

Expert Group Meeting on Multidimensional Inequality in Arab Countries UN-House, Beirut, Lebanon, 18-19 February 2019

Background

Inequality in economic and social outcomes has received heightened attention since 2010 as the underlying root causes of the Arab uprisings emerged as a topic of interest within academic and policy circles. The two policy relevant objectives of this report are: (i) to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of inequality in Arab countries across spatial, economic, gender and social aspects and its evolution since the early 2000s (ii) using these stylized facts, construct a narrative of the political economy drivers of inequality and hence identify and chart out remedial policy actions. Accomplishments on these objectives can potentially lead the region in progressing toward achieving many of the SDGs and targets, particularly those relating to poverty reduction, decent employment and inclusive productive growth.

The analysis and policy recommendations of this report aim at filling the gap in policy discourse in this context. To this end, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic Research Forum (ERF) are joining forces to examine the issue in some depth in a forthcoming report with the tentative title 'Rethinking inequality in Arab States'. In this context, the following three questions are important to address:

- First, why study inequality in the first place: does it matter?
- Second, inequality is a multifaceted subject that lends itself to a variety of theoretical approaches and measurement frameworks. Therefore, it is important to be clear about what form of inequality we are interested in examining and from which theoretical standpoint.
- Third, inequality between whom?

Objective

Inequality in economic and social outcomes has received heightened attention since 2010 as the underlying root causes of the Arab uprisings emerged as a topic of interest within academic and policy circles.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on **Multidimensional Inequality in Arab Countries** which is scheduled to take place on **18-19 February 2019** at the **United Nations House** in **Beirut, Lebanon**.

This technical meeting aims at presenting the findings of the report namely, a comprehensive description and analysis of inequality in Arab countries across spatial, economic, gender and social aspects and its evolution since the early 2000s, in addition to the narrative of the political economy drivers of inequality which aims to identify and chart out remedial policy actions. The results of the discussion are expected to feed into the report and the future work of ESCWA, noting that the Accomplishments on these objectives can potentially lead the region in progressing toward achieving many of the SDGs and targets, particularly those relating to poverty reduction, decent employment and inclusive productive growth.

Target Audience

The objective of this Meeting is to gather a group of experts around the issue of Inequality in Arab Countries, to examine the issue of Inequality in Arab Countries. The meeting will be presenting the results of the study and the narrative feeding into the report to allow for the attendees to discuss and provide their views and comments accordingly.

Results

The Expert Group Meeting aims to gather knowledgeable feedback from the attendees on the draft report to be incorporated into the final publication.