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

#### **REPORT**

# REGIONAL TRAINING OF TRAINERS WORKSHOP ON ESCWA E-ACCESSIBILITY TEMPLATES FOR NATIONAL POLICY AND TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

## ONLINE WORKSHOP

**DATE: 23-25 NOVEMBER 2021** 

### **Summary**

ESCWA organized a regional training of trainers workshop on the 23, 24, and 25 November 2021 as part of the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) project to provide in-depth knowledge on the application and adoption of the ESCWA developed national e-accessibility policy and technical guidelines templates and toolkits. This workshop would pave the way towards forming national working groups including experts trained on the ESCWA templates and toolkits in the field of digital accessibility, which would help in the national rolling out phase.

More than 80 government officials and experts from the ESCWA inter-governmental disability working group (IGED) as well as other government officials and experts from the ICT ministries and related agencies dealing with digital transformation and e-government, attended and contributed to the activities of this workshop.

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#### Introduction

- 1. The regional Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on ESCWA e-Accessibility templates for National Policy and Technical Guidelines aimed at providing hands-on training and knowledge to nominated delegates on the use and adaptation of the ESCWA templates on e-Accessibility. Participants (potential future trainers) would support the roll out of e-Accessibility policies and technical guidelines in their national context. This ToT is part of the ESCWA Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) project.
- 2. ADIP project has been launched in 2020 to support policy makers in Arab countries to develop/improve their national policies and guidelines for enhanced e-Accessibility. This would help to bridge the digital divide and enable all society members to access and use ICT, with particular focus on people with disabilities.
- 3. ESCWA developed the ADIP online platform to assist Arab policy makers in the use and adoption of the ESCWA developed templates related to national policy and technical guidelines on e-accessibility, in an interactive way. A dedicated section in the ADIP online platform that includes interactive toolkits for the application of the ESCWA templates for e-accessibility, is ready and online for final users and policy makers, in the form of different scenarios that they can use / adopt, going from the simple to the most complicated to be applied.

#### I. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4. During the workshop, participants highlighted the importance of:
  - a) Using ESCWA templates and related interactive toolkits for national policy and technical guidelines to build national policies and promote e-accessibility at national level.
  - b) ESCWA template on national policy for e-accessibility, as it provides a framework, that policy makers can be inspired from and apply either to review an existing policy or to design a draft new one, that could be discussed with all national stakeholders involved in e-accessibility issues before adoption.
  - c) The capacity building and raising awareness activities that ESCWA is implementing in the field of e-accessibility and the use of ICT to empower people with disabilities.
  - d) The technical cooperation between ESCWA and member countries, in which ESCWA can provide advisory services to help policymakers build their policies in the field of e-accessibility.
  - e) Encouraging higher education and scientific research entities to conduct studies and research and to benefit from the results of these studies in the field of software development.
  - f) Carrying out periodic reviews to harmonize the legal framework, policies and programs, monitor the progress achieved, and identify the challenges posed by the continuous development of technology, in order to adjust national plans accordingly.
  - g) The collaboration between concerned sectors and multi-stakeholders to form national working groups or committees, in charge of the work needed to promote e-accessibility at national level, including the application of the ESCWA templates on national policy and technical guidelines for e-accessibility.

#### II. PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

5. The meeting spanned over three days and consisted of three sessions per day. The presentations and discussions during these sessions are summarized in the following paragraphs.

## 1- Day 1 – 23 November 2021

## A. Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) overview and Setting the scene

6. During this session, Ms. Mirna El-Hajj Barbar, Programme Management Officer and ADIP Project coordinator, showed the importance of the digital inclusion for people with disabilities and how ADIP aims to bridge the digital divide and enable all members of society to access and use ICTs. She presented the main components and working mechanisms of the ADIP project, including the National Technical Guidelines on E-Accessibility and the National e-Accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region, in addition to the main components of the online platform that are the Resources, IGED space, and the interactive tools. She presented the three-dimensional mechanism/strategy adopted in the follow up on the implementation of the ADIP activities and the achievement of its objectives and outputs. The three main pillars of this strategy are: capacity building, building partnerships with relevant stakeholders, and providing technical support for the application of ESCWA templates.

## B. Session 1: National e-Accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region

- 7. In the first session, the general framework for building a national e-accessibility policy and the policy design cycle based on "ROAMEF" ((rationale, objectives, appraisal, monitoring, evaluation, feedback) approach was presented by Mr. Rashad Kamel, ESCWA consultant.
- 8. Then the concept and principles of the "universal design" was presented, which refers to the design and composition of an environment to design any product, so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. According to the principles of universal design, an environment or any product or service in that environment should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it, not as a special requirement for the benefit of only a minority of the population, but as a fundamental condition of good design. Mr. Kamel also presented the importance of the DARE index, what it measures, and how to determine the related requirements at the country level, and how to raise a country's rating on this index.
- 9. Mr Kamel overviewed the nine characteristics of a national e-accessibility policy, namely being responsive, beneficial to all, profitable, cost-effective, sustainable, integrated, governable, flexible, and participatory.
- 10. The questions and answers session moderated by Mr. Nawar Al-Awa, Regional Adviser on Technology for Development, addressed the role of stakeholders in the adoption and implementation of these policies, including the private sector, the response and commitments of Arab governments and agencies in the development and update of websites to meet e-accessibility, the linkage between the e-accessibility policy with the sustainable development goals.

### C. Session 2: National Policy interactive tools under the ADIP online platform

- 11. This session focused on the components of the national policy template for e-accessibility and the completion of a practical application on the use of tools for building the template of the national policy on digital access using the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform and a review of some best practices and the completion of a practical application on the use of ESCWA tools.
- 12. The questions and answers session, moderated by Ms. Sumaya Almajthoob, Associate Social Affairs Officer, included discussions about the coordination mechanism with ESCWA for the adoption of these tools, the training and capacity building on them. ESCWA experts highlighted the importance of the technical

cooperation mechanism , through which ESCWA can provide advisory services to member states based on their request and needs.

#### D. Session 3: Discussion and feedback

13. This session included a preparation for a practical application of the ESCWA tools to develop a draft e-accessibility national policy. Participants were told that they will have the chance to present their work on Day 3 of the ToT.

# 2- Day 2 – 24 November 2021

### A. Session 1: National Technical Guidelines on e-Accessibility for the Arab Region

- 14. This session provided a high-level introduction to the meaning and importance of web accessibility for people with disabilities and the elderly. The presentation showed how website is designed to be used by all people with the principle of equal access for all. Two video clips edited by adding Arabic caption as an accessibility requirement on the Web accessibility initiative and accessibility perspectives were presented. In addition, Mr. Baha Khasawneh, ESCWA consultant, emphasized on how web accessibility must meet the needs of people with disabilities, by exploring the different components of Web development and how they interact together to achieve this objective.
- 15. The second part of the first session was a presentation on the various technical guidelines, including: WAI, WCAG, ATAG, UAAG, and other internationally recognized standards such as the EU and US standards. The session provided details on the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI W3C) to develop technical specifications, guidelines, techniques and supporting resources that describe accessibility solutions. More emphasis and technical details were given to the WCAG 2.x guidelines since they are the basis for the ESCWA developed technical guidelines. In addition, we introduced the four high-level principles that describe functional accessibility and how accessible technology is "Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust".

# B. Session 2: The technical guidelines interactive tools under the ADIP online platform

16. During the second session a full presentation of the four ESCWA technical guidelines and the interactive tools available at the ADIP portal was provided. Detailed explanations of terms, requirements and guidelines were presented to highlight the different selection of guidelines based not only on basic accessibility needs but rather on functional disabilities. Mr. Khasawneh conducted a full walkthrough the first mandatory guideline and the web accessibility minimum requirements developed under the ESCWA technical guidelines. The outcome of this practical exercise included generating a requirement document for the selected guideline and procurement requirements. Finally, participants were asked to use the interactive tools developed by ESCWA to conduct an exercise on determining the requirement for building an accessible website that can be used from a web browser, smartphone, and public kiosks. The results will be presented during the next day.

## C. Session 3: Introducing testing tools of conformance, discussion and feedback

17. This session introduced the Web accessibility testing techniques and tools. Mr. Khasawneh provided a quick testing approach as a basic step in evaluating minimal accessibility compliance. Two free online evaluation tools, namely WAVE and Achecker, were introduced with complete walkthrough to show the strength of each tool. The main point of the session was to use available tools but a better and comprehensive and thorough evaluation would require human intervention and by hand testing of accessibility rules.

3- Day 3 – 25 November 2021

# A. Session 1: Presentation and discussion of the prepared draft e-Accessibility national policy case studies prepared by the group of experts

18. In this session ESCWA templates and its interactive toolkits were put in practice to conduct a full implementation of a comparative analysis of the National Disability Strategy (2014-2018) of Yemen using the ADIP Policy Makers Assistant Tool Template. The main output of this exercise was a fully drafted national policy on e-accessibility taking into considerations the main pillars and focus areas of the Yemeni National Disability Strategy (2014-2018).

# B. Session 2: Presentation and discussion of the prepared Technical requirements prepared by the group of experts to complement the draft e-Accessibility national policies

19. This session was dedicated to evaluate the outcomes of the exercise conducted by selected participants. Seven participants submitted successful completion of the exercise with positive comments on how helpful the tools were. Two participants used all the four guideline templates and produced the tool generated requirement documents. Other participants used one guideline only for a specific disability group. Again, they all provided very positive feedback on the tools design and how easy and helpful it was. One participant with vision impairment could not finish the exercise using the first guidelines using his own screen reader in Arabic, and his comment was taken by ESCWA team , who promised to look at it and find the best solution the soonest.

## C. Session 3: Closing Remarks

20. ESCWA team thanked the participants for their active participation and interaction. Their feedback and recommendations were essential in the process of the improvement of the ADIP platform, especially with regards to the interactive toolkits. Ms. Barbar invited everyone to participate in the "Accessible Arab Region: ICT for All" event that will take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2021. This event is an opportunity to share experience and good practices on ICT accessibility, discuss challenges and approaches to eliminating barriers to ICT access, thus enabling human development, and promote accessibility policies that will improve quality of life universally.

#### III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

#### A. VENUE AND DATE

21. The meeting was organized online using ZOOM platform on 23, 24 and 25 November 2021.

### **B.** OPENING

22. Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Leader of Statistics, Information Society and Technology Cluster, gave the opening statement. After welcoming participants, he considered the workshop an opportunity to discuss e accessibility and the use of ICT to empower people with disabilities. He stated that understanding the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs in the Arab region is vital to identifying solutions to urgent problems facing the region, particularly those of marginalized communities and groups such as people with disability, elderly, women. Mr Fraihat highlighted the crucial role the ICT can play in the economy, workforce growth, education, healthcare and public safety, in other words in building inclusive societies. He highlighted the main activities of ESCWA in promoting e-accessibility in the region, in particular the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) initiative that was launched in 2020 to help policy makers in the Arab region revise/develop their national e-accessibility policies and technical guidelines. He emphasized on the different activities and templates provided through the ADIP project and commended on the interactive toolkits that ESCWA produced to ensure smooth use of the e-accessibility templates. Mr. Fraihat explained that the main objective

of the regional training of trainers workshop is to provide in-depth knowledge on the application and adoption of the ESCWA developed national e-accessibility policy and technical guidelines templates and toolkits.

#### C. PARTICIPANTS

23. The workshop was attended by more than 80 participants, including government officials and experts who are engaged in the ESCWA inter-governmental disability working group (IGED) and other government officials and experts from the ICT sector, in addition to representatives from and regional organizations dealing with digital government and digital inclusion in the region. The list of participants is contained in Annex I of this report.

#### D. AGENDA

- 24. The meeting agenda is summarized and set forth below:
  - 1- Day 1- 23 November 2021:
    - (a) Opening;
    - (b) Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) overview and Setting the scene;
    - (c) Session 1 National e-Accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region;
    - (d) Session 2 National Policy interactive tools under the ADIP online platform;
    - (e) Session 3 Discussion and feedback.
  - 2- Day 2- 24 November 2021:
    - (a) Session 1 National Technical Guidelines on E-Accessibility for the Arab Region;
    - (b) Session 2 The technical guidelines interactive tools under the ADIP online platform;
    - (c) Session 3 Introducing testing tools of conformance, discussion and feedback.
  - 3- Day 2- 25 November 2021:
- (a) Session 1 Presentation and discussion of the prepared draft e-Accessibility national policy case studies prepared by the group of experts;
- (b) Session 2 Presentation and discussion of the prepared Technical requirements prepared by the group of experts to complement the draft e-Accessibility national policies;
  - (c) Session 3 Closing Remarks.

#### E. DOCUMENTS

25. The documents submitted to the meeting are contained in Annex II.

#### Annex I

#### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#### A. COUNTRY ORGANIZATIONS AND EXPERTS

### **Bahrain**

Ms. Basma Saleh Bouradha Director Hidd Rehabilitation Center

### **Egypt**

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Mr. Khaled Hanafy

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Head of Accommodation and Support Technology Section

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## **Oman**

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Mr. Hamed Alamri Computer technician at the General Directorate of Persons with Disabilities Affairs Ministry of Social Development

Ms. Sumaya AlMalikya Coordination and follow-up specialist at the Technical Coordination Office of the General Directorate of Persons with Disabilities Affairs

Mr. Khumais Alshkili Head of the Department of Diagnostics and Gifted Care Ministry of Education

Mr. Hamed Alebri Arabic language teacher at Al-Amal School for the Deaf

Mr. Badr Alhadidi Information Technology Teacher at Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Institute for the Blind

Mr. Falah Altawbi Head of the Labor Disputes Registration Department at the Labor Disputes Settlement Ministry of Labour

Mr. Said Alshukri Labor inspector Ministry of Labor

Dr. Mohamad Huseein Qatanany Special Education Expert at the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities Ms. Sumaya Alkanadya Administrative Supervisor at the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities

Mr. Ali Alamri Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Disabilities Mr. Yehya Albarashdy Sign language interpreter at the Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Disabilities

Mr. Shuwain Alkhumaisi Member of the Omani Society for Autism

Ms. Fatima Alblooshya Oman Down Syndrome Association

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Ms. Hana Rasheed Al Raisi Compliance Specialist Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

Mr. Ali Abdullah Marhoun Al Amri Senior Specialist - Web Accessibility Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

Ms. Aisha Al Habsi Senior Web Content Writer Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

Ms. Hiba Almuzahmya Computer programmer in the Information Technology Department of the General Directorate of Planning and Studies Ministry of Social Development

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Ministry of Communications and Technology

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Principal infrastructure technical Ministry of community Development

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Mr. Mohamed Salim Legal Department TDRA

## **Yemen**

Mr. Yousef Ahmed Mohammed Mabkhot Specialized in the field of people with disabilities

Mr. Fahim Sultan Alkodosi Journalist specializing in the field of people with disabilities

## B. UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

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Mr. Mohamad Nawar Al-Awa Regional Adviser on Technology for Development Cluster 4, Statistics, Information Society and Technology

Mr. Alaa Sebeh Regional Advisor on Disability Cluster 2, Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development

Ms. Sumaya Almajthoob Associate Social Affairs Officer Cluster 2, Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development

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Mr. Rashad Kamel ESCWA, Consultant

Mr. Bahaa Khasawneh ESCWA, consultant

Mr. Hasan Arous ESCWA Consultant

Zeina Assi ESCWA, Individual Contractor

## Annex II

## LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- (a) Background Documents:
  - Agenda
  - Information Note
- (b) Presentations:
  - ADIP Objectives Overview (in Arabic)
  - Presentation on ESCWA template and toolkits for national e-accessibility policy (in Arabic)
  - Practical training on ESCWA toolkits for national e-accessibility policy (in Arabic)
  - Presentation on ESCWA template and toolkits for national e-accessibility guidelines (in Arabic)
  - Practical training on ESCWA toolkits for national e-accessibility guidelines (in Arabic)
  - Presentation on testing tools of conformance (in Arabic)
  - Presentation and discussion of the prepared scenarios on e-Accessibility national policies (in Arabic)
  - Presentation and discussion of the prepared scenarios on e-Accessibility national guidelines (in Arabic)