of in-depth information on the well-being of persons with disabilities. It has two parts. The first provides information on the development of disability concepts and the implementation of standards to improve the collection of harmonized data, illustrated by success stories from the region. The second presents a proposal for a household questionnaire with a disability module to collect in-depth information on the lives and well-being of persons with disabilities.

7. *Disability statistics database*

42. In 2023 and 2024, ESCWA has also updated its disability database to build a comprehensive view of statistics relating to persons with disabilities by highlighting inequalities between persons with and without disabilities. ESCWA seeks to improve the compilation of comparable disability statistics and has played an important role in improving disability statistics in the region by publishing guidelines and organizing workshops to improve national data collection tools. The current database of 140 indicators is expected to increase to cover additional indicators and areas, including population and living conditions, education and literacy, employment and unemployment, and health and well-being.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

1. *Virtual workshop on gender statistics*
(7-9 May 2024)

43. ESCWA, in cooperation with AITRIS, organized a virtual workshop on gender statistics from 7 to 9 May 2024. The workshop informed participants about gender indicators within global and national frameworks, including the SDGs. It also addressed methodologies, calculation methods and results analysis, and presented ways to update data from different sources.

2. *Regional workshop on time-use statistics: methods and uses*
(Tunis, 10-12 October 2023)

44. ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division and AITRIS, held this workshop to develop national capacities on the methodology used to collect and produce comparable high-quality data related to time use through innovative and digitalized data collection methods. It also analysed data used to inform and answer policy questions, and to create a better understanding of the progress made towards achieving the SDGs.

3. *Webinar on measuring gender-based violence in Africa, Western Asia and Europe*
(15-17 May 2023)

45. ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has organized a webinar series on measuring gender-based violence in Africa, Western Asia and Europe to enhance knowledge and capacities on the use of population surveys and administrative data for monitoring gender-based violence.

4. *Webinar on disability and gender statistics*
(30 April 2024)

46. ESCWA held this online meeting with focal points from NSOs in member States to brief them on its programme in disability and gender, including publications and workshops, and development of relevant databases and tools. Participants also discussed national and regional needs in these areas to inform planning for future activities and to assess areas where ESCWA support would be useful.

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

47. ESCWA represented the Arab region in several regional and international meetings, and was invited to speak about disability statistics activities in the Arab region in the following meetings: [The United Nations World Data Forum 2023 – Maximizing the use and value of disability data and data partnerships for inclusive development, Hangzhou, China, 25 April 2023](#), and the [Washington Group WG22 Annual Meeting, 20 October 2022](#).

V. Sustainable Development Goals

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

1. *Progress towards achieving the SDGs in the Arab region: 2023 and 2024*

48. The 2023 and 2024 reports on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region provide an overview of the region's performance in terms of each of the 17 SDGs at Goal, target, and indicator levels. They also provide key messages on each goal. Despite challenges, Arab countries have managed to increase data availability, but for many targets, data are either scarce or totally lacking.

2. *Tracking progress towards achieving the SDGs in the Arab region: methodology*
(forthcoming)

49. This technical report (available in English) provides information on tracking methods applied in the Arab SDG Monitor and uses various user-friendly visualizations to monitor progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

3. *ESCWA SDMX converter: a guidebook*
(forthcoming)

50. This technical document explains the data structure of the SDGs. It also includes information on other key SDMX concepts such as data flow and content constraints. The document also explains the data exchange and conversion mechanism using Excel workbooks, along with examples for data entry and validation using the ESCWA SDMX Converter interface.

4. *SDG vulnerability frameworks to leave no one behind*
([E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2023/TP.1](#))

51. This report sets out SDG vulnerability frameworks, which were developed to encourage countries to produce disaggregated data on vulnerable populations and make them available to policymakers. The four frameworks on gender, disability, children and young people, and older persons are intended to facilitate and improve data production and the dissemination of indicators related to vulnerable groups, including monitoring and reporting on the national and regional impact of policies to leave no one behind. The frameworks were developed following a detailed assessment of SDG indicators and their respective metadata across the 2030 Agenda.

5. *E-handbook on SDG framework and metadata*

52. Since November 2022, 239 areas of SDG metadata were revised by custodian agencies and were subsequently updated and translated into Arabic in the e-handbook on SDG metadata. The resources for each indicator were also updated. The e-handbook is available in English and Arabic.

6. *SDG database and dashboards*

53. 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 Goal, target and indicator, and tracks progress made towards achieving the SDGs according to the 5 Ps (people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership). The Monitor also serves as a regional hub for the national SDG reporting platforms of 19 Arab countries, with national data officially disseminated by countries and revised in consultation with ESCWA to ensure compliance with 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. National data availability has increased, ranging from 33 per cent to 67 per cent after ESCWA implemented SDG data revisions. Six countries (Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, and Somalia) have incorporated their ESCWA-powered national reporting platform into their official websites.

54. ESCWA has also developed the SDMX platform with the aim of facilitating the timely exchange and dissemination of high-quality national SDG data to the national reporting platforms hosted on the Arab SDG Monitor. The converter uses an up-to-date validation tool in accordance with SDG metadata standards. By the end of 2023, 16 Arab countries had successfully updated their national reporting platforms.

B. Meetings and capacity-building activities

Series of webinars on Sustainable Development Goal indicators

55. During the reporting period, ESCWA, in collaboration with 19 United Nations agencies, held three focused regional capacity-building webinars to address methodological issues, the coordination of national statistical systems and data flow challenges. Since this capacity-development work began, ESCWA has held 50 webinars whose resources and outcomes were disseminated to over 1,500 experts. ESCWA has also held various online bilateral meetings with national statistical offices to increase SDG data availability and reconcile data discrepancies.

**VI. Follow-up of recommendations made by the Statistical Committee
at its fifteenth session**

56. At its fifteenth session held on 16 and 17 November 2022, the Statistical Committee issued several recommendations to ESCWA member States and to the ESCWA secretariat.

57. Member States are invited to report on implementation measures taken pursuant to recommendations issued at the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee ([E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/7/Report](#)) and addressed to them under agenda item 4 of the current session.

58. The following table sets out the recommendations addressed to the ESCWA secretariat and measures put in place for implementing them, as presented in this report and in other documents submitted to the Committee under agenda item 4.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
(a)	Support member States in formulating their national strategies for the development of statistics at various stages;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA is actively updating the Guide on the generic law for official statistics in the Arab countries and revising national statistical legislation when requested. It has also developed a simulator for countries to perform self-assessments and carry out analyses of articles in their national legislation. • ESCWA made available the SDG data collection tool, a strategic tool for national statistical offices to produce quality and comparable data that would contribute to bridging data gaps and assist in formulating statistical development strategies. • ESCWA provides support to improve coordination and modernization of administrative records, and improve data flows through the MARS monitoring application for reporting on the SDGs. • The regional workshop on improving civil registration and vital statistics systems in the Arab region held in Amman on 28 and 29 May 2024 reviewed progress in the implementation of the agreed 2021-2025 regional strategic framework on civil registration and vital statistics, which informs national strategies on the subject. • ESCWA held a regional workshop on statistical records for public institutions in Amman on 25-27 June 2024. The workshop reviewed the latest international recommendations on creating and developing institutional records based on administrative sources, which are fundamental for advancing economic statistics.
(b)	Support member States in developing strategies to bridge gaps in data flows for sustainable development indicators, so as to ensure the sustainability and modernization of national reporting platforms and to exchange statistical data and metadata nationally between components of statistical systems using modern technologies such as SDMX to ensure that no one is left behind, stressing that statistical agencies should be the source of national data and prioritizing the development of administrative records as an alternative data source;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA supported member States in developing their SDG national reporting platforms in three phases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Phase I: Collecting national data and completing the time series with available data; reviewing and improving data quality. ○ Phase II: Establishing a network of focal points for SDGs. ○ Phase III: Reconciling discrepancies. ○ Phase IV: will consist of establishing national SDG data frameworks for member States who request ESCWA support in doing so. • The fifth and sixth meetings of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics presented available data for basic demographic and social indicators in Arab countries, discussed tools for capturing data on these indicators and formulated solutions for bridging data gaps.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
(c)	Continue producing PPPs periodically and publishing regional results, and develop innovative tools for price data collection and analysis using modern technologies;	<p>In response to the recommendation, ESCWA continued to undertake the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the annual development and update of household consumption and non-household consumption surveys. • Support the annual implementation of national surveys and data collection, revision and validation for the calculation of regional PPPs. • Develop PPP forecasts for current years. • Periodically publish PPP results and analysis. <p>ESCWA also developed an automated price collection tool to facilitate regular and centralized price data collection, increase coverage and efficiency and reduce the probability of data entry errors (E/ESCWA/C.1/2024/3(Part II)).</p>
(d)	Strengthen technical support to member States based on their needs in using new technologies to collect, process, analyse and disseminate statistical data; in contributing to the development of human and institutional capacities on the integration of statistical and geospatial information; in formulating guidelines for the implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework; and in conducting population censuses, especially the 2020 cycle, in accordance with resources available to the ESCWA secretariat;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has developed an SDMX Converter for SDGs, allowing member States to disseminate high-quality standardized SDG data. ESCWA has also implemented several SDMX workshops covering different topics at various levels. • ESCWA has written syntax on SPSS, Stata, and Python to produce disability indicators using microdata from multiple indicator cluster surveys and labour force surveys. • ESCWA has also provided advisory services and capacity-building workshops and organized study tours to build the capacity of member States to use new technologies for data and to conduct population censuses (E/ESCWA/C.1/2024/3(Part II)).
(e)	Enable member States to keep abreast of methodological developments in economic, social, environmental and demographic statistics, in collaboration with regional and international organizations, and in line with the priorities and needs of member States and of ESCWA;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has been continuously updating the translation of the Arabic metadata in the SDG e-handbook. In 2023, ESCWA updated 168 metadata categories for 128 indicators. • ESCWA has developed the 2023 Arab Gender Indicator Framework, which aligns with the 2030 Agenda and its core objective of leaving no one behind, offering a framework of 115 indicators that cover priority areas in the Arab region and are linked to strategic objectives outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. • ESCWA has prepared a second edition of its regional guidelines on improving the production of disability statistics to improve the production and dissemination of harmonized disability data, including the collection of in-depth information on the well-being of persons with disabilities. • ESCWA developed the MARS monitoring application for reporting on the SDGs, along with three handbooks: one for data providers, one for NSO coordinators and one for custodian agencies. • ESCWA has organized training sessions on various social topics, including population projections, the International Classification of Crime for Statistical purposes and refugee data.

	Recommendation	Implementation measures
(f)	Coordinate efforts to define a common Arab position on the various agenda items of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, while preserving countries' right to intervene on issues that directly concern them;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA organizes an annual meeting for national statistical offices in Arab countries to coordinate positions on agenda items of the Statistical Commission. This increases the effectiveness of the region's work with the Commission. Virtual meetings were held on 8 February 2023 and on 7 February 2024.
(g)	Continue to support the use of official statistics, and ensure data quality in accordance with international standards;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDG data quality processes: to ensure that national SDG data meet highest standards and adhere with global standards, ESCWA, in collaboration with NSOs, has reviewed survey questionnaires against standard ones, and has developed the ESCWA SDMX Converter which makes it possible to capture any deviation from official standards. • SDMX workshops: since 2020, ESCWA has been holding regional workshops on the use of SDMX for reporting on the SDGs. • ESCWA has been holding annual meetings of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics and other workshops related to censuses and civil registration and vital statistics.
(h)	Support member States' efforts to exchange expertise, successful experiences and good practices among them, and to document them on the ESCWA website to facilitate access to them;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has implemented 6 South-South Cooperation meetings covering 13 SDG indicators with the objective of developing capacities and sharing good practices for collecting and disseminating SDG indicators which are only produced and disseminated on the Global SDG Database by a handful of countries in the region. • The Ensaf newsletter, published by ESCWA twice a year, provides information and shares good national practices and activities on gender statistics in the region. • Other capacity-development and knowledge-sharing activities and study tours are reported on in E/ESCWA/C.1/2024/3(Part II).
(i)	Continue developing the modern ESCWA data ecosystem and provide it with interactive tools to support policymaking, by benefiting from artificial intelligence and geospatial techniques, so as to ensure that it is able to download data from other regional and international organizations and use them to serve member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA has continued to develop its Arab Region Data and Policy Support Hub, in coordination with other regional United Nations agencies. The Hub relies on artificial intelligence and geospatial techniques to instantly draw data from other regional and international organizations, and is linked to ESCWA databases mentioned above, such as the Arab SDG Monitor and the Arab Trade Indicators database, and to policymaking tools such the Index Simulator for Policymaking in the Arab Region. • As mentioned in this document, ESCWA has continued to develop its gender and disability statistics databases, as well as its regional SDG database. It is providing support to NSOs to develop and update their national SDG reporting platforms.
