

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

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**Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work  
and of recommendations made by the Committee  
on Social Development at its eleventh session****Summary**

Since the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held in October 2017, in Khartoum, the Sudan, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has carried out a series of activities under subprogramme 2 on Social Development.

These activities include expert group meetings, publications, capacity-building, technical studies and field projects. They were implemented to assist member States in developing appropriate social policies in five main thematic areas of work, namely: social inclusion; social protection; population, demographic trends and development; international migration; and social justice and participation.

The present document provides an overview of the progress made in implementing these activities under subprogramme 2 for 2018-2019. It also contains activities that were implemented in 2017 but not included in the report submitted to the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development.

Members of the Committee are invited to take note of these activities and express their views and suggestions to guide the future work of ESCWA.

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## Introduction

1. The Social Development Division is responsible for implementing subprogramme 2 on Social Development of the strategic framework of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The objective of the subprogramme for the 2018-2019 biennium is to achieve the adoption by member States of a rights-based approach to equitable, inclusive and participatory social development towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. Expert group meetings, publications, technical studies and field projects on Social Development have been implemented to assist member States in developing policies and exchanging experiences at the global and regional level.
3. The present document reviews the development-related activities implemented by ESCWA since the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development held in Khartoum in October 2017. It also highlights activities implemented pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee at that session.

### I. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK SINCE THE ELEVENTH SESSION

4. The main activities of subprogramme 2 undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat are grouped into the following five priority thematic areas: (a) social inclusion; (b) social protection; (c) population, demographic trends and development; (d) international migration; and (e) social justice and participation.

#### A. SOCIAL INCLUSION

5. The work of ESCWA subprogramme 2 on social inclusion during this reporting period focused on four areas; namely older persons, persons with disabilities, youth and inclusive cities.

##### 1. *Older persons*

6. Along with the preparation of the Population and Development Report Issue No. 8: Prospects of Ageing with Dignity in the Arab Region (PDR8), ESCWA held two expert group meetings. The first was organized in Beirut on 28 and 29 March 2017, as a preparatory consultation to brainstorm and finalize the optimal framework and outline of the report. Experts discussed rapidly growing ageing population in the region and vulnerable socioeconomic conditions of many older persons and recommended an original chapter on future of ageing in the context of 2030 Agenda.
7. The second expert group meeting was held in Beirut on 23 and 24 November 2017. Prominent regional and international experts reviewed the draft of the PDR8 and examined the various perspectives of its key findings based on robust evidence on the rapid growth in the ageing population and outlined the concerns about vulnerable state of older persons in the Arab region. Lead and contributing authors along with subject experts provided constructive feedback for conceiving and finalizing the exhaustive policy recommendations, including on long-term care.
8. The PDR8 ([E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/3](#)) flags the advent of a rapid ageing transition in the region and highlights vulnerable conditions of older persons living in poverty, ill-health and isolation. The report urgently calls for adequate social protection and timely preparedness for long-term care provision, especially for older women. It also provides a wealth of multisectoral recommendations for protecting and empowering older persons immediately, and in 2030 and beyond, relying on a modelling framework into 2050.
9. ESCWA produced the following three technical papers on older persons:

(a) *Ageing in the ESCWA Member States: Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* ([E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.12](#)). This report captures progress and main

challenges in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and identifies opportunities and issues of priority for the region that will guide work on ageing in the short to medium term. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations which served as a background document to the Third Regional Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing Review meeting, which was held in Beirut on 3 August 2017. The findings of the review informed the 2018 report of the Secretary-General on the “Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing”;

(b) *Global Frameworks on Older Persons* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.16). This paper captures and discusses all global frameworks on older persons including the International Conference on Population and Development Plan of Action (1994), Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It calls upon countries to adopt an integrated approach towards implementing the different frameworks;

(c) *Demographics of Ageing in the Arab region: Trends, Patterns and Prospects into 2030 and 2050* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.17). This evidence-based paper examines ageing in the Arab region utilizing past and future demographic trends in all 22 member countries from 1970 to 2030 and beyond into 2050. It analyses chief determinants of population ageing as a consequence of current and foreseen changing trends and patterns in population size, growth, fertility, mortality and migration. The paper also captures data on dependency ratios and key developments in age structures.

## 2. Persons with disabilities

10. ESCWA continued to play an active role in promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda focusing on such areas as disability data and statistics, governments’ institutional set-ups, access to social protection, inclusive labour markets and disability assessment and determination processes. In this regard, ESCWA implemented several activities of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability (IGED) that was established in 2016 at the request of ESCWA member countries.

11. For a detailed report of IGED activities please see the separate document “Activities of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability” (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part II)).

12. In addition to IGED activities, ESCWA produced the following publications, and technical material on disability:

(a) *Monitoring Compliance of National Legal Frameworks in Arab Countries with the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.21). This paper is an exploratory study into the development of indicators for assessing the compliance of national legal frameworks in Arab countries with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These indicators aim to measure the extent to which countries’ legal frameworks have been adjusted according to the word and spirit of the Convention, but do not examine how or whether these legal texts are implemented. Instead, the indicators are intended to reveal States’ commitment and intent to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities as recognized in the Convention. Given that many countries adopted disability-related legal texts prior to its ratification, indicators aim to allow for the identification of legal gaps that are not in compliance with the CRPD;

(b) *Strengthening Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities in Arab Countries* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/2). The report’s main objective is to provide an overview of social protection for persons with disabilities in Arab countries in light of CRPD and the 2030 Agenda. It aims to enrich and expand the current discussion about ongoing reforms of social protection systems in several Arab countries. The report focuses on social insurance, social assistance and health care. It aspires to understand whether social protection is accessible to persons with disabilities, and whether it adequately responds to their needs and preferences.

The report concludes with several recommendations to ensure that social protection is accessible and adequate to the persons of disabilities in line with the principles of CRPD;

(c) *Disability in the Arab Region, 2018* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/1). The publication presents the regional data of disability statistics which is in line with international definitions of the Washington Group and is internationally comparable. It is the result of a series of capacity-building workshops that the ESCWA Statistics Division conducted with the National Statistics Offices of member States. The report analyses statistics relating to the demographic characteristics and socioeconomic situation of persons with disabilities in the Arab region. It is based on data from recent national censuses and surveys that have been harmonized and verified by ESCWA in accordance with international standards;

(d) *Social Development Bulletin: Disability and Sustainable Development Goal 11 in the Arab Region* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/TP.2). The bulletin discusses how critical it is that cities make public services and infrastructure accessible to vulnerable populations, including women, children, elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Safe and accessible public transportation and green spaces are key to facilitating an inclusive urban environment in which persons with disabilities can live and work. Although challenges remain, much progress has been made in Arab cities to further the objectives of SDG 11.

### 3. Youth

13. ESCWA work on empowering youth in the Arab region during this reporting period covered the following activities and key outputs:

(a) Expert Group Meeting on the ESCWA report *The Situation of Youth Participation in Decision-making in Selected Arab Countries* in Beirut on 6 and 7 April 2017.<sup>1</sup> This meeting was designed to engage the member countries in an interactive discussion over the findings and recommendations of the report. Its relevance lies in its contribution to understanding the situation of youth participation in the Arab region, highlighting shortfalls in youth participation in decision-making and drawing lessons on Governments' engagement with youth and the development of inclusive and effective youth-oriented policies and sustainable participation channels;

(b) Toolkit on *Building Capacities of Arab Youth in Participating in Public Policy and Decision-Making processes* (2017).<sup>2</sup> The toolkit was developed to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies;

(c) Three national workshops on *Enhancing the Capacities of Arab Youth Participation in Public Life and Decision-making Processes*, held in Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia in August and September 2017. These workshops aimed at (a) testing the newly created manual on enhancing youth participation in decision-making processes; (b) introducing the concept, principles, dimensions and tools of youth participation; and (c) identifying the situation and challenges of participatory governance and youth participation in the Arab region. Participants were trained to influence public policies and the decision-making process by acquiring requisite skills such as leadership, communication, advocacy, policy dialogue and consensus-building skills;

(d) Regional workshop on *Strengthening the Capacity of Governments in the ESCWA Region to Respond to the Needs of Youth in Formulating Inclusive and Sustainable Development Policies* held in Beirut in October 2017. The workshop was attended by youth activists and leaders, civil society representatives and Government officials from the member countries as well as experts from academic institutions. The workshop aimed to discuss the outcome of the call of ESCWA for proposals on youth empowerment, identify priority

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page\\_attachments/youth-participation-decisionmaking-arab-countries-final-report-en.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/youth-participation-decisionmaking-arab-countries-final-report-en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page\\_attachments/enhancing-youth-participation-public-issues-training-toolkitfin-ar.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/enhancing-youth-participation-public-issues-training-toolkitfin-ar.pdf).

policies for the promotion of youth empowerment in the Arab region and share lessons learned between the countries in the region on youth issues. The main outcome of the workshop was the launching the Youth Policy Toolbox (see (g) below);

(e) Two national dialogue meetings for youth in Tunisia in October 2017 on (a) building sustainable peace nationally and internationally; and (b) building friendly municipalities for children and adolescents. These two nationals' dialogues resulted in the adoption of a "Declaration for Tunisian Youth on The Role of Youth in Building Sustainable Peace Nationally and Internationally" and a "Declaration for a Friendly Municipality for Children and Youth";

(f) Six workshops on the needs of youth in Jordan were held in November 2017 in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Telecommunications, Al-Ain Haifaa Najjar company and Zain telecommunications company. The workshops were organized in various locations in Jordan, including the north, centre and south, to ensure maximum outreach and geographical representation. The outcome of these workshops was the identification of national priorities and the creation of an action plan in partnership with decision-makers highlighting actions to move forward;

(g) Youth Policy Toolbox for governments on planning, designing and implementing youth policies, produced in December 2017 in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). It consisted of a platform for sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices on youth issues from across the regions. The toolbox included a newly developed training manual on enhancing youth participation in decision-making processes, it also included a total of 30 best practices.

14. In addition to the above activities in the youth area, ESCWA contributed to the United Nations Youth Strategy, also known as *Youth 2030, Working with and for Young People*. This strategy was endorsed by the Secretary-General on 22 June 2018 and launched on 24 September 2018. It was developed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), with contributions from United Nations entities, including ESCWA.

#### 4. Inclusive cities

15. ESCWA made substantive inputs to global reports on issues related to the inclusive cities, namely "The Quadrennial Report: UN-Habitat Strategy to report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda" and the "SDG 11 Synthesis Report", which were presented and discussed at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2018.

16. ESCWA work on issues of inclusive cities included the organization of the following meetings:

(a) *Expert Group Meeting on Urban Profiling in the Arab States: Cities Under Stress*, organized by ESCWA and the UN-Habitat Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) on 30 January 2019 in Beirut. The meeting brought together local government officials and regional urban profiling experts to identify common regional post-crisis urban challenges, discuss lessons learned in Iraq, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic and draw upon existing expertise to improve the upcoming profiling work. The participants included senior officials from municipalities, city planning institutions and urban planning agencies in selected Arab cities, namely: Basra and Nineveh, Iraq; El Zawiyah, Libya; Damascus, the Syrian Arab Republic; Ma'rib, Aden and Sana'a, Yemen. The meeting succeeded in flagging the common regional post-crises urban challenges that will be considered in the recovery and reconstruction plans of these cities;

(b) *Planning Session on Advancing the Land Governance Agenda in the Arab Region*. The meeting was co-organized by the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), UN-Habitat and the World Bank with the support of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and development (BMZ) and ESCWA, on 18 and 19 February 2019 in Beirut. The overall objective of the meeting was to provide updates on the work being

done or planned and to strategize on how to join efforts among land initiatives and partners to achieve the common goals outlined in the Dubai Declaration that was adopted at the first Arab Land Conference in February 2018. The meeting concluded with a proposed road map for 2019-2020 that identifies some of the most urgent actions and activities to be initiated by Arab Land Initiative partners.

17. In addition, ESCWA produced a technical paper entitled *Social Housing in the Arab Region: An Overview of Policies for Low-Income Households' Access to Adequate Housing* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.7). The paper discusses social housing in the member countries, grouped into four subregions, namely: Mashreq (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic), Maghreb (Libya, Morocco, Tunisia), Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates) and the Arab Least Developed Countries (Mauritania, the Sudan, Yemen).

18. ESCWA also developed a policy brief entitled *Technology as a tool to make cities safe and combat violence against women* (E/ESCWA/ECW/2019/Brief.1) It explores one of the main challenges resulting from the unprecedented urbanization boom that the Arab region is witnessing specifically, the sexual violence and harassment of women in public spaces. The brief introduces a mapping of Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, the New Urban Agenda and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. It examines international and regional solutions to addressing women's safety concerns in public spaces and highlights successful experiences in the area. It discusses how countries utilize technology, particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), to innovatively raise awareness and advocate for safe public spaces, report unsafe public spaces and track safety of women and girls. It concludes with recommendations to governments and relevant stakeholders in the Arab region on ways to use ICTs to comprehensively address violence against women in public spaces and make cities safe for all, thus foster the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

### 5. Inclusion of Key Social Groups

19. In addition to the outputs on the four subthematic areas of social inclusion indicated above, ESCWA produced a pamphlet entitled *ESCWA approach to Key Social Groups and Emerging Issues in the Arab region* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/PAMPHLET.1). ESCWA presented this pamphlet as a contribution to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development, which was held in New York from 29 January to 7 February 2018 under the theme "Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all". The pamphlet summarizes the recent activities of ESCWA in relation to the situation of key social groups – notably youth, older persons and persons with disabilities – as well as emerging development, critical to the achievement of the SDGs. The pamphlet explores why these issues are vital to the development of the Arab region and how ESCWA supports its member States in these areas.

### B. SOCIAL PROTECTION

20. ESCWA has organized an Expert group meeting to discuss the report on *Social Protection Reform in the Arab Region* in Beirut on 14 May 2019. The objective of the expert group meeting was to facilitate experience exchange on recent and ongoing reforms in the spheres of social insurance, social assistance and health care in the Arab countries and inform the forthcoming Social Protection Reform in the Arab Region report.

21. ESCWA has also produced the following publication and technical paper on social protection:

(a) A publication on *Social Protection Reform in Arab Countries* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2019/1). This is the first regional report dedicated to the considerable reforms carried out by Arab countries in the field of social protection. The report discusses social protection as an integrated system and presents countries progress in the areas of social insurance, social assistance and health care. It also discusses the informational and

institutional infrastructure set up to govern social protection systems and complex political economic aspects impacting upon the outcome of reforms;

(b) *Social Protection Country Profile: Mauritania* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/CP.2) report presents a comprehensive profile of social protection in Mauritania. It covers pensions, health care, cash transfers, and food and energy subsidies, as well as other social insurance and social assistance programmes in place in the country. The report then discusses the challenges facing the social protection system in Mauritania, including low coverage, fragmentation and lack of targeting. The health system has seen considerable improvements in recent years, but lack of support for the poorest and supply problems in rural areas still impede the achievement of universal coverage.

### C. POPULATION, DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT

22. In partnership with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Arab States Regional Office and the League of Arab States (LAS), ESCWA organized the *Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after 2013 Cairo Declaration* in Beirut from 30 October to 1 November 2018. The main objective of this high-level and multi-stakeholder conference was to review and discuss progress, challenges and priorities in implementing 2013 Cairo Declaration, relying on review report and country presentations. The conference highlighted links with 2030 Agenda, called for integrating population issues in development planning and coined key messages relayed to the United Nations Commission on Population and Development in its fifty-second session in New York. PDR8 was also launched to ensure timely pronouncement of rapid ageing transition in the region.

23. ESCWA also produced the following publications in the area of population, demographic trends and development:

(a) *Social Development Bulletin vol. 6, Issue No. 2: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.6). This bulletin sheds light on the changes in age structure that result from the interplay between population dynamics and create a demographic window of opportunity that could lead to rapid economic growth. It highlights the importance of creating an enabling policy environment to reap the demographic dividend and developing a methodology for the estimation of its size;

(b) *The Demographic Profiles of the Arab States, 2017*, (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Country Profiles). The profiles provide demographic data and trends per Arab country for the period 1980-2050 and could serve as a valuable reference for population and development research. The key indicators include updated data on population trends, mortality, fertility, age structure, urbanization, international migration, education and youth unemployment. See <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/demographic-profiles-arab-states-2017>;

(c) *Arab Regional Review Five Years After the 2013 Cairo Declaration Pamphlet*, (E/ESCWA/SDD/2019/INF.1). This advocacy material highlights with the aid of info graphics results of ICPDs 25-year review of the Arab region. It was submitted to the fifty-second session of the Commission on Population and Development to represent the regional voice and consensus.

### D. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

24. ESCWA has produced a number of key documents on international migration since the eleventh session of the Committee, including:

(a) *2017 Situation Report on International Migration: Migration in the Arab Region and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/1). The second edition of this flagship report was prepared by the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, co-chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ESCWA, in collaboration with 13 United Nations sister agencies. It offers a standard and in-depth overview of migration trends in the region and reports on new developments



in migration governance. The thematic focus of this edition discussed framework for achieving migration-related sustainable development goals;

(b) Executive Summary of the 2017 Situation Report on International Migration: Migration in the Arab Region and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/TECHNICAL PAPER.20](#)). This brief document highlights the key findings and recommendations of the 2017 Situation Report on International Migration including the main trends and patterns in international migration in the Arab region from 2015 to 2017, developments in migration governance in Arab countries, and the positive links between international migration and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and its Relevance for the Arab Region Parliamentary Documentation* ([E/ESCWA/EC.5/2018/11](#)). This document was presented and discussed with member States at ESCWA Executive Committee in its fifth meeting on 18 December 2018. In addition, and at a broader level, the document was widely disseminated at the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, in Marrakech, Morocco on 10 and 11 December 2018 to adopt the Compact.

#### E. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PARTICIPATION

25. During the reporting period, ESCWA implemented several activities in the area of social justice and participation, including:

(a) Expert group meeting to discuss the conceptual framework and annotated outline of the *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region* in Beirut on 20 June 2017. This expert group meeting provided an opportunity for the participants to make a number of recommendations pertinent to the proposed framework of the report, and to present informed opinions on emerging issues related to inequality in the Arab region. Main key messages drawn were acknowledgments of (a) identifying structural inequalities embedded in countries' social institutions, laws and practices; (b) discussing how the three aspects of inequality (outcome, process, and autonomy) affect social welfare in a country context; and (c) studying inequality at the macro level across three country case studies;

(b) *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy, and Change in the Arab Region* ([E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/6](#)). This report examines how inequality and personal autonomy are likely to impact the broad "political settlement" in the Arab region over time. It additionally demonstrates the existence of a perceived autonomy gap, investigates its distribution, and analyzes the reasons behind this gap. Finally, it examines the implications of this gap on the attitude towards various forms of inequality in the region.

26. ESCWA also organized several dialogue series to discuss key issues in the areas of social justice and participatory development in the region, including:

(a) Dialogue on Justice Issues in the Arab Region: Six years post-uprisings, are social movements still a driver of change and justice in the Arab Region? in Beirut on 18 July 2017. This dialogue addressed the application and evolution of the concept of participatory development in the Arab region and its impact on the achievement of social justice. The meeting discussed the nature and evolution of social movements in the region with a specific focus on Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco and debated how they fared in terms of mobilization and political activism, and the challenges they faced in delivering on their promises. Participants also proposed a number of actions that civil society and activists need to take to enable them to influence policy reforms;

(b) *Policy Dialogue on the Social Development Report No. 2* in Beirut, 18 and 19 December 2017. The main purpose of this meeting was to foster policy dialogue on the levels, dimensions and measurements of inequality in Arab countries and to present recommendations on the new proposed framework in SDR-2 and its adaptation to the region;

(c) *Civil Society Dialogue on “Electoral Justice: the essence of meaningful participation in Lebanon and the Arab region”* in Beirut, April 2018. The dialogue stemmed from the need to understand the conditions surrounding the low political participation of women and youth in the Arab region. The meeting used lessons from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia as well as Europe. As such, it highlighted shortfalls in participation in political life, addressed the challenges that lie ahead for rectifying these shortfalls, and drew lessons from successful stories and experiences;

(d) *Civil Society Dialogue on Social Justice Issues in the Arab Region: Civil Society Forum* in Beirut, 10 and 11 January 2019. This meeting was organized in cooperation with the Arab NGOs Network for Development (ANND) in preparation for the Fourth Arab Economic and Social Development (AESD) Summit which convened in Beirut on 20 and 21 January 2019. The Dialogue discussed the current challenges to development in the Arab region from a civil society perspective and produced a set of messages to the Summit. ESCWA also presented a proposal to establish the first Regional Partnership Mechanism for Development (RPMD) to promote and institutionalize partnerships between ESCWA member countries and regional civil society institutions. The mechanism will also be used as a platform to advocate and further develop ESCWA normative and operational work on social justice, equality and participatory development.

27. In addition, the following technical papers were produced by ESCWA:

(a) *Social Development Bulletin (vol. 6, No. 4): Informality in the Arab Region: Another Facet of Inequality* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.15). This bulletin examines the interplay between informality and inequality in the Arab region. It explores the main dynamics that led to the growth of the informal sector in the Arab countries and proposes some policy recommendations for Arab governments to deal with this expanding phenomenon and limit its repercussions;

(b) *Sustainable Development Goals: the 2030 Agenda and the Nexus Approach* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/TP.5). This paper addresses the challenges and opportunities for implementing the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and contextualizing it to the strategies, policies and programmes of ESCWA member countries. The first part of the paper discusses a “nexus” approach for development planning based on the three clusters: (a) poverty reduction-decent employment-sustainable growth; (b) water-energy-food security and (c) equality-justice-inclusion (EJI). The second part of the paper applies the EJI nexus for mainstreaming the SDGs in two ESCWA member countries: Jordan and Lebanon, taking into consideration key institutional, legislative and policy elements;

(c) *Policy Brief: From the Ideal of Social Justice to the Concept of Inequality* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/BRIEF.2). This policy brief focuses on the concept of inequality which is one of the main components of social justice. It examines its manifestation in the Arab region and concludes with policy recommendations on how to address this challenge at all levels to ensure basic rights and fundamental freedoms to all;

(d) *Pamphlet on Social Justice Matters: a view from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/TP.6). This pamphlet provides general information and raises awareness on social justice and related challenges in the region. In addition, it presents good examples of the progress made by Arab countries in combatting the different manifestations of social injustice and highlights the role of ESCWA and its contribution in support of these objectives.

#### F. UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT PROJECTS

28. Within the framework of the United Nations Development Account, subprogramme 2 on Social Development supports the implementation of five projects.

29. The following are the activities and outputs implemented by these projects since the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development.

1. *Strengthened national capacities for integrated, sustainable and inclusive population and development policies in the Arab region*

Duration: 2014-2018

Status: Implemented

30. Launched in 2014, the project aimed to build the capacity of national population bodies and contribute to inducing meaningful policy change in five target countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

31. The activities implemented included:

(a) A study entitled “Socioeconomic Priorities for Older Persons: Means for Living with Dignity, in Lebanon” was completed and validated in a national workshop. The study provided the basis of launching the development of a cohesive and integrated ageing strategy by the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs;

(b) A zero draft of the national migration strategy entitled “Guidelines for a Migration Strategy in the Sudan” was completed, and the first national multi-stakeholder dialogue around the strategy was organized;

(c) A study on “Support for the Elaboration of a Strategic Framework for the Protection of Older Persons in Morocco” was completed in 2018;

(d) A paper on “[Population Policy in Tunisia: Priorities and Challenges](#)” was finalized in 2017;

(e) A study on “[The Availability of the Concepts of Work, Vocational Work Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation in School Textbooks in Jordan](#)” was completed and launched in a national workshop in December 2017. The Study contributed to Jordan’s efforts to reform its school curricula to stimulate employment among youth through vocational education, innovation and entrepreneurship;

(f) A series of trainings and workshops provided to the Jordanian Higher Population Council on strategic management, human resource management, ICT and technical writing skills. A series of trainings were also conducted with civil society participation on youth entrepreneurship and on mainstreaming young women issues in CSOs action plans (July to December 2018).

2. *Promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region*

Duration: 2016-2020

Status: In progress

32. This project aims at strengthening the capacity of ESCWA member States to operationalize the principles of social justice and gender equality and integrate them in development strategies and programmes. As of mid-2019, the project produced two training toolkits and organized a number of regional and subregional workshops to build national capacities on their use and application. Going forward, ESCWA is planning to develop a capacity-building program around these toolkits that can be tailored to the needs of individual countries upon their request.

33. The activities implemented included:

(a) A subregional workshop took place in Rabat from 26 to 29 November 2018 on the toolkit for developing *Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach* in collaboration with the Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development in Morocco. The workshop also aimed at harnessing

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/project-population-and-development>.

more feedback on the toolkit and stimulating interest for adopting the toolkit in Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and the Sudan;

(b) A guidebook on *Toolkit for mainstreaming social justice in development plans, policies and programmes* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.10). The main objective of this guidebook is to improve the capacities of policy makers in member States to formulate social justice sensitive policies, plans and programmes. It provides a set of practical approaches, skills and tools required to ensure that the four principles (rights, equity, equality and participation) of social justice identified by ESCWA are mainstreamed in public policy processes;

(c) A workshop, to pilot the guidebook, was held in Beirut from 12 to 14 September 2017. Government officials from Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, the State of Palestine and the Sudan and concerned with public policy development and implementation provided feedback on its content, relevance, and applicability to the Arab region.

**3. *Promoting Equality: Strengthening the capacity of selected developing countries to design and implement equality-oriented public policies and programmes***

Duration: 2016-2018

Status: Implemented

34. During the period from January 2016 to June 2018, ESCWA implemented a number of activities under this development account project to enhance the knowledgebase on inequality in the Arab region and identify relevant policy instruments to promote equality and social justice. The project covered selected countries from different regions of the world (two from each region) and was jointly implemented by the five regional commissions of the United Nations. The project primarily aimed at strengthening the capacities of policymakers and government officials from the selected countries in the Arab region, namely the Sudan and Tunisia, in the techniques and tools utilized to analyse and measure socioeconomic inequalities and adopt more progressive social spending and fiscal policies, in the context of the 2030 Agenda. It also enhanced the social justice pro-equality agenda that ESCWA is developing in the Arab region.

35. The activities implemented included:

(a) A regional study on the dimensions, drivers and challenges of socioeconomic inequalities in the Arab region was produced based on a dynamic and cross-disciplinary social/economic approach and including the political economy dimension. The study provided the overall framework for the formulation of two technical toolkits, one focusing on building the capacities of concerned government experts in the analysis and measurement of socioeconomic inequalities entitled "*Toolkit on the analysis and measurement of socioeconomic inequalities in the Arab region*" and another providing technical knowledge and building practical skills and capacities in the design and implementation of equality-oriented public policies and programmes entitled "*Toolkit on the design and implementation of equality-oriented policies in the Arab countries*";

(b) Several consultation meetings to review and discuss the relevance of the content of the toolkits, followed by five national capacity-building workshops in the beneficiary countries, two in the Sudan and three in Tunisia. These workshops aimed to train government officials from various ministries as well as other national stakeholders, including civil society representatives, on the utilization of the toolkits. Technical advisory services were also provided to Tunisia to assist Tunisian policymakers in implementing new measurements of socioeconomic inequalities and effectively designing and implementing evidence-based and equality-oriented social protection, labour and green fiscal policies. Project activities concluded with a regional closing meeting held in May 2018;

(c) Regional Meeting on Sharing Experiences and Lessons in the Design and Implementation of Equality-Oriented Public Policies and Programmes, held in Beirut, 9 and 10 May 2018. This meeting was the

closing meeting for the above-mentioned project. The meeting brought together representatives from ministries of social development/affairs of 14 ESCWA member countries, United Nations regional commissions, non-governmental organizations, as well as experts from academic institutions.

**4. *Strengthening the capacity of Governments in the ESCAP, ECA and ESCWA regions to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies***

Duration: 2014-2017

Status: Implemented

36. The main objective of this Development Account project was to build the capacity of youth and member States to formulate effective youth policies and increase youth participation in decision-making processes. Targeted member States were Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia. The activities implemented during the reporting period aimed to build the capacity of more than 60 stakeholders in the area of “Participation in public life and decision-making processes”, most of them youth leaders and decision-makers in policy dialogue. This project was led by ESCAP with the participation of ECA and ESCWA.

37. The activities implemented included:

(a) Regional report on youth and a compilation of good practices on youth empowerment;

(b) Training materials on enhancing youth participation, which were included in the online interregional platform, the Youth Policy Toolbox digitally housed at ESCAP;

(c) Three capacity-building training workshops;

(d) Provision of grants to empower youth civil society organizations in which three grant recipients implemented much-needed, youth-led projects, at the national level, in the areas of “Youth and Peacebuilding”, “The Creation of Youth-Friendly Municipalities”, and “The National Identification of Youth Challenges by Youth Leaders and NGOs”;

(e) *Interregional Youth Policy Forum* was held in Bangkok on 21 to 23 November 2017 as a closing event for the project. It presented a forum for international exchange of experiences and substantive knowledge on youth policies as well as for exploring the implementation of ICT in engaging diverse stakeholders to enhance the role of youth in achieving the sustainable development goals.

**5. *Fostering institutional development for participatory approaches towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Western Asia***

Duration: 2016-2019

Status: In progress

38. The social dimension of this project builds on a recently implemented three-year development project that focused on partnership for democratic governance. It assisted three target countries (Iraq, Lebanon and Tunisia) in strengthening and building resilience to conflicts, through a series of capacity-building workshops that aim at developing participatory and governance competencies. This project will continue throughout 2019 to conduct a survey on the impact of the participatory approach of ESCWA to development and establish National Committees of Practice to help expand the outreach of these participatory-based programs and ensure long-term reform and systems transformation in post-conflict and conflict-afflicted countries.

39. The activities implemented included:

(a) Preparation of a comprehensive institutional mapping of government, academic and civil society institutions involved in social development, policy reform, civic engagement, participation, decision-making,

democracy, human rights and democratic governance in Iraq, Lebanon and Tunisia, along with brief analyses of their situation;

(b) The updating of the manual on *Capacity-Building for Partnerships in Democratic Governance*, by ESCWA in 2018. This manual explores nine competencies that can support stakeholders involved in the course of and success of the transition process, namely: practicing just and good leadership; engaging civil society in the reform process; building alliances for public policymaking; building public institutions; upholding accountability and transparency; promoting dialogue and building consensus; designing public policies based on the principles of equity and social justice; promoting local development; and developing communication and social media strategies;

(c) Two subregional training workshops were organized to develop participatory-based and good governance competencies based on the ESCWA manual on “*Capacity-building for Partnerships in Democratic Governance*”. One workshop was on “*Building Capacities for Partnership in Democratic Governance (PDG)*”, in Beirut in November 2018 and the second was training of trainers workshop on *Capacity-building for PDG* in Beirut in December 2018;

(d) National Committees of Practices (NCPs) were established in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, which include members of civil society institutions and governmental officials who will work jointly to advance the youth empowerment agenda at the national level.

## II. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT ITS ELEVENTH SESSION

40. The Committee on Social Development, at its eleventh session in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017, addressed eight recommendations to ESCWA member States and seven recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat. The main activities and follow-up actions undertaken in implementation of the recommendations directed to the secretariat are as follows:

### **Recommendation**

(a) Organize training workshops for member States on using the guide prepared by the secretariat to mainstream social justice principles in public policymaking, including social protection policies;

### **Action Taken**

Within the framework of the Tenth Tranche of the Development Account Project on “Promoting Social Justice in Selected Countries in the Arab Region”, ESCWA organized a pilot workshop on the guide for “mainstreaming social justice in development plans and policies” in Beirut, from 12 to 14 November 2017. In addition, ESCWA organized a training workshop on the toolkit for “Developing Social Protection Policies using a Participatory Approach” in Rabat, from 26 to 29 November 2018, in collaboration with the Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development in Morocco. Both workshops generated positive feedback. Moreover, participants recommended undertaking training at the national level, while providing technical assistance or monitoring for the use of the toolkit in individual countries.

### **Recommendation**

(b) Continue convening meetings of the Group of Experts on Disability until the next Committee session, ensuring that the Group will present its progress report to the twelfth Committee session and strive to secure funding for its activities;

### **Action Taken**

Over the past two years, ESCWA convened the IGED in two regular and five additional meetings

and trainings dedicated to specific topics such as disability assessment, institutions, employment, statistics and social protection. The report on IGED activities and achievements is presented as a separate parliamentary document.

### **Recommendation**

(c) Prepare introductory material and provide technical services to support member States in implementing the New Urban Agenda in related economic, social and environmental fields, especially in countries recovering from and affected by conflict;

### **Action Taken**

Over the past two years, ESCWA together with UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States implemented two capacity-building workshops on New Urban Policies as well as on post-conflict reconstruction. In addition, ESCWA has issued two technical papers on social housing policies in Arab countries and on the status of implementing Goal 11 of the SDGs in the Arab region. Jointly with other regional commissions, ESCWA has contributed to two global reports of UN-Habitat, specifically the first status report on implementing the New Urban Agenda and to the Synthesis Report on Goal 11, submitted to the High-level Political Forum. Furthermore, ESCWA developed the above-mentioned policy brief entitled “Technology as a tool to make cities safe and combat violence against women” (see para 18).

### **Recommendation**

(d) Increase technical support services to member States to implement the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda based on ESCWA approaches that support its integrated nature;

### **Action Taken**

To ensure human rights and dignity of older persons and migrants in the Arab region and duly promote their inclusion and participation as stipulated by Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, a number of national and regional workshops and consultations were organized for officials and non-governmental organizations. Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco, Tunisia and the Sudan all benefited from technical support on integrating national key population issues into development. ESCWA has also relayed its knowledge on international migration and delivered direct and timely assistance to the region as a whole, through a dedicated workshop on migration and sustainable development goals in the Arab region, co-organized by IOM and the League of Arab States, and in partnership with United Nations sister agencies represented in the Working Group on International Migration, in Cairo from 16 to 17 July 2018.

### **Recommendation**

(e) Develop a simplified questionnaire for member States on the activities of the ESCWA Social Development Division, and closely follow up with member States to ensure their effective contribution to fulfilling the questionnaire’s purpose;

### **Action Taken**

To have well-constructed feedback from the member States on the activities of the social development division, the questionnaire will be replaced by an interactive discussion with the members of the Committee during the twelfth session of the Committee under a separate agenda item.

### **Recommendation**

(f) Increase member States’ involvement in the Committee’s next session by giving them a space to make presentations on their efforts in implementing the recommendations issued at previous Committee sessions;

### **Action Taken**

In an effort to increase member States' involvement in the work of the Committee, its representatives will be invited during the twelfth session of the Committee of Social Development to brief the meeting on follow-up actions taken at the national level in implementation of the recommendations of the eleventh session. In this regard, a separate agenda item and a corresponding session will be dedicated to member countries' presentations. The final report of the twelfth session of the Committee will include a summary of presentations and actions taken.

### **Recommendation**

(g) Provide technical support to develop systems for monitoring and evaluating progress at the national level in implementing a guide on social protection policies and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Action Taken**

To enhance its capacity-building toolkits, ESCWA has continued to update the case studies and training tools on participatory social protection policies; mainstreaming social justice in development plans; measuring socioeconomic inequality; developing equality-sensitive public policies; youth empowerment and partnership for democratic governance. The aim is to continue supporting member States with capacity-building and technical advice to respond to their development needs.

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