



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**REPORT****WORKSHOP ON MACROECONOMIC SIMULATIONS FOR MDG ACHIEVEMENT
BEIRUT, 28-29 SEPTEMBER 2011****Summary**

On September 28-29, 2011, ECRI co-organized a two-day workshop on Macroeconomic Simulations for MDG Achievement jointly with EDGD aimed at reviewing the most recent and effective techniques that may help policymakers in designing and implementing pro-poor economic and social policies. ESCWA has also embarked on macroeconomic modelling exercises at both the regional and country levels with this strategic aim in mind. Macroeconomic modelling techniques are a powerful tool that can help inform policymakers and civil society and tackle critical issues such as redistributive and pro-growth policies as well as assessing the socio-economic impacts of fiscal policies.

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Introduction

1. The world is experiencing the worst economic recession since the Great Depression and we still suffer from continued financial fragility, high unemployment, and volatile commodity prices; all in times of deteriorating fiscal space thus significantly restricting the efficacy and use of counter-cyclical policies. Achieving MDGs in such an uncertain context is exceedingly difficult and increasing poverty and inequalities may feedback into higher risk of instability and conflict in our region. In this respect, an undeniable urge for integrated and coherent policy responses has arisen. Understanding and assessing macroeconomic implications when designing social policies, assessing social implications of macroeconomic policies, choosing policies that are most effective to achieve developmental priorities, assessing trade-offs (across time) and synergies between different sets of policies, as well as their budgetary implications becomes crucial to policymakers particularly in the wake of the recent unrests that have shaken the region. Mounting discontent and pressure by public opinion has forced governments in time of limited fiscal space to do more and better with less. This means equipping policymakers with new analytical tools that can help in measuring costs and impacts of pro-poor policy reforms, all within a context affected by regional and global emerging issues.

2. To this end, on September 28, 2011, ECRI organized a one-day workshop on Macroeconomic Simulations for MDG Achievement followed by a one-day workshop on Macroeconomic Simulations in the Arab Region organized by EDGD with the aim of reviewing the most recent and effective techniques that may help policymakers in designing and implementing pro-poor economic and social policies. ESCWA has also embarked on macroeconomic modelling exercises at both the regional and country levels with this strategic aim in mind. Macroeconomic modelling techniques are a powerful tool that can help inform policymakers and civil society and tackle the aforementioned issues.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Policymakers need to deal with inter-temporal trade off of investing in MDGs for immediate social but mainly future economic, risking fiscal sustainability along the way. To create policy coherence, regulators must identify macro-economic trade-offs, such as real exchange rates and growth undermining financing strategies, and assess the options to offset possible trade-offs. MAMS analyses don't give finite answers, but can help guide the decision making by quantifying trade-offs and suggest where to seek greater policy coherence. MDG strategy can help ensure a better future for all, but is no end station. Getting to the end station comes at a cost and no win-win outcome can be guaranteed though adequate and coherent public policies guide in that direction.

4. To derive conclusions and recommendations for policy consideration and dialogue, policymakers must experiment with alternative presentations of findings, such as briefings on budget implications of alternative scenarios, policy briefs, presentations, hands-on sessions to fine tune simulations. They should also identify or organize (multi-stakeholder) platforms for policy dialogue where some results meaningfully can be discussed. Also, establishing mechanisms to swiftly respond to new demands for policy simulations.

II. DISCUSSIONS TOPICS

28 September 2011

A. SESSION I: INTEGRATED MACRO-MICRO MODELLING FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS MDG STRATEGIES: OVERVIEW, APPLICATIONS, AND POLICY QUESTIONS AND ANALYZING POLICY SCENARIOS WITH MAMSS

5. In the first session, panellists discussed macroeconomic and social policy coherence in an integrated modelling framework. Pointing out to continued financial fragility and volatility amid an environment of crisis and recovery, a sense of economic insecurity and hardships in achieving MDGs has emerged. This

present context would then require a need for integrated and coherent policy responses making an integrated framework for MDG analysis a helpful tool is assessing effectiveness and implication of policies.

6. Presenters then introduced an integrated framework for MDG analysis that includes the *Maquette for MDG Simulations (MAMS)*, an economy-wide dynamic simulation model that analyzes MDG strategies in different countries, *the sector analysis of MDG determinants and of interventions*, needed to achieve MDGs in education, health, water and sanitation, and *microsimulations*, translating labour market outcomes of simulations into impact on poverty and income distribution at household levels. Panellists stressed that no model is perfect but can be beneficial in simulating alternative policies to inform of their pros and cons and simulate an “on track” or “off track” results using current scenarios rather than projection on past trends. They also pointed to the importance of realizing that “the future isn’t what it used to be” assuming its uncertainty and volatility.

7. More specifically, presenters then explained the structure of MAMS and its steps in scenario analysis. MAMS main building blocks include activities (producers), institutions (households, governments, rest of the world) and markets (factors and domestic commodities). The steps in scenario analysis are defining and running the base scenario, defining and running alternative/non-base scenarios, and analysing and validating the differences between those two scenarios and between different non-base scenarios. Questions often addressed would be an analysis of what happens if the government: expands services in one or more areas with additional financing provided by foreign grants and domestic taxes and borrowing, contracts in one area and expands in another within the limits of fiscal space, and becomes more/less productive, adjusting one or more types of spending or financing in response. Following the conceptual explanation behind MAMS, panellists performed an actual simulation example for Tunisia.

B. SESSION II: ADAPTING THE MACRO-MICRO MODELING FRAMEWORK TO COUNTRY-SPECIFIC NEEDS

8. The second session concluded with adapting the macro-micro modelling framework to country specific needs in eight basic steps. First, defining institutional setting and national team to adapt and apply the modelling framework (includes identification of needs of policy analysis and, hence, key objectives for the application of the framework). Second, construction and adjustment of SAM for MAMS. Third, obtaining plausible values for key elasticities and parameters and calibrating static CG, recursive dynamic CGE, and baseline. Fourth, performing sectoral and microeconomic analysis of MDG determinants and cost functions. Fifth, calibrating complete MAMS. Sixth, performing MAMS policy simulations. Seventh, performing microsimulations to estimate poverty and inequality impact of each policy scenario. Finally, deriving conclusions and recommendations for policy consideration and dialogue.

29 September 2011

C. SESSION I: CURRENT WORK ON MACROECONOMIC SIMULATIONS FOR THE ARAB REGION

9. This presentation focused on ESCWA’s work in developing a macro-econometric model for the Arab region. The objective is to use these results as input for two main ESCWA publications: Arab World in 2025 and the Arab Integration report. The main purpose of the framework is to conduct simulations of the impact of budgetary and monetary policies. Another purpose is to shock financial and monetary indicators (intra regional financial flows, intra-regional aid flows, intra regional trade, labour supply). The model is a stochastic, dynamic, non-linear simultaneous equations. It is structured along five main blocks: the real sector, the price-wages block, the balance of payments block, the fiscal accounts and the monetary block. The model considers two sub regional groupings: the oil exporting countries and the oil importing countries.

10. The second presentation was on IFPRI’s work on modelling in the Arab world. IFPRI stands for the International Food Price Research Institute and is a think tank whose mission is to find innovative solutions for reducing poverty and hunger. It uses policy research, capacity building and policy communications.

IFPRI developed a National Food Security Strategy for Yemen at the request of the government. Then IFPRI presented their dynamic CGE model which is using realistic target setting and priority setting. The model used a detailed structure: 65 production sectors (27 agriculture, 30 industries, and 8 services); 6 sub-national level regions (agriculture and households); Labour by skill level and by private and public employment; 126 household groups (by region, rural-urban etc.). It focused on food security through nutrition micro simulation.

11. The third presentation was about ECOMOD's Modelling in the Gulf Countries. It was explained that the ECOMOD's models span from CGE, macroeconometrics and microsimulation to forecasting. And in terms of sectors, the models study labour markets, energy and environment, trade and public finance sectors. ECOMOD has developed models for United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), Bahrain and Qatar. The representative from ECOMOD presented one of their models in detail: the ADMOD which is a Dynamic Multi Sector General Equilibrium Model for Abu Dhabi. The agents in the model are: households, firms, governments, rest of the world. The markets are: goods and services, factors of production, foreign exchange. The labour market is divided into skilled, unskilled and highly skilled groups. The households are divided in nationals, expatriates and collective households.

D. SESSION II: SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP AND NEXT STEPS

12. The last session summarized the previous presentation, it was highlighted how there are many different economic models and that they answer different questions. It is crucial to select the appropriate model that suits the needs of the policymaker. For example, a MAMS model is able to answer certain questions while a macroeconomic model answers other questions. Before embarking on a new modelling project, there must be an assessment of the requirements of this model as well as the opportunities this model provide.

13. Following the discussion about the pros and cons of the different models, a discussion with the representatives from the member countries took place. The representatives explained some of their current and past experience with modelling. There was a strong interest from some member countries in this new initiative by ESCWA and they deemed that this would be useful for their countries.

III. OBJECTIVES

14. The main objectives of the meeting were to providing senior officials from the Arab Region with latest up-to-date techniques and methodologies that can be used as tools for macroeconomic policies in order to accelerate MDG achievement in a cost-effective manner particularly in conflict-affected countries. This discussion is particularly relevant given current and emerging challenges facing Arab states to help shape the region's strategic vision and realign its current priorities and program of work.

IV. ATTENDANCE AND WORK PROGRAMME

A. VENUE AND DATE

15. The Workshop on Macroeconomic Simulations for MDG Achievement was held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut on September 28th and 29th 2011.

B. ATTENDANCE

16. The workshop was attended by experts from the ESCWA region, Europe and the United States, with experience in MDGs and development in conflict affected countries, and by civil society actors (see Annex I for full list of participants).

C. OPENING

17. The meeting opened with welcoming remarks by Mr. Nadim Khoury, Deputy Executive Secretary at ESCWA. Mr. Khoury alluded to the sessions' discussion on the need for macroeconomic and social policy coherence simulations to study achievements of MDGs. He gave a brief and broad overview of the objectives of the workshop and the presentation of participants.

D. AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

18. The first and second days of the workshop were organized along two panels of experts (see Annex II: Work Programme) that deliberated on the following themes:

September 28th 2011

19. Session I: Integrated macro-micro modeling framework to assess MDG strategies: overview, applications, and policy questions and analyzing policy scenarios with MAMSs and real-time application of MAMS simulations and discussion

20. Session II: Adapting the Macro-Micro Modeling Framework to country-specific needs

September 29th 2011

21. Session I: Current Work on Macroeconomic Simulations for the Arab Region, ESCWA's Work on Macromodelling, IFPRI's Work on Macromodelling, Estimating Socio-economic Cost of Conflict in the ESCWA Region, Presentations on ESCWA Country Case Studies

22. Session II: Summary of the workshop and next steps

23. ECI (represented by Mr. Vito Intini) chaired the first day of the workshop. Mr. Abdallah Dardari (Director, EDGD) chaired the second day. The final discussion and recommendation session was chaired by Rob Vos (Director, UN-DESA), Hans Lofgren (Senior Economist, World Bank), Abdallah Dardari, and Tarek Alami (Chief, ECRI). This last session consisted on the discussion by a panel of experts and ESCWA of the main conclusions and recommendations.

Annex I*

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Annex II

WORK PROGRAMME



United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)

Workshop on Macroeconomic Simulations for MDG Achievement

Preliminary Work Programme

United Nations House, Committee Room 1, B1 Level

Beirut

Wednesday, 28 September	
<i>Workshop on Macroeconomic Simulations for MDG Achievement</i>	
09:00-09:30	<i>Welcoming remarks, objectives of the workshop, and presentation of participants</i> Nadim Khouri, Deputy Executive Secretary (ESCWA)
	Session I
09:30-10:15	<i>Moderator: Vito Intini</i> Integrated macro-micro modeling framework to assess MDG strategies: overview, applications, and policy questions Rob Vos and Marco V. Sánchez
10:15-11:00	Analyzing policy scenarios with MAMS Hans Lofgren
11:00-11:15	Coffee Break
11:15-13:00	Real-time application of MAMS simulations and discussion Marco V. Sánchez
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-16:00	Session II <i>Moderator: Vito Intini</i> Adapting the Macro-Micro Modeling Framework to country-specific needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- How to implement in eight steps?- What policy analysis needs should the framework respond to?- What institutional arrangements and expertise need to be put in place and developed?- What are the minimum data requirements to apply the framework? Rob Vos and Hans Lofgren, <i>Introduction to above issues</i> Discussion

Thursday, 29 September	
09:00-10:00	<p style="text-align: center;">Session I</p> <p>Current Work on Macroeconomic Simulations for the Arab Region</p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Abdallah Dardari, ESCWA</p> <p>ESCWA's Work on Macromodelling Dony Costa, ESCWA</p> <p>IFPRI's Work on Macromodelling Clemens Breisinger and Olivier Ecker, IFPRI</p> <p>Estimating Socio-economic Cost of Conflict in the ESCWA Region Vito Intini, ESCWA</p>
10:00-11:15	<p>Presentations on ESCWA Country Case Studies Ali Bayar, Free University of Brussels and EcoMod Amad Kamaly, American University of Egypt</p> <p><i>Discussion</i></p>
11:15-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-13:00	<p style="text-align: center;">Session II</p> <p>Summary of the workshop and next steps Rob Vos, Hans Lofgren, Abdallah Dardari, and Tarik Alami</p>