

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/ECW/2011/IG.1/3
6 December 2011
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Women
Fifth session
Beirut, 19-21 December 2011

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

**PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE FIELD OF ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
SINCE THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN:****IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT
OF WOMEN UNDER ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM
2010-2011, AND PURSUANT TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AT ITS FOURTH SESSION****Summary**

This report reviews the main activities undertaken by ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) since the fourth session of the Committee on Women, held in Beirut from 21 to 23 October 2009.

It deals with the studies and research carried out by the Centre and with the meetings and training courses it organised for member countries and non-governmental organisations. It also addresses the manuals, newsletters and information kits issued by the Centre with a view to enhancing communication with all national stakeholders, governments and non-governmental organisations to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise, moving towards gender equality.

The report also reviews the technical assistance and services that the Centre provided for member countries on raising and mainstreaming gender awareness in policies and programmes; national reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and Security Council Resolution 1325 of year 2000.

The report finally touches upon field projects and extra-budgetary activities implemented by the Centre in cooperation with international and regional organisations supporting women's affairs and empowerment. It also addresses the necessity for extra-budgetary resources to meet member country needs throughout this critical transitional period.

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Women was established at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) pursuant to ESCWA resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003. Pursuant to the resolution, the Executive Secretary was requested to establish a Centre for Women to be the secretariat of the Committee on Women within the Executive Secretariat of ESCWA. Consequently, the Executive Secretary established the Centre for Women in October 2003.
2. The first session establishing the Committee on Women was held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2003, the second session was held in Beirut from 8 to 10 July 2004, the third session in Abu Dhabi on 14 and 15 March 2007, and the fourth session in Beirut from 21 to 23 October 2009. The fifth session of the Committee on Women will be held in Beirut from 19 to 21 December 2011.
3. This report reviews activities undertaken by the Centre for Women furthering the advancement of women, such as conducting studies and field research, organising conferences, periodic meetings, training sessions and workshops on key issues to empower women and reduce discrimination in various fields, producing information kits and technical materials to enhance interaction via the Internet and providing consultancy services and technical assistance for member countries upon request.
4. With a view to reaffirm the role of the Centre in gender equality, economic, social and political empowerment of women, and gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes, and with a view to promote regional cooperation in those fields, many memoranda of understanding were signed, including with the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Qatar, the Supreme Council for Women (SCW) in Bahrain, the Women's Affairs Committee in Kuwait, the General Women's Union in the United Arab Emirates, the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO) in Egypt, and Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon. The Centre also cooperated with several regional and international organisations, such as the Women's Department of the League of Arab States, the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), UN-Women, and the United Nations regional commissions.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN

A. PROVIDING LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE AGENDA OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

5. Pursuant to recommendation 2 issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session held in October 2009, member countries are called to emphasise the importance of political will in supporting and promoting gender equality, equity and justice and mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, strategies and development programmes. The recommendation highlighted the importance of female advancement as a national and regional priority and called to increase financial and human resources allocated to policies, programmes and national mechanisms for women, and link the necessary budgets to the overall budget. In addition, governments were urged to build the capacity of the personnel, including men, in the national mechanisms to promote gender mainstreaming in national policies, programmes and plans. The Committee on Women recommended the creation of an information-and-data base disaggregated by gender and indicator analysis to identify cross-sectoral gender gaps with the aim of adopting "women-friendly" and gender-based policies.
6. Pursuant to recommendations, ESCWA member countries are called to provide an enabling environment for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), withdraw their reservations on the Convention, and accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Under recommendation 2, the Committee called on member countries to review and reform national legislations that discriminate against women, work towards enforcing existing laws, and train people working in legislative and law-enforcement bodies related to women's legal rights such as the judiciary system. The Committee also called to increase the rate of participation of women in decision-

making positions by adopting measures of temporary positive discrimination, including through quotas, in order to create a “critical mass” of women qualified to assume legislative, executive and leadership positions in the public sector. Moreover, member countries called to engage women in peace keeping and building negotiations, resolution of armed conflicts and post-conflict development, and to ensure psychological support, rehabilitation, and non-exclusion of women who are victims of armed violence by adopting local action plans to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 of year 2000.

7. The fifth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women is held at a time when some Arab countries are witnessing popular movements. As a result, exceptional conditions and new demands have emerged calling to reconsider the Centre programmes and activities in response to unfolding events, such as empowering and engaging women in uprisings, decision-making, and in efforts aimed at building new nations and maintaining previous gains through transitional justice. In this framework, the Committee on Women will address, at its the fifth session, issues of great relevance to woman advancement and empowerment, such as mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, programmes and activities of public institutions, implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), combating violence against women, engaging women in political leadership and decision-making, and promoting the role of media in women’s empowerment in Arab countries.

8. The Committee on Women submitted to ESCWA Session recommendation 3 (a) of its fourth session, on supporting the Centre for Women with additional human resources in order to upgrade it to the level of a division, with the aim of doubling efforts to assist member countries with the empowerment of women. Besides, the Committee invited member countries to adopt the outcomes of the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2010. At its twenty-sixth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 293 (XXVI) of 19 May 2010 concerning “Upgrading the ESCWA Centre for Women to the level of a division and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab countries after fifteen years: Beijing+15”.

B. CONDUCTING STUDIES AND RESEARCH

9. Pursuant to recommendation 3 (b) issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session on “Strengthening the capacity of national mechanisms for mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies, plans and programmes, through preparation of studies, and provision of possibilities for inter-communication, and exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences”, the ESCWA Centre for Women issued:

- A study on “**Review of the Performance Assessment of National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Mainstreaming: A Gender Perspective in the Arab Countries**”, in 2010. The study aims to assess the current status of national mechanisms promoting women’s advancement in the Arab region, analyse their strengths and weaknesses, evaluate their achievements and governmental support, and identify their problems, in view of reducing gender inequality. The study is concluded by a set of recommendations that include, inter alia, providing those mechanisms with advocacy, lobbying, and influence skills, developing indicators to measure their efficiency and capacity to fulfil their duties, training people who work on the advancement of women in policy departments, and developing plans to enable those people to establish a suitable methodology and take the right measures for the national advancement of women;
- A study on “**Progress in Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCWA Region: A Gender Lens**”, in 2010. This study analyses the causes and consequences of discrepancies in the progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in ESCWA member countries by exploring the targets and indicators of MDGs from a gender perspective. The study assumes that progress towards MDGs cannot be achieved without adopting national development policies and strategies with a gender perspective, based on rights and equality;

- A guide on “**Gender Mainstreaming in the Policies, Programmes and Activities of Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs in ESCWA Member Countries**” in 2011. This guide includes a comparative analysis of successful experiences mentioned in the reports of ministries of labour and social affairs in Kuwait, Palestine, and the Syrian Arab Republic, with regard to the use of different methodologies in data collection and analysis. It aims to exchange outcomes and reach a set of recommendations, such as following up and implementing the action plan and outcomes of analytical studies, maintaining contact and consultation between the ESCWA Centre for Women and stakeholders, building the capacity of human resources at all administrative levels and raising their gender awareness.

10. Pursuant to recommendation 3 (c) issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session, on “Strengthening the capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through capacity-building of national mechanisms, exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences, and raising the awareness of decision makers of the Convention”, in 2011, the Centre issued a study as part of the Women and Development series on “**Good Practice and Successful Experiences in the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Arab States**”. This study aimed to review and analyse good practice and successful experiences in implementing the Convention in Arab States, withdraw reservations on the Convention, and implement it by promulgating legislation conducive to gender equality. The study included recommendations to decision makers in Arab countries and national machineries for women, such as: Withdrawing all reservations on the Convention by adopting a strategic vision that takes into consideration the aspirations of women, international obligations, and current transformations within Arab countries; ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention; creating national observatories to prepare reports, and monitor the implementation of the Convention; removing all discriminatory legal texts, regulations, and practice; criminalising gender-based violence and developing policies to sanction perpetrators. The study also called to ensure real political commitment towards gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes, mobilise adequate human and financial resources, promote the culture of equality, raise social awareness, strengthen coordination among national machineries for the advancement of women in Arab countries, exchange good practice and successful experiences, and standardise statistical indicators to facilitate comparison between Arab countries and learn from successful experiences.

11. The Centre for Women issued a **Regional Study on Violence against Women** as a major part of a regional project implemented by the five United Nations Regional Commissions^(*), with the support of the United Nations Development Account, on “Strengthening capacities to eliminate violence against women through networking with local knowledge societies”. The study aims to conduct holistic research on violence against women in the ESCWA region, its prevalence and different facets. It also highlights such issues as the prevalence of violence against women and its impact on the well-being of women and society, review of existing laws and policies, and evaluation of actions taken to eliminate violence against women.

12. Pursuant to the recommendations made at the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held in Beirut from 3 to 5 July 2002, the Centre for Women has incorporated into its programme of action, since 2003, activities related to Palestinian women. For instance, in 2011, the Centre issued a special report on **Economic and Social Situation of Palestinian Women 2009-2011**. This report is periodically submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/42 of 22 July 2003 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. This resolution calls on the Commission to be guided by the information provided by ESCWA, in its preparations for the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the subject.

(*) The five regional commissions are: The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Addis Ababa; the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Geneva; the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Santiago; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Bangkok; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Beirut.

13. Pursuant to resolution 278 (XXIV) adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-fourth session, held in Beirut from 8 to 11 March 2006, which reaffirms the need to enhance the role of women in decision-making with respect to conflict prevention and peace-building, and pursuant to the resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session, held in New York on 20 March 2006, concerning the need to increase the participation of both women and men in decision-making at all levels, the Centre for Women prepared a report on the situation of Arab women in 2011, entitled “**Political Leadership and Participation in Decision-Making**”. This report covers indicators used to measure women participation in national and local councils, and such limitations as electoral laws and female quotas. It also tackles the enrolment of women in political parties and existing movements of change in Arab countries, the role of women in countries affected by armed conflicts and their impacts, and particularly the role of women in peace talks. A preliminary review of this report was conducted at an Expert Group Meeting held in Beirut on 25 August 2011. It has been submitted to the advisory team to be discussed at the Expert Group Meeting in Beirut on 19 December 2011 and be launched at the closing of the fifth session of the Committee on Women on 21 December 2011.

C. MEETINGS AND TRAINING WORKSHOPS

14. Pursuant to recommendation 3 (b) issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session on strengthening the capacity of national mechanisms for mainstreaming the gender perspective in national policies, plans and programmes through preparation of studies, and provision of possibilities for inter-communication, and exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences, the Centre for Women organised in Beirut on 25 and 26 January 2011 an Expert Group Meeting on “**Progress in Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCWA Region: A Gender Lens**”. The meeting aimed to review a draft study on the subject, discuss best practice and methods to mainstream the gender perspective in the implementation and evaluation of MDGs, and review successful experiences in the preparation of reports on MDGs in selected ESCWA member countries. At the end of the meeting, recommendations were made to enhance report submittals and implementation of MDGs through local publishing of national reports and alignment of MDGs with national plans and programmes. To that end, national specificities should be taken into consideration, and a “unit for equal opportunities” should be created within ministries to facilitate the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

15. In the first implementation stage of recommendation 3 (b) issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session, in an effort to mainstream gender into main developmental policies, upon the recommendations of United Nations Secretary General, and based on the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 and on ECOSOC resolution 2004/4 with respect to the review of ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, the Centre for Women organised a workshop on “**Gender Mainstreaming for Ministries of Labour and National Women Machineries**”, from 3 to 5 August 2010 in Beirut. The workshop aimed to strengthen cooperation with national women machineries and support ministries of labour in mainstreaming gender in their culture, organisational structure, policies, and programmes. Besides, the status of institutions was discussed at the workshop as well as ways to develop gender-based programmes of action;

- In the second implementation stage of recommendation 3 (b), some countries implemented the theoretical measures of the first stage by conducting an institutional gender-based analysis of the ministry of labour and/or social affairs;
- In the third and final stage, the Centre convened an Expert Group Meeting on “**Mainstreaming Gender in the Plans and Programmes of the Ministries of Labour in Selected ESCWA Member Countries**”, in Beirut on 29 and 30 March 2011. The goal of the meeting was to exchange both successful experiences and good practices which have led ministries of labour and social affairs in selected member countries to conduct analytical studies in view of drawing out lessons learnt and developing a gender-based action plan and guide for public institutions. The

meeting reaffirmed the need to continue follow-up and evaluation to mainstream gender in public institutions, and implement this programme in all member countries.

16. Pursuant to recommendation 3 (b), the Centre for Women organised, in cooperation with the National Commission for Lebanese Women, a workshop on **Integrating a Gender Perspective into National Budgets** in Beirut, on 19 July 2011. The workshop aimed to raise the awareness of gender focal points in Lebanese ministries and governmental institutions of the important need to prepare gender-based budgets to achieve social justice. It also aimed to introduce participants to the concept, elements, and tools of analysis of gender-based budgets, discuss how the national budget in Lebanon is prepared, and possibilities of integrating a gender perspective into it. The workshop was concluded with a set of recommendations, such as identifying the duties and difficulties facing gender focal points, organising training workshops to raise the gender awareness of senior personnel in ministries and public administrations, developing capacity-building programmes for those who prepare national budgets to integrate gender perspective into budgets, and building partnerships with the private sector and civil society organisations to mainstream the gender perspective, including preparing gender-based budgets, and disseminating media slogans to raise awareness of gender-based budgets.

17. Pursuant to recommendation 3 (c) issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session and related to “strengthening the capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through capacity-building of national mechanisms, members of parliament, judicial institutions, civil society and the media, helping States to withdraw their reservations on the Convention, exchanging experiences and lessons of successful experiences, and continuing to raise awareness of decision makers of the Convention”:

- ESCWA held a regional workshop on the **Role of Women National Mechanisms in Promoting the Full Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the ESCWA Region**, in cooperation with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in Beirut, on 28 and 29 April 2010. The workshop aimed to review how periodic reports are drafted to follow up the Convention implementation, based on the United Nations guidelines and process of drafting and submitting reports to the competent commission at the United Nations, and to exchange experiences in this field;
- In cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Lebanese Parliament, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a regional workshop was organised by ESCWA on the **Role of Arab Parliaments in Implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Ending Violence against Women**, in Beirut, from 27 to 29 July 2010. Men and women members of parliament and Shura councils from selected ESCWA member countries took part in the workshop, in addition to the Secretary General of IPU, the Head of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Parliament and many members of the European Parliament. Participants concluded that it is essential to identify parliamentary mechanisms and tools for the effective national implementation of CEDAW, address violence against women through national legal frameworks, and identify existing gaps. Participants recommended taking practical actions to align national legislations with CEDAW, and support parliamentary actions to implement CEDAW by building partnerships with governments, civil society, international organisations and the media, and promulgating legislations to criminalise violence against women, including actions to end violence and assist victims, developing national action plans, and identifying financial resources needed for their implementation;
- In cooperation with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women in New York, ESCWA organised a semi-regional workshop on **Strengthening Legislative Frameworks to Address All Forms of Violence against Women**, in Beirut, from 13 to 15 April 2010. The

workshop aimed to strengthen the capacity of governmental officials, members of parliament, and non-governmental organisations, to promulgate comprehensive legislations on violence against women, including the amendment and full implementation of existing legislations. The workshop evaluated the achieved progress, identified obstacles and challenges, and stressed on the exchange of experiences and good practice to overcome challenges.

18. In commemoration of the ten-year anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), and pursuant to that Resolution, the Centre for Women organised a training workshop on **Developing National Action Plans (NAPs) to Implement Security Council Resolution 1325**, in Beirut, on 25 and 26 October 2010. The session aimed to build the capacity of participants to develop national action plans to implement Resolution 1325. At the workshop, the main report of the Centre for Women on the status of Arab women 2009: **Means of Enhancing the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building**. The report focused on the role of women in conflict resolution and peace building in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine, and reached general recommendations on strengthening the role of women in conflict situations to establish an active civil society and effective women organisations capable of building peace.

19. Pursuant to recommendation 3 (e) issued by the Committee on Women in its fourth session, on supporting the application of ESCWA guidelines, developed in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), on protection of rights of women living in conflict areas, the Centre for Women organised, in cooperation with the Commissioner and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a training workshop on the **Protection of Women in Conflict Situations: United Nations Security Council 1325**, in Beirut on 8 and 9 December 2011. This workshop aims to raise awareness of Security Council Resolution 1325 to develop national action plans for its implementation, and highlight the required legislative amendments for the protection of women in conflict situations. It also aims to exchange regional and international expertise, with a review of Rwanda experience in this field, and build the capacity of national women machineries to prepare national reports on the implementation of Resolution 1325.

20. Pursuant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 2003/44 on women's participation in and access to the media and information and communication technologies, and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women, ESCWA held an **Expert Group Meeting on Strategies and Media Campaigns to Promote the Empowerment of Women in the ESCWA Region**, in Beirut on 21 and 22 June 2011. This meeting was attended by public administration experts in ESCWA member countries and aimed to review and exchange successful experiences on media campaigns to empower women, raise awareness of their issues, and support their rights. Participants reached a set of recommendations that strengthen the role of media in women's empowerment, namely urging countries to develop strategies based on international documents, devising policies and mechanisms to follow up their implementation, and evaluate their outcome and impact, and integrating a gender perspective into media policies, programmes and plans, emphasising the real participation of women in decision-making, reviving awareness of women's issues and legal literacy, and building the capacity of media personnel to raise awareness of Arab women's affairs, rights and challenges.

21. Pursuant to the recommendations made at Cairo forum on raising the challenges of the transitional period, held in April 2011, the Centre for Women organised, in cooperation with UN-Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a **Forum for Young Women and Men in the Arab Uprisings: Agents of Democratic Change**, in Cairo on 16 and 17 October 2011. The forum was attended by a group of activists who took part in the uprisings of some Arab countries, in addition to experts, intellectuals, civil society activists and United Nations agencies in Egypt. The forum's goal was to give an opportunity to young women and men to exchange experiences and lessons learnt that help them to overcome challenges in the transitional period. Through open discussions at the forum, several economic, political, and social issues and challenges were discussed, and the youth agreed to create a webpage on the Internet to promote social interaction and emphasised the importance of peaceful movement of people.

D. MANUALS, NEWSLETTERS, AND INFORMATION KITS

22. Aware of the need for communication between ESCWA and governmental and non-governmental bodies, experts and researchers, the Centre for Women has begun developing and disseminating manuals, newsletters, and information kits concerning women's empowerment, and raising awareness of the need to mainstream gender in policies, programmes, and plans of public institutions, as gender mainstreaming is a continuous process and a shared responsibility at all levels:

(a) A brochure describing the mission of the Centre for Women, and resolution 2003/9 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the creation of the Committee on Women;

(b) A brochure entitled "Arab Women at a Glance" providing key data and statistics on indicators used to evaluate the status of women in Arab countries, such as education, health, work, and political participation;

(c) A brochure on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Arab countries, including their date of accession to the Convention, their reservations on its implementation and Optional Protocol, and the dates of periodic reporting;

(d) A quarterly newsletter on developments related to the status of women in Arab countries, focusing in every issue on an important aspect of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming;

(e) A continuously updated webpage displaying all activities undertaken by the Centre for Women, such as studies, research, reports, meetings, and workshops;

(f) A webpage for ESCWA on Facebook, that is continuously updated, and displays the major developments and activities, and answers questions on women and gender issues;

(g) An electronic network serving as a forum between the Centre for Women and international non-governmental organisations, to create prospects of cooperation between ESCWA and civil society organisations, and provide the latest information on the activities of United Nations bodies, relevant resolutions, conventions, and international treaties, and crucial matters that have an impact on women's empowerment and gender equality. This network also aims to promote networking between national women machineries and civil society organisations to exchange expertise, information and lessons learnt.

E. CONSULTANCY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

23. ESCWA has been active in helping its member countries adopt gender-sensitive policies, prepare national strategies for the advancement of women and also institutional frameworks necessary for their implementation. ESCWA has undertaken a range of activities, on the following issues:

(a) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Country	Beneficiary	Period	Technical assistance
Lebanon	National Commission for Lebanese Women	14-15 April 2010	Capacity-building workshop for gender focal points in ministries and public institutions
Kuwait	Human Rights Society	23-25 November 2010	Workshop to raise awareness of key concepts and items
Bahrain	Supreme Council for Women (SCW)	17-20 January 2011	Workshop to raise awareness of key concepts and items
Qatar	Supreme Council for Family Affairs and Human Rights Society	10-14 October 2011	Awareness-raising workshop for public institutions

(b) Gender mainstreaming

Country	Beneficiary	Period	Technical assistance
Jordan	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	22-24 March 2010	Workshop on building the capacity of gender focal Points
	The Jordanian Women's Union	26-27 April 2010	Capacity-building workshop
	Economic and Social Council	18-19 April 2011	Capacity-building workshop
Saudi Arabia	Hirfa Society	10-15 May 2010	Capacity-building workshop
The Syrian Arab Republic	Syrian Commission for Family Affairs	4-5 April 2011	Awareness-raising workshop for public university professors in all governorates
Lebanon	National Commission for Lebanese Women, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Labor	4-5 July 2011	Roundtable, in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in Jordan, to introduce participants to the Jordanian experience in statistics and gender mainstreaming
The Sudan	Ministry of Welfare and Social Security	19-22 November 2011	Capacity-building and awareness-raising workshop

(c) Conducting strategic planning, assisting in mainstreaming a shared vision with respect to the work of national machineries, and identifying clear and specific prospects that are based on clear and specific action plans and the efficiency of which can be measured and assessed in the future.

Country	Beneficiary	Period	Technical assistance
Saudi Arabia	Ministry of Social Affairs	11-14 January 2010	Survey to identify needs
	Al Anoud Foundation	January 2011	Technical assistance to prepare a funding proposal for the project on the rehabilitation of female inmates
The Sudan	Ministries and public institutions	22-26 February 2010	Collective survey to identify needs
Palestine	Ministry of Planning	March 2010	Technical assistance to review the gender-based sectoral strategic plan as part of the national plan 2011-2013
Yemen	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	26-30 June 2010	Collective survey to develop the five-year plan of Yemen
The United Arab Emirates	General Women's Union	11-14 October 2010	Technical assistance to develop the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the United Arab Emirates
		27 September 2011	Follow up on technical assistance to develop the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the United Arab Emirates
Lebanon	National Commission for Lebanese Women	18-19 March 2011	Participation in a workshop to provide advice and recommendations to adopt the Women's National Strategy in Lebanon
	Ministry of Social Affairs	23-24 March 2011	Technical assistance to implement the action plan of gender mainstreaming in the project on "Strengthening women's participation in local governance and development"

(d) Leadership, negotiation, and political participation skills

Country	Beneficiary	Period	Technical assistance
Yemen	Yemени Women's Union	26-27 January 2010	Capacity-building training on political participation and management of electoral campaigns
	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	3-4 July 2010	Capacity-building workshop on negotiation skills
Bahrain	The Supreme Council for Women (SCW)	17-20 January 2011	Workshop on building the leadership capacity of women in the private sector
		26-27 July 2011	Workshop on building the leadership and decision-making capacity of women in civil society organisations

24. The activities undertaken by the Centre for Women in the field of technical cooperation and consultancy services for women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming since the fourth session in 2009, included twenty-five missions executed by the regional consultant in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. It should be noted that consultancy services and technical cooperation are provided upon a request submitted by member countries to ESCWA, clearly specifying the actions to be undertaken by the Centre.

F. FIELD PROJECTS AND EXTRA-BUDGETARY ACTIVITIES

25. Since 2009, the ESCWA Centre for Women is implementing a project on **Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**, with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in New York and in coordination with the other regional commissions. This project, which is funded by the Italian government, covers national women mechanisms in all United Nations member countries. It aims to increase knowledge about national women mechanisms, established since 1995, identify priorities and strategies to promote cooperation, synergy, and capacity-building of machineries at national and regional levels. In the first stage of the project in 2009, every regional commission prepared a study on the status of national women mechanisms in its area of competence, in addition to a comprehensive global study. In the second stage, regional commissions will prepare a training guide to address gaps and challenges identified in the first stage of the project, to build the capacity of national women mechanisms to cooperate at national and regional levels for gender equality and women's empowerment. This training guide will be distributed to the national mechanisms.

26. Pursuant to recommendations 3 (f) and 3 (g) issued by the Committee on Women at its fourth session, on "studying feasibility of developing an index of gender and development specific to the Arab region, to identify and analyse the nature of the gender gap, with the aim of making specific policies and strategies for advancement of women", and on "studying feasibility of establishing an observatory and a regional early-warning system, based on a recent information-and-data base disaggregated by gender, to track and analyse social phenomena relating to the status of women, so that societal problems may be remedied before they escalate", Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon is implementing, in cooperation with ESCWA, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and the World Bank, a project on "**Creating an Observatory for Arab Women**", including a gender indicator. The main goals of this project are to develop a gender-disaggregated database, covering all Arab countries, that is regularly updated on the Internet; to create an "Arab gender indicator" to follow up and monitor progress of gender equality; to develop national briefs including an analysis and evaluation of limitations to gender equality at the national level; to raise awareness of the Arab woman's affairs; and to strengthen cooperation and exchange of expertise to promote the status of Arab women. This project will be implemented over a couple of years, and in the first stage, a "Pilot Project for Lebanon" will be launched as of December 2011.

27. The Centre for Women conducts several activities to promote women's affairs, empowerment, and capacity-building, as well as awareness-raising of gender mainstreaming in the policies, programmes, plans of public institutions, and accession to international conventions. Based on developments in Arab countries, and challenges facing women in preserving their rights and previous gains, and based on additional capacity-building requests sent to the Centre for Women, additional extra-budgetary funding is needed to meet member country needs in this critical transitional period. To that end, some member countries have already expressed their willingness to contribute to the creation of a development fund at ESCWA. The Centre is following up with member countries on the implementation of the proposed fund. In this context, the Centre urges Arab countries to support the fund creation.

Annex

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ESCWA COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AT ITS FOURTH SESSION
(BEIRUT, 21-23 OCTOBER 2009)**

	Recommendations	Completed (date and resolution)	Under completion	Not completed	Remarks
1	Emphasise the importance of political will in supporting and promoting gender equality, equity and justice, mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, strategies and development programmes, and considering the advancement of women to be a priority at both national and regional levels;				
2	Increase financial and human resources allocated to policies, programmes and national mechanisms for women, and link the budgets for these to the overall budget;				
3	Promote administrative reform and good governance in both public and private sectors, ensuring employment and job promotion of women;				
4	Coordinate among foreign financing entities to ensure a fair distribution of financing and resolve the various problems facing women of all strata;				
5	Build capacity of the national mechanisms for mainstreaming gender in national policies and engage men and train them in mainstreaming gender in development policies, as well as in women's rights in general;				
6	Network with parliament and enhance participation of women's associations and civil society in addressing problems facing women;				
7	Provide an enabling environment for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, raise awareness to women's legal rights, and invite member countries to consider the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;				
8	Continue to review and reform national legislations that discriminate against women, work towards enforcing existing laws, and train people working in legislative and law-enforcement bodies related to women's legal rights;				
9	Establish an information-and-data base disaggregated by gender, analyse and process indicators to identify gender gaps in various sectors, with the aim of making specific policies and strategies for advancing women;				

Recommendations		Completed (date and resolution)	Under completion	Not completed	Remarks
10	Examine the possibility of establishment of observatories and early-warning systems at the national level to track and analyse social phenomena relating to the status of women, so that societal problems may be remedied before they escalate;				
11	Encourage women to enter applied sciences and link their education to market needs, update curricula and revise textbooks to eradicate images and ideas that discriminate against women and perpetuate a negative stereotypical image of women;				
12	Enact legislations to raise the age of marriage, tackle problems that cause girls to drop out of school in order to alleviate female illiteracy and poverty, develop literacy programmes, and enhance qualification and vocational training of women, particularly in rural areas;				
13	Raise the proportion of individuals using computers through promoting programmes aimed at teaching girls to use computers and the internet and develop their computer skills;				
14	Increase the rate of participation of women in the public sector and in administrative and official positions, qualify and train women to assume leadership positions, and enhance their performance;				
15	Increase the rate of participation of women in decision-making positions by various means, including through quotas, training women to run for elections, and working towards increasing the number of women ministers;				
16	Provide and develop microfinance and soft loans for women to enable them to support themselves and their families, insure financial risks in order to encourage women to start small projects, provide markets for them, and build their project-management capacities;				
