



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Expert Group Meeting on Social Inequalities in the Arab Region Post-COVID-19: The Road to Structural Transformation

Virtual meeting, Wednesday 1 September 2021 (15.00-18.30- Beirut time)

Concept note

Background

Despite a growing number of social reforms in many countries of the region, fragmented health services, subpar educational institutions and inadequate social protection measures, social inequalities have been persistent and deepening. The response of Arab Governments to the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these disparities, even if some measures were effective in the immediate term. In fact, Arab countries have responded rapidly to deal with the economic effects of the crisis on firms and households as well as to keep their financial markets in operation. In terms of social protection policies, governments implemented a range of programmes, such as social assistance funds; cash transfers; food transfers; school feeding; public works; subsidies or waivers; tax relief and VAT exemptions; employment protection; and health insurance.

It is important to analyze these programmes and the overall Arab government response to the pandemic to draw lessons and ensure that the region can be better equipped to face future pandemics and crises. In that context, UNESCWA in partnership with UNESCO, Arab Regional Office produced a report titled “Social Inequalities in the Arab Region Post-COVID-19: The Road to Structural Transformation” (Social Development Report 4) that embarked on actionable policy research to examine and assess the interplay of the social policy dimensions, global experiences, and regional responses to the pandemic in the Arab region. By critically engaging with the actions and priorities of a variety of stakeholders, the report develops and advocates for policy solutions for judicious and methodical implementation of the SDGs, combating inequality and supporting the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda.

Objective of the meeting

The meeting aims at discussing the first draft of the report titled “Social Inequalities in the Arab Region Post-COVID-19: The Road to Structural Transformation” (Social Development Report 4) during a virtual expert group meeting, organized jointly by UN-ESCWA and UNESCO, Regional Office for Arab States, that will take place on Wednesday 1 September 2021, from 15.00-18.30 (Beirut time). Expert’s feedback shall be integrated to enrich the report and validate the data.

Participants

Experts on social and economic policies focusing on the Arab region shall be invited to provide feedback on the draft report.

Venue and Time

The meeting shall be held virtually on Wednesday 1 September 2021, from 15 .00-18.30 (Beirut time). In addition to an introductory session, five sessions shall cover each chapter of the report (agenda attached). The meeting link shall be sent to you two days before the meeting.

Language

The meeting shall be held in English.

Contact

For further details about logistics and organization, please contact Ms. Manal Tabbara on tabbaram@un.org.