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Regional and global issues

ESCWA vision on post-conflict recovery: towards more effective development outcomes

Summary

Widening socioeconomic disparities, governance deficits, political transitions, competition over scarce resources, legacies of violence and social tensions are root causes of conflict. The humanitarian and socioeconomic costs require urgent action to ensure that development priorities are met and that post-conflict recovery efforts prevent the recurrence of violence. As such, it is critical for policymakers and stakeholders across the Arab region to prepare for post-conflict recovery, given that societies have narrow windows of opportunity to consolidate their transitions to peace.

As such, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with relevant national and multilateral partners, supports its member States with various policy options, technical assistance, and inclusive national and regional dialogues to improve national development outcomes and prevent conflict relapse. ESCWA aims to place its member States on a favourable trajectory to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 despite unfavourable conditions resulting from conflict, occupation and terrorism.

The present paper discusses the following seven thrust areas deployed by ESCWA in that regard: studying the impact of conflict on human development; analysing conflict dynamics and its spillover effects; establishing indicator baselines for SDGs; strengthening national and regional approaches to address conflict spillover effects; providing technical dialogue platforms; strengthening institutional governance practices and structures during the post-conflict recovery phase; and monitoring and preventing violent extremism and radicalization.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

1.   There are currently 148 million people in the Arab region (36.4 per cent of the Arab population) who live in countries beset by wars of different intensity.[1] Conflicts in Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen are having a devastating impact on the entire Arab region and beyond. Moreover, the Israeli occupation of Palestine is the longest occupation of modern times.

2.   Widening socioeconomic disparities, governance deficits, political transitions, competition over scarce resources, legacies of violence and social tensions are root causes of conflict. The humanitarian and socioeconomic costs require urgent action to ensure that development priorities are met and that post-conflict recovery efforts prevent the recurrence of violence. As such, it is critical for policymakers and stakeholders across the Arab region to prepare for post-conflict recovery, given that societies have narrow windows of opportunity to consolidate their transitions to peace.

I.   THE ARAB REGIONAL CONTEXT: TRENDS, CONFLICT DYNAMICS AND IMPACTS

3.   A combination of external and internal factors in the socioeconomic, security and political spheres, many of them long standing, have made the Arab region acutely vulnerable to armed conflict, civil strife, political instability and occupation. As a result, by late 2016, over 148 million people in the region were living in countries beset by conflict of various intensities or under occupation. A total of 29 million people have been forcibly displaced, and 56.4 million are dependent on humanitarian assistance.[2] Armed conflict and instability in Arab countries, including the fight against terrorism, have had a toll on human development that could take generations to reverse.

4.   The price of modern conflict is increasingly paid by civilians, with women and girls particularly at risk. In the Arab region, they outnumber men and boys among the displaced, making up more than three quarters of total Syrian refugees.

A. HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED ARAB COUNTRIES

5.   Armed conflict has direct and indirect effects on all aspects of human development that can impact individuals throughout their lives. This is reflected in the high prevalence of humanitarian needs reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in conflict-affected countries of the region. According to OCHA estimates, people in need of humanitarian assistance in at least one sector (food security, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, shelter, non-food items (NFIs), protection and education) peaked at 60.1 million (41.4 per cent of population) in 2015, up from 47.2 million (33.2 per cent of population) a year earlier. Although this number decreased to 56.4 million in 2016, it remains high, representing 38.1 per cent of population (figure 1).

B. IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

6.   Beyond the immediate humanitarian effects illustrated in the previous section, armed conflict pervasively impacts human development in the medium and long term. It affects individuals differently depending on their population group and stage of life, with consequences that damage current and future generations.

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[1] ESCWA calculations, based on data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

[2] ESCWA calculations based on data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Figure 1. People in need in conflict-affected Arab countries, 2014-2016
(*percentage of the population*)
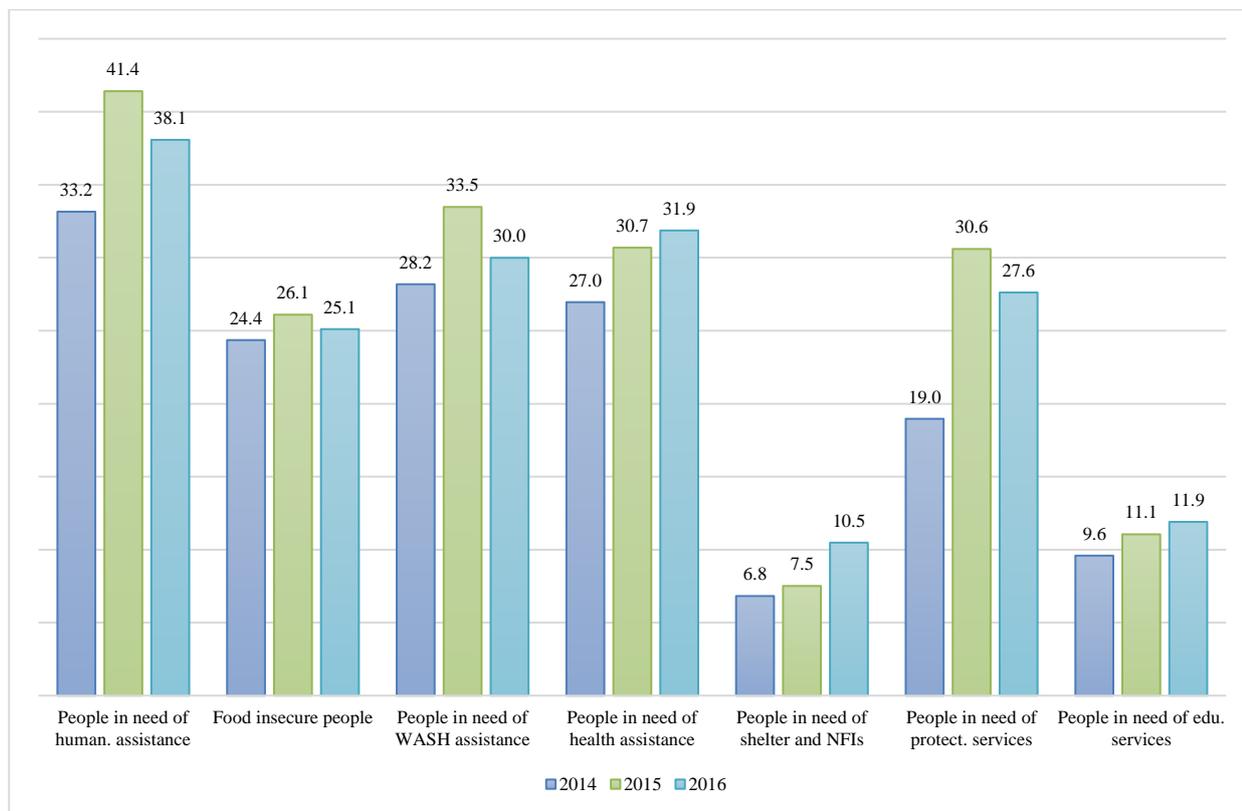
Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from OCHA and UN DESA.

Note: The following countries are included in the calculations: Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen. Due to a lack of data, Libya is included in the totals of people in need of humanitarian assistance and food security only.

7.   Lack of education, inadequate health care, malnutrition and violence-related psychological stress are occurring at influential stages of the life cycle of Arab children. Such shocks not only affect their current development, but reduce their ability to accumulate skills later, thus undermining their earning potential with severe repercussions for economies, security and political order. Development reversal in crisis-affected countries could harm overall regional progress.

8.   Recent human development indicators on children in conflict-affected Arab countries are alarming. In Yemen, 2.1 million children (over 15 percent of all children in the country) are now acutely malnourished. Moreover, 14.1 million are estimated food insecure and 14.5 million people need WASH assistance. More than 7 million do not know when they will eat again.[3] Malnutrition makes them more susceptible to cholera, infecting an estimated 5,000 people daily.[4]

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[3] See http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/yemen.

[4] See http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/cholera-yemen-mark/en/.

9.   An estimated 14.8 million people in Yemen, 12.8 million in the Syrian Arab Republic, and 9.7 million in Iraq have little or no access to basic health care. Medical infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, and medical materials and health workers are in chronically short supply.[5]

10.   In the Syrian Arab Republic, 2.8 million children are estimated out of school: one third do not attend because of safety fears, and two thirds because of financial hardship, child labour or destroyed educational infrastructure.[6] In Yemen, some estimates suggest that over 3.4 million school-aged children are out of school (half of all school-aged children in the country), and around 3,600 schools have closed.[7] In Iraq, nearly 3.7 million school-aged children attend school irregularly or not at all, and schools in governorates impacted by the so-called Islamic State must convene three sequential sessions to cope with the increased number of students.[8] In Libya, thousands of children, especially girls, are out of school. Of the 558 schools affected by the crisis, 30 are completely destroyed, 477 are partially damaged and 51 are accommodating displaced populations.[9]

11.   Syrian children are affected in multiple ways, with more than 8 million suffering from violence, loss of parents, displacement, child labour, forced child marriage, and school shortages.[10] Over 10 per cent of Syrian girls are married before the age of 18, and the conflict has caused a dramatic increase in early marriage within Syrian refugee communities.[11]

12.   As those figures demonstrate, armed conflict has impacted all aspects of human development in the region. Beyond the immediate consequences of death, injury, food insecurity, disease, and inadequate water, sanitation and shelter, conflicts impair skill and human capital development, with detrimental long-lasting consequences for individuals, communities and national economies.

C. FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND REFUGEES

13.   Forced displacement is of particular concern in the Arab region. With the current situation becoming more violent and protracted, large segments of the population have been forced to migrate internally or to other countries. As figure 2 shows, the number of displaced persons in the region increased steadily between 2010 and 2015. Numbers dropped slightly in 2016 because of a decrease in internally displaced persons, but the refugee count remained high. This is a worrisome trend since displacement severely disrupts the living conditions, livelihoods and future opportunities of the affected population.

14.   In addition, some Arab countries, such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, have received large inflows of forced migrants, putting additional pressure on local infrastructure and services.

1. *Refugees*

15.   The Arab region, which accounts for only 5.4 per cent of the world's population, hosts 37.5 per cent of its refugees (figure 3). The State of Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon host almost 80 per cent of all refugees in

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[5] See http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mena-economic-monitor-april-2017-economics-post-conflict-reconstruction.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] See https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-humanitarian-response-plan-2017-february-2017.

[9] See http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/libya.

[10] See http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mena-economic-monitor-april-2017-economics-post-conflict-reconstruction.

[11] Ibid.

the Arab region, where the refugee-to-population ratio stands at 45.1 per cent, 30.3 per cent and 24.6 per cent, respectively (figure 4). However, those figures only account for officially registered refugees; including unregistered refugees would increase the numbers substantially. For instance, estimates suggest that adding Syrian refugees who have not registered with UNHCR would increase the refugee-to-population ratios to 36.8 per cent and 32.8 per cent in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively. Refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, both registered and unregistered, and Palestine make up an estimated 62.6 per cent and 36.4 per cent, respectively, of all refugees in Jordan. Syrians, both registered and unregistered, and Palestinians make up an estimated 76.1 per cent and 23.5 per cent, respectively, of all refugees in Lebanon.[12]

Figure 2. Arab refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), 2010-2016
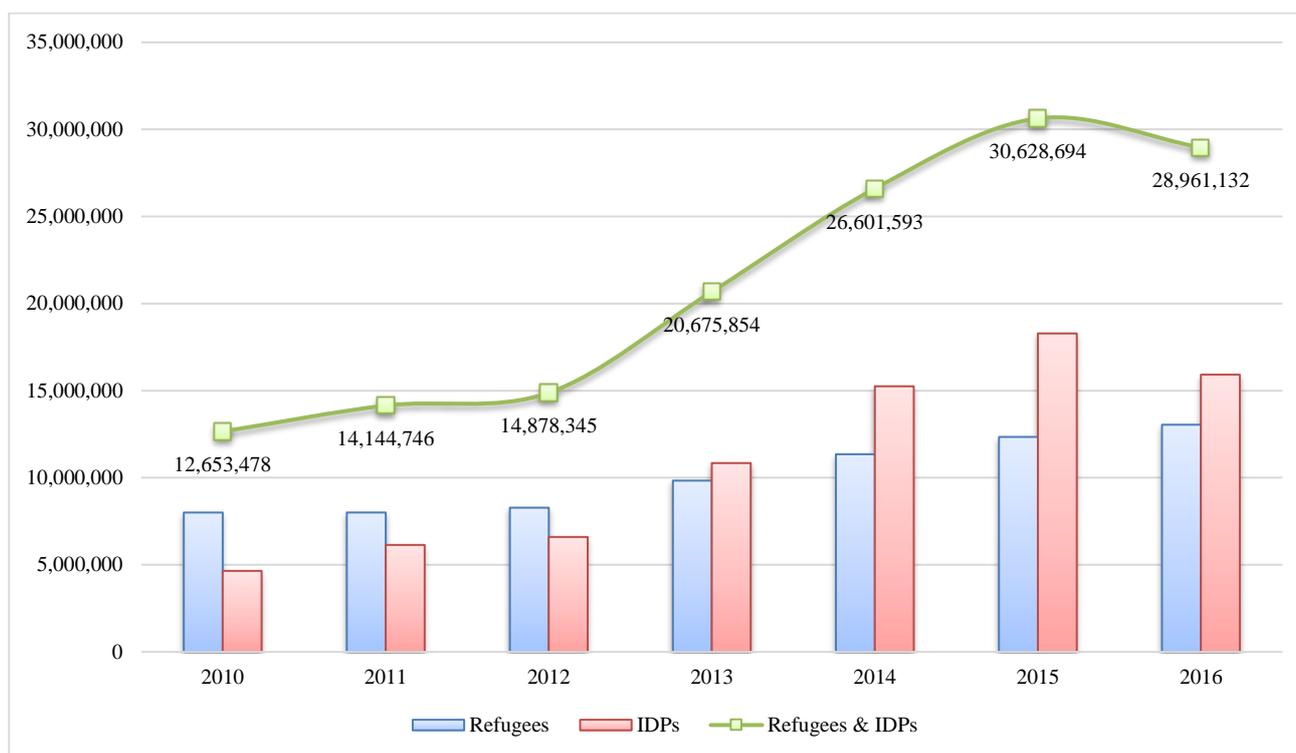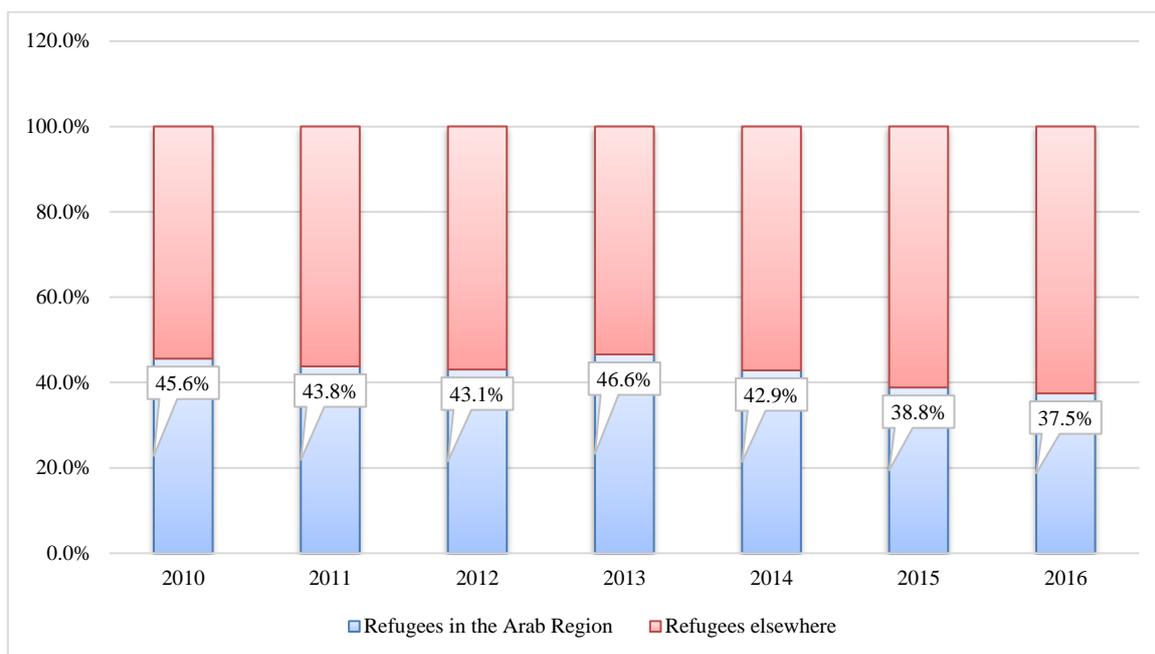

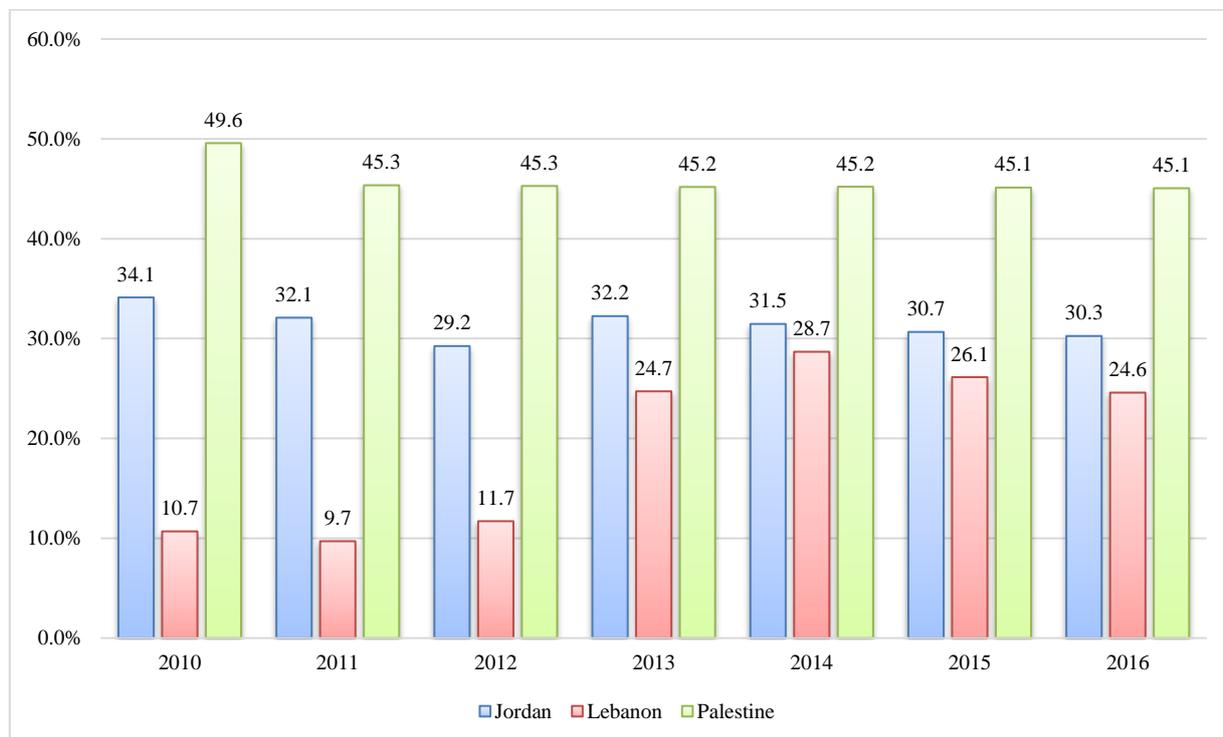*Source*: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR, UNRWA and IDMC.

Note: "Arab region" covers 22 countries, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

16.   As the overall percentage of refugees from the Arab region rose from 51 per cent in 2010 to 57.4 per cent in 2016, the percentage of refugees residing outside the region increased from 8.1 per cent in 2010 to 23.1 per cent in 2016 while the percentage of those inside the region decreased from 42.9 per cent in 2010 to 34.3 per cent in 2016 (figure 5). Turkey hosts 54.8 per cent of all refugees originating from the Arab region, almost 80 per cent of whom are Syrians. Germany hosts 9.1 per cent, mostly Syrians, Iraqis and Somalis. Kenya hosts 6.3 per cent (mostly Somalis), Chad hosts 6 per cent (mostly Sudanese), Ethiopia hosts 5.4 per cent (mostly Somalis and Sudanese), and South Sudan hosts 4.6 per cent (entirely Sudanese). Other European countries, such as Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden, host a smaller percentage of refugees, mostly Syrians, Somalis and Iraqis.

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[12] ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR, UNRWA, UN DESA, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of Jordan, Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2017-2019, and Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020.
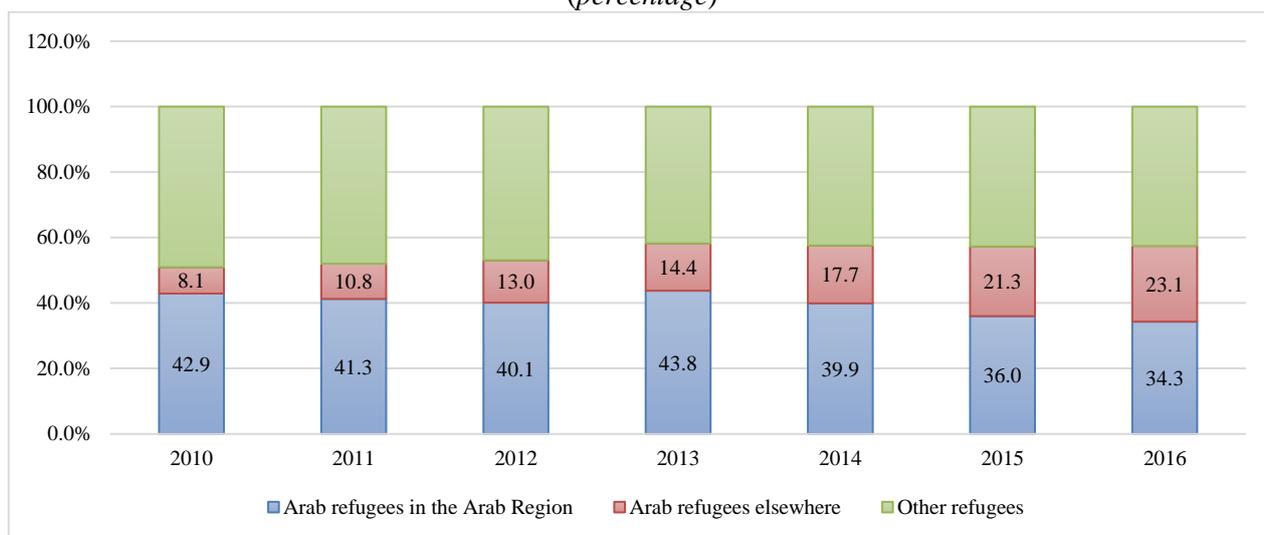
Figure 3. Arab refugees as a percentage of the world's refugees, 2010-2016

Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR, UNRWA and UN DESA.

**Figure 4. Refugees as a percentage of the population in Jordan,
Lebanon and the State of Palestine**

Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR, UNRWA and UN DESA.

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Figure 5. Distribution of Arab and other refugees, 2010-2016
(*percentage*)

Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR and UNRWA.

2. *Internally displaced persons*

17.   The rise in Arab internally displaced persons has been much steeper, from 4.7 million in 2010 to almost 16 million in 2016, resulting in an increase from 31.7 per cent of the world's total in 2010 to 43.5 per cent in 2016. The region, which accounts for only 5.4 per cent of the world's population, hosts 43.5 per cent of the world's internally displaced persons (figure 6).

Figure 6. Arab internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a percentage of the world's IDPs, 2010-2016
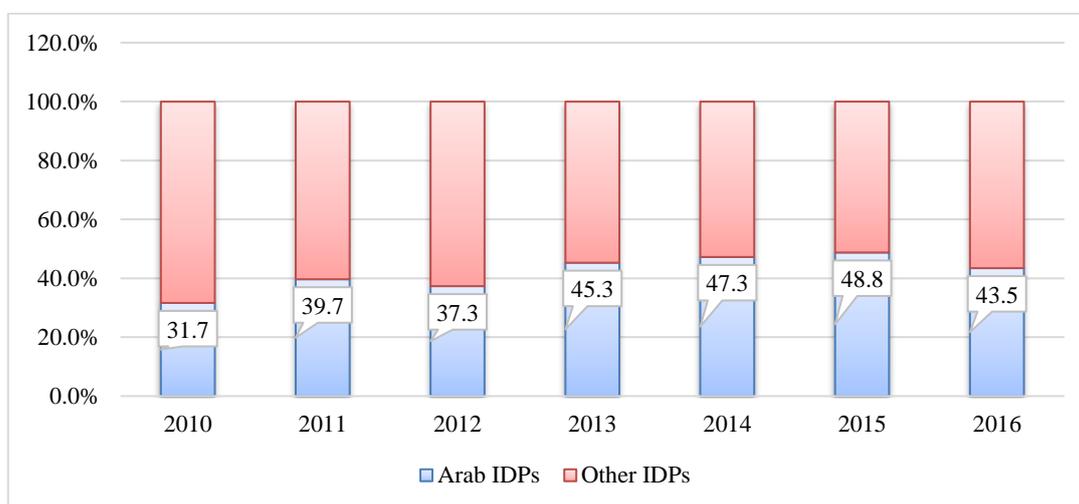
Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR, UNRWA and UN DESA.

18.   The internally displaced persons concentrated in the following six Arab countries: Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, represented 11.10 per cent of the population in 2016, up from 4.62 per cent in 2010. This is largely explained by just four countries: 34.32 percent in Syria, 10.91 percent in Somalia, 9.69 percent in Iraq and 7.34 percent in Yemen, together hosting almost 85 percent of the region's IDPs (figure 7).

19.   Compared with 3 million people displaced in Iraq and 2.5 million in Yemen, Syrian forced displacement (both internal and external) stands at over 11.5 million (half of the pre-conflict Syrian population). Over 50 per cent are displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic, making it, after Colombia, the country with the second largest number of internally displaced persons in the world.[13] On average, every day between January and August 2016, an additional 6,150 Syrians were forced from their homes or areas of residence.[14]

Figure 7. Internally displaced persons in Arab countries, 2010-2016
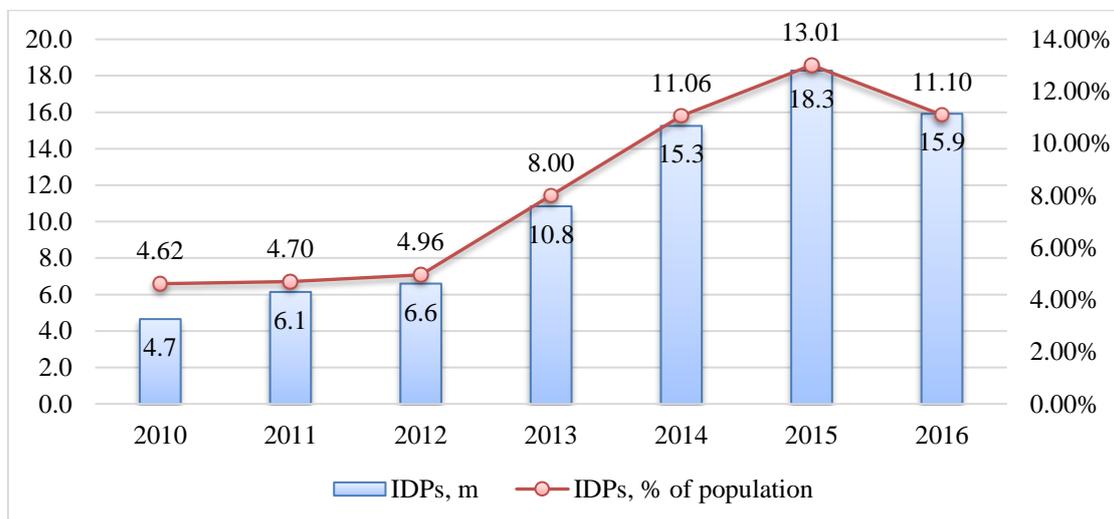
Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR, IDMC and UN DESA.

Note: The six Arab countries that account for 100 per cent of the regional total internally displaced population are Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen.

D. IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

20.   Protracted conflict, insecurity and violence have negatively affected economic growth and development in crisis-affected economies, with direct and indirect consequences for the region. Armed conflict affects economies in numerous ways, including continued political and economic instability, persistent diversion of resources away from economically and socially productive sectors to the security sector, decreasing economic activity and trade, major damages to oil facilities and pipelines, international sanctions, falling government revenue, crippled tourism industry, rising prices and unemployment, shortages, expansion of black market activities, interrupted salary payments, disrupted livelihoods, and accelerated poverty and humanitarian crises. For instance, between 2010 and 2015, gross national income (GNI) per capita in constant 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP) United States dollars has plunged more than twice in Libya, 2.5 times in the Syrian Arab Republic, and by more than 40 per cent and 15 per cent in Yemen and Iraq, respectively (figure 8).[15] Estimates by the World Bank show that if a political solution is reached today and reconstruction begins, it will take ten years for the Syrian gross domestic product (GDP) to get close to its pre-war (2010) real GDP level if the economy grows by 5 per cent on average. Growing at 3 per cent, for example, will delay the recovery by another ten years.[16]

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[13] See   http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mena-economic-monitor-april-2017-economics-post-conflict-reconstruction.

[14] See https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2017-humanitarian-needs-overview-syrian-arab-republic-enar.

[15] UNDP International Human Development Indicators.

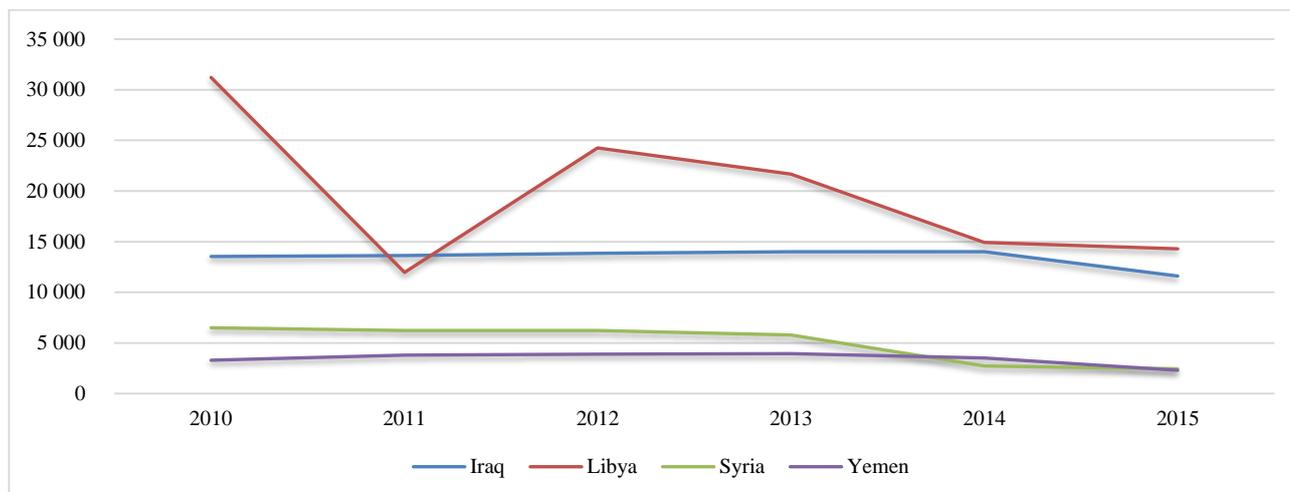[16] See   http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mena-economic-monitor-april-2017-economics-post-conflict-reconstruction.

**Figure 8. Constant GNI per capita in Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic,
and Yemen, 2010-2015**

Source: ESCWA calculations based on UNDP data.

BOX 1. FIFTY YEARS OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION

2017 marks 50 years of military occupation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The 50-year Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory entails deeply discriminatory practices and other violations of international law.[a] The occupation and its practices have a negative cumulative social and economic impact on the Palestinian people, and incur multi-layered costs including humanitarian crises, obstruction of social and economic development, and at times reversal of the development trajectory. There are sharp differences in living conditions within Palestine. The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip since 2007, together with successive military campaigns by the Israeli army, has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, severely undermining any development efforts, limiting the availability of essential services, and resulting in violations of human, social and economic rights.[b] As a result, while 2015 gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the West Bank was 27.9 per cent above its 2000 level, in Gaza it is was 12.7 per cent below, reflecting years of obstructed growth and de-development. The unemployment rate in the fourth quarter of 2016 was 16.9 per cent in the West Bank and 40.6 per cent in the Gaza Strip. The unemployment rate in Gaza (averaging 41.7 per cent in 2016) remains above its pre-2014 level, showing that the labour market is still struggling to recover from the fallout of the 2014 offensive. Although improvements have been registered in recent years, food insecurity remains high in Palestine, with 26.8 per cent of households classified as food insecure in 2014. Improvements are witnessed only in the West Bank, where food insecurity fell from 22.1 per cent of households in 2013 to 16.3 per cent in 2014. The situation in Gaza remains dire, with high levels of food insecurity (46.7 per cent of households in 2014, up from 44.5 per cent in 2013). In the West Bank, food insecurity is particularly high in refugee camps, at 29 per cent.[c] A food security crisis in Gaza has been averted only because of large-scale humanitarian assistance.[d] More than 70 per cent of Gazans receive some form of international aid, the bulk of which is food assistance.[e] The population receiving food aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) grew more than tenfold between 2000 and 2016, rising from fewer than 80,000 to over 960,000. UNRWA reports that 75 per cent of schools in Gaza continued to operate on a double-shift basis in 2016. Refugee children have fewer opportunities to engage in recreational and creative pursuits than students attending single-shift schools.[f] Over the 50 years of occupation, Israeli policies and practices have placed severe limitations on social and economic development, at times resulting in humanitarian crises. The impact of those policies and practices on the Palestinian people, society and economy is multi-layered and has accumulated over the decades, with grave costs that require dedicated efforts to understand and mitigate.

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[a] See A/HRC/34/70, para. 62.
[b] See A/HRC/34/38, para. 66.
[c] See http://fscluster.org/state -of-Palestine/document/sefsec -2014.
[d] See A/72/90-E/2017/71.
[e] See www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-blockade-november-2016.
[f] See A/72/90 -E/2017/71.

II. POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY: BETTER DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AND CONFLICT RELAPSE PREVENTION

21.   As stipulated in a report by the Secretary-General entitled "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda - ensuring a better future for all", regional economic commissions have a primary role as policy think tanks, providing data and analytical services and policy advice to address regional issues, and supporting the development of a wide range of regional norms, standards and conventions. They serve as platforms for engagement with regional intergovernmental institutions, for intra- and interregional exchanges, extending and expanding new forms of development cooperation and regional partnerships. The report further states that regional economic commissions should be empowered as the lead voice of the United Nations development system on policymaking and research. It outlines the following three key functions for regional commissions: think tank of the United Nations system at the regional level; regional platform for the exchange of best practices and analysis of existing and emerging challenges; and supporting and strengthening the normative and policy capabilities of United Nations country teams. Those key functions must be utilized within the evolving conflict prevention architecture of the United Nations.

22.   Delivering on the 2030 Agenda entails strengthening universal peace under greater freedoms. Significantly, peace is highlighted in the SDGs and their targets, where member States express their determination to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence. As already shown in the first section of the present paper, the current Arab regional context is far from conducive to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

23.   The lack of development opportunities owing to continued crisis, both at the individual and collective levels, is not only fuelling existing conflicts but has the possibility of triggering new violent episodes. This feedback loop has the potential to drag entire subregions or countries into a conflict trap, with disastrous consequences for the population.

24.   The disruptive consequences of violence are not limited to the territories directly affected by it, as the large number of refugees in the Arab region indicate. In addition to the perilous dynamics of conflicts, weak institutions and governance challenges require regional and national approaches to promote peace and achieve structural transformations to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions, and avoid relapse into conflict.

25.   According to an ESCWA working paper entitled "Political transformation and conflict: post-war risks in the Arab region", it is critical for policymakers and stakeholders in the Arab region to prepare for post-war peacebuilding, recovery and transition. Since 1970, civil wars have lasted roughly ten years, on average. Societies have narrow windows of opportunity to consolidate their transitions and prevent war relapse. Failure is common: about 35 per cent of all post-war countries lapse back into civil war between the same actors in the first decade after the end of fighting, and an additional 16 per cent see a recurrence of lower-level civil conflict. Most of the risk of relapse occurs in the first five years of the post-war period, meaning that if countries can make it peacefully through the initial post-war phases, their chances of success markedly improve. Practitioners have called these narrow windows of opportunity the "golden hours" of post-war recovery, both because those periods are so critical for long-term success, and because they are pregnant with possibilities of far-reaching political, social and economic reforms.[17]

26.   Given the narrow opportunities to ferment peace and solidify post-conflict recovery, ESCWA, in collaboration with relevant national and multilateral partners, supports its member States with various policy options, technical assistance, and inclusive national and regional dialogues to improve national development outcomes and prevent conflict relapse.

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[17] See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/political_transformation_and_conflict_post_war_risks_in_the_arab_region.pdf.

27.   Given the Arab regional context, ESCWA has been working to:

(a)   Analyse the root causes of conflict and its associated risks at the national and regional levels;

(b)   Ascertain the cost of conflict and its immediate and long-term ramifications;

(c)   Provide policy options and programmes to mitigate the impact of conflict and its spillover effects, including strengthening governance structures to enhance resilience and prevent conflict relapse;

(d)   Support peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery by facilitating and sustaining technical dialogue platforms.

BOX 2. ESCWA POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY VISION

To support member States with policy options and technical assistance, and to convene and facilitate country-owned inclusive national and regional technical dialogues, so as to improve national development outcomes and prevent conflict relapse.

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28.   ESCWA efforts primarily aim to place its member States on a favourable trajectory to attain the SDGs by 2030, despite the unfavourable conditions resulting from conflict, occupation and terrorism. In this regard, seven thrust areas have been deployed by ESCWA. They involve studying the impact of conflict on human development, analysing conflict dynamics and its spillover effects, establishing indicator baselines for SDGs, strengthening national and regional approaches to address conflict spillover effects, providing technical dialogue platforms, strengthening institutional governance practices and structures during the post-conflict recovery phase, and monitoring and preventing violent extremism and radicalization.

A. STUDYING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

29.   By studying the long-term impact of conflict on development, ESCWA contributes to the understanding of the most pressing development challenges for the Arab region, thus gearing development assistance to address and reverse the long-term impact of conflict over generations.

30.   ESCWA uses microdata to understand the links between exposure to violence and developmental and social outcomes through the life cycle. ESCWA aims to unpack how conflict impacts early childhood development and health outcomes; schooling choice and academic achievement; and labour market outcomes. It also hopes to understand the drivers of radicalization and how it links to poor labour market performance in the Middle East. Fundamentally, human development is economic development. Therefore, understanding the main channels through which conflict harms individuals at different stages of life, from early childhood and the formative periods to early adulthood and economically active life, is essential to supporting recovery efforts and development in the Arab region. ESCWA aims to show policymakers the complex ways in which armed conflict affects human development, and the challenges that countries will face to achieve the 2030 Agenda. For the Arab region, framing the complex situations of conflict around the SDGs represents an opportunity to carry out interventions to promote human development, if post-conflict recovery interventions are to have the desired effects.

B. ANALYSING CONFLICT DYNAMICS AND ITS SPILLOVER EFFECTS

31.   Conflict dynamics and impacts are not contained within national borders. Terrorism, hate speech, extremist religious discourse, non-State actors intervening across borders, illicit crime networks, forcible displacement, and large swathes of ungoverned spaces have become commonplace in the Arab region. Global phenomena, such as food insecurity or desertification, are particularly severe in the region and further compound these challenges.

32.   Given those challenges, ESCWA is analysing conflict dynamics in the Arab region. Such an analysis cannot be conducted in isolation of the long-term impact and trends of conflict on development outcomes.

Such trends and impacts include an increased incidence of conflict, the depletion of human capital, the expansion of war/informal economies, weaker State institutions, and high youth unemployment with young people vulnerable to extremism, and the militarization of societies. ESCWA is tackling these issues against the backdrop of global trends or mega stress factors, such as climate change, changing demographics and water scarcity. ESCWA aims to tackle the various ramifications of conflict, analysing their impact on SDG attainment under different scenarios.

C. ESTABLISHING SDG INDICATOR BASELINES TO GUIDE POST-CONFLICT
RECOVERY INTERVENTIONS

33.   Conflict must be conceptualized as a cross-cutting challenge for the realization of the 2030 Agenda. However, with 17 SDGs and 169 targets, tracking progress in a region affected by conflict is challenging. Available micro-level data from household surveys can provide structured, standardized and representative evidence to monitor sustainable development and better understand the extent to which conflict has affected the population. Recent surveys from Arab countries directly or indirectly affected by conflict can be an unparalleled tool to estimate the state of the SDG indicators, particularly those related to poverty, nutrition, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, livelihoods, labour market outcomes, and consumption and production. It has been established that the lack of recognition of peace and State building was one of the underlying reasons why the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were not entirely transformative. At the country level, a salient challenge was that most of the MDGs were either unreported or underreported due to lack of data. Today, there is sufficient microdata to assess progress towards the people-centric goals of the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA will utilize existing micro-level data to estimate how Arab countries fare relative to the SDGs indicators, and identify the main gaps, by population groups, in those countries directly or indirectly affected by conflict. ESCWA will thus provide a source of information and a tool for policymakers to prioritize fragile situations in the coming 15 years.

D. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESS CONFLICT
SPILLOVER EFFECTS

34.   In its capacity as a think tank, ESCWA has the technical knowledge and expert networks to develop regional frameworks for addressing the above-mentioned challenges. ESCWA, through its specialized intergovernmental bodies, drives regional cooperation on priority issues such as water, energy access, gender equality and statistics. Those intergovernmental bodies could be more actively geared towards impact mitigation, post-conflict recovery and prevention.

E. SUPPORTING PEACEBUILDING AND POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY THROUGH
TECHNICAL DIALOGUES

35.   Inclusive and nationally owned visions and tools for socioeconomic development can help unify a nation in a post-conflict environment, and thus prevent conflict relapse. However, post-conflict transitional Governments usually do not have time to engage in long-term planning as they must meet urgent needs and expectations. At the same time, addressing multiple urgent needs and expectations without a broader developmental vision leads to incoherent and even contradictory policies.

36.   With the understanding that the absence of a multilayered social reconciliation process significantly increases the risk of a country relapsing into conflict, ESCWA has developed a mechanism for providing a holistic, multisectoral, participatory and conflict-sensitive approach to tackling governance and socioeconomic challenges, and enabling national stakeholders to develop tailored solutions and reforms.

37.   In recent years, ESCWA has initiated technical dialogue projects in Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, grounded in this shared approach and common underlying principles; however, in design, they are customized to the unique context and needs of each country.

38. Regional commissions in general are well-suited to undertaking such technical dialogue projects, as they are not involved in meeting urgent humanitarian needs during conflict or in the political settlement of conflicts, but can play a role by facilitating dialogue on a unifying future vision or reform options, which can inform post-conflict national planning and help bridge the humanitarian-development gap. Given their regional mandate and positioning in the United Nations system, regional commissions can deliver a long-term approach to reform and continued engagement with clients beyond the lifecycle of a single project; draw on expertise and experience from working in several countries; and utilize their ability to offer comparative experiences from elsewhere in the region and beyond.

1. *National Agenda for the Future of Syria Programme*

39. In 2012, the National Agenda for the Future of Syria Programme created a platform for dialogue to engage Syrian experts and stakeholders in setting the principles for a vision for the country in 2030, and developing scenarios and policy alternatives to prepare for a post-agreement phase.

40. The Programme encompasses 52 development sectors, divided into three interlinked pillars, with additional five cross-cutting sectors (figure 9). For each sector, the Programme established a working group of between 5 and 15 Syrian experts to produce background papers, situation analyses and policy alternatives.

41. To coherently link policies across sectors, the Programme has adopted a framework designed to show the division of the sectors' workgroups, while reflecting a systems-based approach. This systems-based approach stresses the interactive and interdependent nature of sectors and looks at them as a matrix of interreliant domains, the sum of which forms the overall policy alternatives framework.

42. The approach differentiates between the following two types of policies:

(a) **Delivery policies** are sector policies, which deliver a service or value, such as agriculture, industry, education, health, elections, and security;

(b) **Enabling policies** are vehicle policies, which lead to the implementation of delivery policies, such as infrastructure, macroeconomy and governance.

43. The framework has an additional layer of quality control in the form of guiding principles, and the cross-cutting themes (human rights, gender, civil society, environment, and sustainability) were standardized and mainstreamed across the policy alternatives (both delivery and enabling policies). In this way, the experts ensured that the policy alternatives of all sectors adhere to universal standards of human rights, and take into consideration gender empowerment. To implement this approach, the experts developed an interrelationship matrix for every sector, the purpose of which was to give weights (strong, medium and weak) to the relationships between the sector they were working on and the other sectors.

44. Phase II of the project, launched in 2017, has the following four main goals:

(a) Influencing international debate on the future of the Syrian Arab Republic, and finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict through the outcomes of multi-stakeholder dialogue;

(b) Ensuring the relevance of recovery planning by regularly updating information on rapidly changing needs and realities on the ground;

(c) Translating theory into practice by ensuring that normative discussions can be translated into concrete tools that can help alleviate the situation of Syrians on the ground;

(d) Informing policy at different levels, from the political peace negotiations to national and international programming for Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Figure 9. Sectors of the National Agenda for the Future of Syria Programme

Reconstruction & Economic Recovery	Governance, Institutions Building & Democratization	Reconciliation & Social Cohesion	Enabling
Local Strategic Development	Rule of Law	Culture & Identity	Macro-Economy
Regional Development & Housing / Rural Settlements	Constitution / Legislative	Identity & Citizenship	Employment
Productive Sectors	Security Sector Reform	Culture & Heritage	Infrastructure Vehicles
Tourism / Trade	Judiciary / Civil Service	Social Development	Knowledge Management Exchange
Agriculture / Industry	Representation	Education / Health	Governance
Mineral Resources	Decentralization	Social Protection	Institutions Building
Oil – Gas – Mining	Transparency & Accountability / Media	Population & Migration	Civil Society / Media
Banking & Finance	Civil Society / Elections	Poverty	Public Procurement
Banking – Financial Institutions	**Cross Cutting Sectors**	Human Rights	
Transport / Energy	Gender	Environment	
Telecommunication / Water	Civil Society	Sustainability	

2. *Libya Socioeconomic Dialogue Project: Towards Effective and Accountable Institutions and Sustainable Socioeconomic Development*

45.   The 2011 uprising in Libya had several underlying structural causes spanning political, social and economic factors, many of which remain key challenges today. There is a dangerous political power vacuum resulting from fragmentation and dissent. Violence and instability have left a tragic balance in terms of human loss and destruction of infrastructure, but the consequences go beyond those immediate effects. Provision of basic public services has weakened, leading to a deteriorating health and educational situation. The economic collapse has damaged the population's main sources of income, causing an increase in unemployment and poverty, and a feeling of insecurity and vulnerability. Large portions of the population have been forced to migrate internally or across borders. Libyan institutions are not equipped to meet socioeconomic challenges, and the absence of a unified vision for the new Libya has led to the establishment of multiple, competing notions of legitimacy, which are threatening to undermine the State.

46.   The Libya Socioeconomic Dialogue Project aims to provide a platform for Libyans to engage in dialogue on the long-term socioeconomic vision they want for their country's future, addressing issues such as the distribution and utilization of resources, endowments, income, wealth and equality of opportunity, and the orientation and diversity of economic activity.

47.   Libyans must embark on discussions about their country's sustainable development trajectory: how to diversify, how to structure their economy, how to improve the quality of education and health care, how to provide jobs for young people, and how to build a socially cohesive society governed by inclusive and accountable institutions. Greater inclusion and empowerment will enable Libyans to work together for a better Libya, but must be based on a Libyan-owned process and eventually a common vision for a future Libya.

48.   Several Libyan stakeholders have identified the lack of a common vision as a key impediment for shifting the focus of conflicting parties from controlling strategic resources for short-term gain to the medium- to long-term development of the country. The project has the following four main goals:

(a) Establishing a baseline of the current state of Libya's institutions, economy and society to identify priority themes and entry points for future reform;

(b) Developing a socioeconomic vision and policy options for realizing that vision through dialogue with groups of Libyan experts and stakeholders;

(c) Validating the vision and policy options through inclusive consultations;

(d) Supporting Libya in implementing the vision through capacity-building and technical cooperation.

49. The project is grounded in the 2030 Agenda, specifically SDG 16, which states that effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, and access to justice and the rule of law are at the core of sustainable development, especially in situations of conflict.

50. The consultations will be as broad and participatory as possible, with between 25 and 75 Libyan experts and stakeholders sharing their views and priorities on the future vision of Libya. As the project develops, the number of participants should steadily increase.

51. To ensure that the consultations are truly inclusive, and in recognition of the critical roles played by women and youth in reconciliation, peacebuilding and post-conflict policymaking, special efforts will be made to facilitate the meaningful participation of women and young people in the process.

3. *Technical Dialogue Platform for Strengthened Public Governance in Yemen*

52. Yemen, one of the world's least developed countries, is currently facing a severe humanitarian emergency. While much of the international community's resources are devoted to providing essential humanitarian aid and services and facilitating the peace process, this project aims to bridge the humanitarian-development divide by focusing on long-term institutional development.

53. The National Dialogue Conference of Yemen, which concluded in January 2014, represented cautiously optimistic progress in terms of attaining wider inclusion, and its negotiated outcome was considered a breakthrough achievement of power-sharing. However, the Yemeni State and its institutions have been unable to translate the Conference's outcomes into concrete actions and lack the capacity to implement and facilitate social reconciliation at the local level.

54. The Yemen project will contribute to preventing social fragmentation and conflict relapse in Yemen, through an inclusive and participatory process for formulating a reform plan to rehabilitate and strengthen institutions and public governance.

55. The project has the following four main goals:

(a) Establishing a baseline: studies on the current state of Yemeni institutions will be conducted and published, focusing on gaps and weaknesses, sociopolitical context, institutional capacity needs, and the drivers of conflict relapse;

(b) Ensuring a consultative approach to developing a reform plan for institutions: Yemeni stakeholders will engage in dialogue to articulate a plan that outlines interventions and reforms geared towards rehabilitating and strengthening institutions and public governance, linked to the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Mobilizing political will for reform: an advocacy effort will be designed to generate buy-in for the implementation of institutional reforms among political actors and decision makers;

(d) Capacity-building for the public sector: technical assistance and capacity development will be provided for civil servants, to enable them to implement the reforms and interventions identified in the plan and transform Yemeni institutions.

56.   The project is grounded in the 2030 Agenda, specifically SDG 16, which articulates that effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, and access to justice and the rule of law are at the core of sustainable development, especially in situations of conflict.

57.   While humanitarian relief is a high priority in Yemen today, to address longstanding socioeconomic challenges and lift the country out of poverty, it must go hand in hand with development efforts. This project attempts to fill a gap between humanitarian and development interventions by contributing to achieving the governance prerequisites to transition from conflict to development.

58.   To ensure that the consultations are truly inclusive, and in recognition of the critical roles played by women and young people in reconciliation, peacebuilding and post-conflict policymaking, special efforts will be made to facilitate the meaningful participation of women and young people in the process.

F. STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE PRACTICES AND STRUCTURES
DURING THE POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY PHASE

59.   Weakness of institutional and governance structures is often identified as a main obstacle to recovery, and a main cause of conflict relapse. Although a rich variety of experiences and knowledge regarding institution-building is already available, initiatives are still fragmented or duplicated, and efforts are not complementary. The need for prioritization and the scarcity of resources pose challenges at the technical level. Implementation capacity is chronically limited (tools and data for designing and monitoring policies, laws and regulations). Lack of funding and technical skills reduce the ability to implement and monitor development models, and to strengthen the capacity of the public sector during the post-conflict recovery phase.

60.   ESCWA brings added value to the post-conflict recovery phase, including through the following:

        (a) Technical advice on public policies: ESCWA has built significant cumulative experience and expertise in advancing sustainable development, linking national agendas with regional and subregional processes. ESCWA will help harmonize and coordinate public policies that are part of the economic, social and environmental pillars of recovery;

        (b) Strengthening national capacities: ESCWA is well placed to build recovery capacity in key national institutions in two ways: by training and advising civil servants and civil society organizations, and by serving as an information observatory to provide data and methodologies for public policy design and implementation. ESCWA can create regional public goods, such as a bank of good governance practices. In that regard, ESCWA has developed a distinct institutional diagnostic toolkit to identify key gaps in institutional effectiveness for recovery and better development outcomes. Civil servants will be trained to deploy and analyse the diagnostic toolkit, so as to place their institutions on a better footing to assist or lead recovery efforts, support better development outcomes and prevent conflict relapse;

        (c) Knowledge of the national and regional context: Given its work with governments on public policy, ESCWA enjoys a detailed knowledge of individual member State priorities, specificities and challenges. This is vital for the United Nations system when dealing with the particularities of post-conflict recovery;

        (d) Promoting multilateral dialogue: ESCWA promotes multilateral dialogue, knowledge sharing and cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation for institutional development.

*Monitoring and preventing violent extremism and radicalization: towards an early
identification of the push and pull factors of violent extremism*

61.   To accurately determine risk factors and counter-extremism solutions, it is critical to identify the multifaceted drivers of radicalization at different levels: social, economic, political, and ideological. Deconstructing the diverse motivations, and identifying the level of criticality and decisiveness of violent radicalization, is an approach that presents both challenges and opportunities. The opportunities stem mostly from the fact that the socioeconomic and political grievances of potentially radicalized individuals are initially

limited to a particular space and polity, and it is possible to successfully address them - if properly identified at an early stage - in ways that do not entail more radicalization leading to violent forms of extremism. The challenge, however, is to disentangle critical motivations from those that appear to be less decisive. It is much harder to contain the influence of networks and organizations that are socially embedded and feed off socioeconomic and political grievances, than it is for transnational violent organizations that operate on the fringes of society and do not enjoy a mass following.

62.   The radicalization phenomenon must be seen in context. There can be no general deterministic or culturalism theory about why and how individuals, especially young people, turn to violent extremism, since it is a context-bound overdetermined phenomenon. A detailed and nuanced understanding of the context and root causes, therefore, is vital for developing adequate preventive policy responses to stem the flow of candidates for violent extremist organizations, deter community support for those organizations, and create a non-conducive environment to violent radicalization.

63.   Only a sound knowledge of the socioeconomic, cultural and political dimensions of the Arab region, regular engagement with stakeholders, and monitoring trends and inclusive societal dialogues at the national and regional levels can distinguish between the main sets of motivations, and between the different kinds of violent extremism and radicalization and the organizations associated with them at the regional level. Through its knowledge of the region and proven expertise, ESCWA is best positioned to study the violent radicalization phenomenon, and help devise effective strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism.