



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Expert Group Meeting

Social Expenditure Monitor Report: Toward Making Budgets More Efficient and Effective to Achieve the SDGs

Kempinski Hotel, Amman, 1-2 December 2021

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

The Social Expenditure Monitor (SEM) report, jointly produced by UNESCWA, UNDP, and UNICEF, is considered the first report in the region that analyzes the results and major trends of social expenditure for the Arab States. The report sheds light on the importance of social spending for supporting and promoting inclusive growth in the region, including in supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It discusses the need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of spending and fiscal sustainability. To this end, it highlights the key challenges that undermine public financial management (PFM) in the Arab region and calls for related PFM reform as a critical enhancer of social expenditure and enabler of efforts to build a more socially just and inclusive society. The report concludes with a set of recommendations to improve data on social expenditures and implement fiscal policy, budgeting and other PFM reforms toward fostering inclusive development.

The report contributes to new knowledge and analysis in several ways. First, it improves measurement of social expenditure conceptually through the SEM data disaggregation framework. It introduces a tool to enable regional stakeholders to assess public expenditures and their efficiency and effectiveness in achieving socio-economic outcomes using a more dis-aggregated classification of expenditure data than has existed previously. It also provides comprehensive content on and analysis of the situation of PFM in the Arab States, and as such, it is a valuable contribution to the literature on PFM in the region. The report not only improves quality of policy recommendations on fiscal policy budget and PFM reforms toward "smart spending" with improved efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure but also carries potential to enhance research and policy related to social expenditure and social policy reforms.

During the preparation of the report, a regional expert group meeting is planned to take place on December 1-2 to discuss the draft chapters of the SEM report and its key messages. The draft report will be reviewed by reputed experts who will act as peer reviewers to the report, a wide range of stakeholders in the regional consultation, and colleagues in the ESCWA publications committee.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The main objectives of this Expert Group Meeting are to:

- Present the key message of the draft chapters of SEM report
- Discuss peer reviewers' comments on the draft chapters of the SEM Report and agree on the key messages of the SEM Report
- Discuss the next steps of the Final Report dissemination, launching, and production

III. PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the regional meeting are expected to include representatives from academia, reputed experts in the field, UN entities and partners.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

This meeting will be held on 1-2 December 2021, in Kempinski Hotel, Amman, Jordan. The logistics information will be shared with the participants prior to the meeting. Discussions will be undertaken in the English language. There will be no interpretation provided during the meeting.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

For any inquiries, kindly contact the following meeting focal points:

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