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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

First Coordination Meeting of the Steering Committee for the “Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region”
Beirut, Lebanon, 25 - 26 September 2018

INFORMATION NOTE

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is convening the First Coordination Meeting of the Steering Committee for the “Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region” to present the outcomes of the inception phase, discuss and coordinate project components, the roles and responsibilities of the national and regional partners and establish the project’s “Steering Committee”. The coordination meeting will be held on 25 - 26 September 2018, in Beirut, Lebanon.

1. *Background*

The Arab region is facing major development challenges. It is a region of extremes in terms of its natural resources endowments (abundant fossil fuels and renewables) and aridity with most of its land covered by desert. Water, energy and food security represent major challenges for the region’s sustainable development and the situation is further exacerbated by the growing manifestation of climate change with increasing unpredictable climatic conditions. This fragile natural resource balance in many parts of the Arab region, coupled with rising economic expectations by the region’s young, and increasingly educated population necessitate better governance and sustainable management of the natural assets of the Arab countries to ensure that present and future generations of Arabs can lead decent, stable, and successful lives.

The volatile political environment in the Arab region, imposes additional developmental challenges especially in rural areas which have limited and unequal access to basic services, such as education, healthcare, water resources, and decent employment opportunities outside of the agricultural sector, particularly for women. Furthermore, the influx of refugees to the rural areas resulted in additional demographic pressures causing a sharp rise in demand for energy, water, sanitation and food, thus impeding the already poor living conditions of the rural populations and increasing competition over scarce resources.

This situation has affected the ability of Arab governments to invest in maintaining and expanding national physical infrastructure and to engage in efficient systematic economic and social reforms. This has disrupted their ability to improve and modernise key productive sectors, notably the energy sector, which is needed to ensure that basic services to their populations such as access to food, water, and energy are met.

Attaining Sustainable Development entails providing income generating opportunities through the diversification of economic activities based on locally available resources and involving all sections of the local society on an equal footing. Several examples show that access to energy is a single most important intervention for bringing communities out of poverty⁽¹⁾.

(1) UN-Energy: http://www.un-energy.org/sites/default/files/share/unc/un-enrg_paper.pdf. [Accessed 3 September 2016].

Access to electricity is close to universal across the cities of the Arab region, but remains at roughly 80% in rural areas, and much less in lower income countries of the region². Renewable energy resources play only a marginal role in the Arab region's energy consumption despite considerable potential for renewable energy across the region given its favourable geography and climatic conditions³. In fact, the share of renewable energy in the energy mix in the Arab region is one of the lowest in the world, indicating that Arab states still have a globally unparalleled reliance on non-renewable sources of energy. This is particularly so in the non-oil producing Arab States, where rural communities continue to depend on traditional energy resources, such as low-grade fossil fuels and biomass. These energy resources are inadequate to support the expansion of agricultural value chains, the extension of basic services and improvements in the quality of life of women, children and vulnerable groups who dominate the Arab rural population.

In this context, increasing the use of renewable energy technologies and applications in Arab countries will offer an environmentally sound avenue for providing modern and sustainable energy services to improve the quality of life, the wellbeing and self-realization of people living in rural areas. Improving access to reliable, affordable, and modern sources of energy represent concrete and effective steps to significantly change the quality of life of rural communities and their capacity to play a bigger role in their respective national economies. The "*Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region*", led by ESCWA and funded by The Swedish international Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) constitutes an initiative to support achieving such objectives.

2. Scope

The "*Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region*" aims to improve the livelihoods of rural Arab communities by promoting pro-poor investments in renewable energy (RE) applications focusing on environmentally adequate, affordable, and region specific small-scale renewable energy technologies. The project addresses the underlying constraints in the rural environment and operation of market mechanisms within the rural areas of the Arab countries. It intends to review, benchmark and build capacity to enable the dissemination and use of appropriate renewable energy technologies based on rural entrepreneurship in green sectors. The project is conceived to promote gender equality and social inclusion to support rural development, satisfy energy needs and showcase and document the effectiveness of the bottom up approach to achieve the desired results.

To ensure successful execution of the project activities and achievement of its expected accomplishment, an inception phase was envisaged and was started from January 2018 till end of September 2018. This Inception phase constituted a preparatory step for Project development and was dedicated to clearly identify regional and national partner organizations in the implementation of this Project and those who will be part of the Steering Committee (SC) to be established.

To this end, consultation meetings were organized at the ESCWA premises and at each target country to initiate the process and define the scope of work, roles and responsibilities and where appropriate to be included in the Letters of Understanding (LoAs) which were signed within the framework of the Project. Furthermore, this inception phase served to finalize the selection of beneficiary countries to be studied in this project and on which the pilot projects will be implemented.

The present meeting will constitute the First Coordination Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) to be established to facilitate the coordination and collaboration between the various project partners and

(2) Arab region Progress in Sustainable Energy- Global Tracking Framework Regional Report 2017, ESCWA.

(3) Arab region Progress in Sustainable Energy- Global Tracking Framework Regional Report 2017, ESCWA.

streamline the coordination process between the various levels of project planning and implementation of project activities at local community/national and regional levels.

The meeting will focus on updating the implementing partners on the progress on the country visits and established partnerships in the four pilot countries: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The meeting will also discuss the project's key components, gender mainstreaming strategy, project sustainability and ownership aspects, the roles and responsibilities, project plan and next steps.

3. Objectives and Themes

The objective of this Coordination Meeting is to bring together key implementing partners of the “*Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region*” to discuss and coordinate the partnership and implementation process of this project.

The event intends to provide an update on the outcomes of the consultative meetings undertaken in the pilot countries - Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. It also aims to review the project's work plan, discuss the project objectives, expected outcomes and indicators of achievements and to coordinate future efforts and responsibilities of the implementing partners.

4. Focus Areas

The First Coordination Meeting will focus on the following topics:

- a. Project components and expected accomplishment
- b. Gender mainstreaming strategy and plan
- c. Sustainability aspects, in terms of national level ownership of the outcomes of the pilot projects, reporting effectiveness of gender equality and mainstreaming efforts and activities, as well as local buy-in and ownership
- d. Conflict sensitivity Analysis
- e. Results framework including the Means of Verification which include local measures of the project's impact on implementing gender mainstreaming and women empowerment
- f. Role and responsibilities of the national and regional partners and institutions
- g. Monitoring and Evaluation
- h. Identification of key stakeholders at national and community levels to be part of the Local Facilitating Team (LFT) and participate in the Project activities
- i. Collect data and information on pilot countries local and rural area context, including economic activities and energy needs
- j. Establishment of the project Steering Committee
- k. Coordinate and manage the implementation of the project components.
- l. Next steps....

5. Participants

Participants will include representatives and experts from Government officials, The League of Arab States, line energy ministries and national entities in charge of renewable energy and rural development and key-stakeholders involved in the project's four pilot countries.

6. *Date and venue*

The Coordination Meeting will be held at the UN-House, ESCWA premises in Beirut, Lebanon, on the 25th – 26th of September 2018. Registration will commence at 8:30 a.m.

7. *Language of the session*

The meeting materials will be presented in Arabic and English languages.

8. *Logistical information*

Each participant shall undertake the following preparation related to her/his participation: securing hotel reservation, visa (**participant is required to contact the Lebanese Embassy at their respective countries**), and any other requirements for travelling to Lebanon.

Additional logistical information about how to obtain entry visa to Lebanon, as well as any special arrangements made for hotel reservations, or other additional information will be provided to participants in due course. For more inquires for the visa, please visit the following website: http://www.general-security.gov.lb/Entry_visas.aspx

9. *Correspondence*

All session-related correspondence should be sent to the following ESCWA officials:

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