

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

Committee on Social Development  
Eleventh session  
Khartoum, 17-18 October 2017



Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Progress in social development since the tenth session of the  
Committee on Social Development****Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work  
and pursuant to recommendations made by the Committee****Summary**

Since the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held in Rabat on 8 and 9 September 2015, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has carried out a number of planned activities under subprogramme 2 on social development of its programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017. This included activities set out in the recommendations made by the Committee on Social Development at its tenth session.

Capacity-building and advisory services were provided in the area of social development. Studies, guides and technical material were developed, field projects were undertaken and consultations were held with member States on strategies for designing integrated social policies.

This document reviews progress made in the implementation of these outputs within the framework of the 2016-2017 work programme of ESCWA. It also features activities that were implemented in 2015 but not included in the reports submitted to the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development. Participants to the eleventh session are invited to take note of the information presented in this document and make comments and suggestions on follow-up actions.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Social Development Division (SDD) of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is responsible for the implementation of subprogramme 2 on social development of the programme of work of the Commission. The objective of the subprogramme for the biennium 2016-2017 is to enhance the capacity of member States to adopt and implement rights-based social policies that promote social justice and lead to equitable, inclusive and participatory socioeconomic development.
2. ESCWA seeks to achieve that objective through the following: (a) conducting social policy research and analysis, and monitoring social development trends in the region; (b) servicing intergovernmental bodies, including the Committee on Social Development; (c) monitoring implementation of internationally agreed goals and plans of action, and of the inclusive social development pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (d) informing regional and global processes and serving as platform for the exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices to support social development; (e) building the capacity of member States to implement equitable, inclusive and participatory policies that lead to social justice; and (f) strengthening partnerships with key players in order to further social development in the Arab region.
3. This document is a review of progress made in the implementation of social development-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017. It also features the outputs implemented in 2015 that were not covered by the reports presented to the ninth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held in Rabat in September 2015.

### **I. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK SINCE 2015**

#### A. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

##### *National communities of practice inception workshops for Iraq and Yemen (23-25 January 2015 and 16-18 December 2015)*

4. The inception workshops for national communities of practice in democratic governance provided government representatives and members of the civil society from Iraq and Yemen with valuable knowledge, skills and techniques to promote dialogue and design participatory public policies. The first workshop culminated in the establishment in Iraq of the National Committee of Practice on Participatory Development and Public Policy Processes, which has been actively working with national constituencies to mainstream participatory approaches in development processes. A virtual national committee of practice on participatory development was established in Yemen in early 2016.

##### *Observance of World Day of Social Justice (Beirut, 20 February 2015)*

5. In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), ESCWA organized a special event to commemorate World Day of Social Justice, on Friday 20 February 2015 at the United Nations House in Beirut. It featured a cultural and artistic programme including a musical performance and a documentary screening. The event concluded with a short testimony and graffiti exhibition by talented young artists from the Arab region.

##### *Expert group meeting on the 2015 Situation Report on International Migration: Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region (Beirut, 5-6 March 2015)*

6. Acting as the secretariat of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab region, ESCWA convened an expert group meeting (EGM) to review the draft of the first edition of the 2015 Situation Report

on International Migration: Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region, which focused on the link between forced migration and development, and presented an overview of international migration trends and recent developments in migration governance in the region.

*Sixteenth meeting of the heads of national population councils*  
(Cairo, 16-18 March 2015)

7. The sixteenth annual meeting of national population councils was convened by the League of Arab States, in collaboration with ESCWA and the Arab States Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA-ASRO), to promote the links between the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the regional outcome of the 20-year review of the implementation of that Programme and the 2030 Agenda, in the context of the 2013 Cairo Declaration on Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World. The meeting emphasized the role of national population councils in advancing the population agenda in the region.

*Expert group meeting on the Population and Development Report, Issue No. 7*  
*Overcoming Population Vulnerability to Water Scarcity in the Arab Region*  
(Beirut, 1-2 April 2015)

8. This meeting was organized to review the first draft of issue No. 7 of the Population and Development Report. It stressed the importance of addressing water scarcity through a population lens in the region.

*Side events at global meetings for the United Nations Conference on Housing*  
*and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)*  
(Nairobi, 14-16 April 2015; Surabaya, Indonesia, 25-27 July 2016;  
and Quito, 17-20 October 2016)

9. In preparation for Habitat III, ESCWA, together with regional and global partners, organized several side events at global meetings in order to discuss the main issues and challenges facing the Arab region in terms of housing and sustainable urban development. Those events represented occasions to share the regional main messages for the formulation of the New Urban Agenda; propose global, regional, national and local actions for achieving urban development; and foster partnerships for the implementation of that Agenda.

*Regional civil society organizations meeting on the post-2015 development agenda*  
(Beirut, 30 April 2015)

10. ESCWA and ANND organized a consultation meeting to follow up on emerging issues in the international debate on the 2030 Agenda. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss the priorities and interests of civil society in that framework. Participants adopted a civil society declaration that was presented to the second session of the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Manama from 5 to 7 May 2015.

*Workshop on disability and development:*  
*Operationalizing the post-2015 development agenda for persons with disabilities*  
(Beirut, 11-13 May 2015)

11. The activity resulted in a set of recommendations to support disability-inclusive implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

*Pilot workshop: Testing the toolkit on building capacities in developing social protection policies using a participatory approach*  
(Beirut, 27-30 July 2015)

12. The workshop introduced the draft toolkit on building capacities in developing social protection policies using a participatory approach, as a first step towards its deployment in 2016-2017. Government officials from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia and a regional expert from Yemen validated the toolkit and provided feedback on its applicability and relevance to their countries' needs. Three participants requested similar workshops at the national level.

*Review of the Social Development Report No.1*  
*What Remains of the Arab Spring: Challenges Impeding the Achievement of Social Justice in the Arab Region*  
(Beirut, 18 August 2015)

13. The draft of the Social Development Report No. 1 was peer-reviewed in an expert group meeting that focused on the research findings related to constitutional reforms, recent institutional arrangements and socioeconomic policies adopted in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Participants to the meeting made comments and proposed policy recommendations, some of which were included in the final version of the report.

*Tenth session of the Committee on Social Development*  
(Rabat, 8-9 September 2015)

14. The meeting mainly addressed the population dimension of sustainable development in the Arab region; the extension of social protection to persons with disabilities and informal workers in the agricultural sector; and participation as a lever for social justice.

*Capacity-building for public-civic partnership in democratic governance*  
(Amman, 14-16 September 2015)

15. This workshop contributed to enhancing the capacity of civil society actors in advocating for citizens' participation in governance and public policy processes. It focused on participatory techniques and democratic governance, and enabled participants to identify the concrete roles that they could play in the ongoing political transitions in their respective countries.

*Consultations on the Arab regional report for Habitat III*  
(Virtually, 23 October-3 November 2015; Cairo, 11-12 January 2016;  
Beirut, 22-23 February 2016)

16. During the preparations for the regional report to be presented at Habitat III, ESCWA held several consultations with regional stakeholders and incorporated their outcome in the report.

*Workshop on strengthening institutional capacities and partnerships for disability-inclusive development in the Arab region*  
(Beirut, 14-15 December 2015)

17. The workshop focused on national disability coordination mechanisms. It looked at their mandates, structures and functions in the Arab region, and their role in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda and in devising disability-inclusive social protection programmes.

*Launch of the Social Development Report No.1  
What Remains of the Arab Spring: Challenges Impeding the Achievement  
of Social Justice in the Arab Region  
(Beirut, 21 December 2015)*

18. The Social Development Report No. 1, which analyses post-uprising developments and their translation into actual constitutional and policy reforms, was launched during an event held at the United Nations House in Beirut. It identified common gaps and challenges hindering the realization of social justice in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

*Launch of the 2015 Situation Report on International Migration:  
Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region  
(Beirut, 14 January 2016)*

19. The launch of this pioneering publication was jointly organised by ESCWA and the International Organization for Migration at the United Nations House in Beirut. An overview of the report and its key findings were presented, and a round-table discussion followed.

*National workshop on population priorities in Jordan:  
Framework and methodology development for in-depth studies related to selected priority areas  
(Amman, 19-20 January 2016)*

20. This workshop was organized in partnership with the High Population Council in Jordan to examine ways to boost youth employment and reap the benefits of the demographic dividend. Participants reviewed the terms of reference of a study on the values and concepts related to vocational work, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation in academic curricula.

*National workshop on population priorities in the Sudan:  
Framework and methodology development for in-depth studies related to selected priority areas  
(Khartoum, 6-7 April 2016)*

21. This workshop was convened to initiate a policy dialogue involving public institutions and civil society, focusing on migration and reproductive health. Over 80 participants from ministries, public institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), researchers, and population and development experts attended the meeting. The workshop identified international migration as a key priority for the next policymaking process.

*Regional Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Implementation  
of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region  
(Doha, 20-21 April 2016)*

22. Organized by the Qatar Social Work Foundation, the League of Arab States, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP-RBAS), UNFPA-ASRO and the Gulf Cooperation Council, this major conference brought together representatives of CSOs from the region to engage in a multi-stakeholder dialogue with governments, experts, the private sector, United Nations agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations. ESCWA played a key role in ensuring that the outcome document, the Doha Declaration on the Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, advocates for legal frameworks that empower civil society and enhance its role in the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development  
(Amman, 29-30 May 2016)*

23. The 2016 Forum was organized in cooperation with the Government of Jordan, the League of Arab States and regional United Nations agencies. It brought together 150 participants representing 16 Arab States, CSOs, parliaments, the private sector and the media, to facilitate regional dialogue on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, and the policy implications at the national and regional levels. A number of priorities, opportunities and challenges were identified and captured in the final outcome document, which was presented later to the High-level Political Forum (New York, July 2016) and the twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA (Doha, December 2016).

*Side event at the Arab Towns Organization seventeenth General Assembly:  
Promoting Knowledge and Innovation for Inclusive and Sustainable  
Urban Development in the Arab Region  
(Manama, 30 May 2016)*

24. ESCWA organized a regional event on ongoing regional preparations for Habitat III on the sidelines of the seventeenth session of the Arab Towns Organization General assembly.

*Conditional cash transfer programmes in the Arab region  
(Beirut, 19-20 July 2016)*

25. In cooperation with other United Nations organizations, ESCWA organized a workshop on conditional cash transfer programmes that targeted ministers and officials from 10 Arab countries and gathered international experts on the subject, including from Latin America.

*ESCWA Civil Society Dialogues (2016):  
In search of justice: civic liberties and political rights in electoral processes in Arab countries  
(Beirut, 16 August 2016)*

26. The meeting reviewed the sociopolitical dynamics that are shaping political processes in Lebanon and Yemen in relation with Sustainable Development Goal 16. Underlining the vital role played by CSOs in the formulation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, discussions addressed the achievement of justice as manifested in the rule of law and access to civil liberties, political rights and participatory policymaking.

*National workshop on population issues in Tunisia:  
Framework and methodology development for in-depth studies related to selected national priority areas  
(Tunis, 6-7 September 2016)*

27. This workshop was organized in partnership with the National Board for Family and Population and UNFPA in Tunisia. It brought together representatives of the Board, experts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There was an agreement on developing an advocacy document to support the formulation of a national vision on population and to determine the capacity requirements to enable cooperation between government institutions and CSOs on priority population issues.

*First meeting of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability  
(Beirut, 20-21 September 2016)*

28. In response to a recommendation of the Committee on Social Development, ESCWA organized the first meeting of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability (IGED), which is the first such network in the Arab region. Seventeen member States participated in the meeting. The proposed terms of reference of the IGED recommend that a substantive face-to-face meeting be held once a year.

*Subregional training workshop on the Toolkit on Building Capacities  
in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach  
(Muscat, 3-6 October 2016)*

29. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development in Oman, ESCWA organized a subregional workshop for countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on the toolkit entitled “Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach”. The workshop, held in Muscat from 3 to 6 October 2016, brought together representatives from State and non-State institutions in GCC countries concerned with the design and provision of social services. It helped to identify common issues and share experiences in the design and implementation of social protection programmes.

*Seventeenth meeting of the heads of national population councils  
(Sharam El-Sheikh, 8-9 November 2016)*

30. This meeting focused on population issues in the context of the SDGs and prior population and development frameworks. It addressed youth empowerment, migration and displacement, and age structural transitions in Arab countries, bringing together heads of Arab national population councils, experts in population and development, and members of the Arab Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development. The meeting was a platform to advocate for policy change in the above-mentioned areas.

*National workshop on population issues in Tunisia: the CSOs perspective  
(Tunis, 21 November 2016)*

31. ESCWA, in partnership with the National Board for Family and Population and the United Nations Population Fund in Tunisia, organized this workshop on population issues in Tunisia to discuss the findings and recommendations of the previous workshop on the subject (see para. 27) and examine priority population issues from the perspective of CSOs.

*Consultative meeting on population issues in Tunisia:  
Framework and methodology of sectoral studies in selected population areas  
(Tunis, 22 November 2016)*

32. This meeting was also organized in partnership with the National Board for Family and Population and UNFPA in Tunisia. Discussions identified youth issues, rights and behavioural changes among the country’s main population priorities. Experts debated how significant shifts in behaviour, especially among young people, raise questions on the role of the family, a topic that deserves further research.

*Expert group meeting on the 2017 Situation Report on International Migration:  
Achieving Migration-Related SDGs  
(Beirut, 25 November 2016)*

33. Members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region and regional and international experts gathered in this meeting to discuss the proposed outline of the 2017 Situation Report on International Migration. It was agreed that migration-related SDGs and targets would constitute the thematic focus of this edition, which will also provide an overview of international migration trends and recent developments in migration governance in the Arab region.

*National workshop: Towards a national strategic framework  
for the advancement of the rights of older persons in Morocco  
(Rabat, 21-22 February 2017)*

34. ESCWA organised this workshop in partnership with the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, the Family and Social Development of Morocco to engage national government and non-government stakeholders in a



discussion on a conceptual framework for the advancement of the rights of older persons in Morocco. Participants addressed fast-growing ageing concerns in Morocco and acknowledged the urgency of developing a national strategy on ageing that responds to the needs of this important and growing population group.

B. REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

*Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/IG.1/6/Report)

35. The report summarizes the proceedings and recommendations of the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was hosted by Morocco and held in Rabat on 8 and 9 September 2015.

*2015 Situation Report on International Migration:  
Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/1)

36. This report advocates a new approach to migration underpinned by good practice, respect for human rights and a long-term development perspective, with a view to deriving benefits from migration and mitigating its potential downsides. It also fills gaps in knowledge by providing a multidisciplinary and comprehensive overview of trends and patterns in international migration and displacement, and their economic and social consequences for the region.

*Inclusive Social Development*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/2)

37. The aim of this report is to provide a comprehensive mapping and analysis of the most important social and economic issues related to social inclusion, and act as a guide for its advancement and the realization of social justice in the Arab region.

*What Remains of the Arab Spring: Challenges Impeding the Achievement  
of Social Justice in the Arab Region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/3)

38. The first issue of the Social Development Report series sheds light on the constitutional processes adopted in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco five years after the uprisings. It examines several laws enacted and socioeconomic programmes initiated to support the achievement of social justice. The report also highlights the challenges hindering the development of efficient social and economic programmes, particularly in the context of growing security and terrorism concerns. It concludes with policy recommendations on how to promote social justice in the Arab region.

*Population and Development Report, Issue No. 7  
Overcoming Population Vulnerability to Water Scarcity in the Arab Region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/4)

39. This report looks at the link between water scarcity and population dynamics. It argues for an urgent shift to a people-centred approach to development policymaking in order to build the resilience of specific sociodemographic groups, and features two case studies from Jordan and Yemen. The report proposes measures to improve the adaptive capacity and reinforce the resilience of the groups most vulnerable to water scarcity in the Arab region.

*Multilateral governance of international migration in theory and practice:  
past, present and future scenarios*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/WP.1)

40. This working paper is based on the premise that international migration should be tackled through a global governance process, as it creates challenges and opportunities that no State can manage alone. This governance could even take the form of a regime that would oblige States to progressively lower the barriers to human movement, perhaps overseen by an international organization empowered to provide a forum for dialogue, negotiation and capacity-building.

*The social pillar and the paradox of development in the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/WP.2)

41. This working paper served as a background document for the Arab Sustainable Development Report. It aims to evaluate the relevance of the social dimension of the SDGs for the Arab region.

*Social protection for development: national profile of social protection  
in the United Arab Emirates*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.2)

42. This paper features a comprehensive analysis of social protection programmes and challenges in the United Arab Emirates. It addresses policy and legislation issues, and the roles of different institutions. It recommends that an integrated national strategy for social development be established to ensure social protection for all and reform the social welfare system (Arabic only).

*Social Development Bulletin, vol. 5, Issue No. 2*  
*Social protection as a tool for justice*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.3)

43. This bulletin addresses the reciprocal relationship between social protection and social justice. It promotes the former as a transformative tool that can empower disadvantaged groups and enable them to become active development actors. It concludes with recommendations on the key areas that must be addressed for the implementation of just and coherent social protection policies.

*Social Development Bulletin vol.5, Issue No. 3*  
*Migration governance in the Arab region and beyond*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.4)

44. In the absence of a global or regional migration regime, Arab States have exerted efforts to facilitate international migration and enhance intraregional cooperation on migration issues. Building on the convergence of regional interests around the subject, this bulletin provides an overview of developments in migration governance in the context of the ongoing crisis and puts future efforts under the broad framework of the 2030 Agenda.

*Social protection and development: national social protection and insurance programs in Oman*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.5)

45. This paper examines the strengths and limitations of existing social protection programmes in Oman. It notes progress made by the country in that regard and makes recommendations to address gaps, namely in terms of identifying eligible beneficiaries (Arabic only).

*Social Development Bulletin, vol. 5, Issue No.4*  
*Urbanization and sustainable development in the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.6)

46. This bulletin addresses issues of urbanization and sustainable development in the Arab region and discusses ongoing global and regional preparations for Habitat III. It also examines the regional dimension of the proposed new urban agenda.

*Provision of education by non-State actors in Arab countries: benefits and risks*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.7)

47. In the context of examining the welfare mix in Arab countries, this paper outlines the patterns of non-State provision of education across the region and the regulation of non-State schools in varying national contexts. It also analyses the benefits and risks of private sector and civil society provision of education.

*The demographic profiles of the Arab States*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.9)

48. The profiles present demographic data and trends per country over time and aim to serve as reference material for evidence-based policymaking. Data are taken from the United Nations World Population Prospects database for comparability purposes. Projections up to 2050 are included for key demographic indicators.

*Social protection in the occupied Palestinian territory: the role of zakat*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.10)

49. This paper discusses the welfare mix in Arab countries, especially cases where non-State institutions have become front-line assistance providers. It explores the role and activities of zakat organizations in the overarching social policy framework in Palestine.

*Organizations of persons with disabilities in the Arab region: a preliminary study*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Technical Paper.11)

50. This paper explores the structure, membership and main activities of Arab organizations of persons with disabilities.

*Report of the electronic consultation on the annotated outline  
of the Habitat III regional report for the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/WG.7/Report)

51. The report documents the methodology and results of the first electronic consultation on the annotated outline of the Arab regional report for Habitat III, which took place from 23 October to 3 November 2015.

*Social Policy Brief No. 8*  
*Unemployment of young women in the Arab region: causes and interventions*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Brief.8)

52. This policy brief unveils the causes and consequences of young women's unemployment in the region and warns that the inability of young women to enter the labour market may expose them to poverty. The brief draws examples from Arab countries on the poor transition from school to work, and urges policymakers to introduce interventions based on a strategic framework to empower young women and achieve gender equality.

*Sharing responsibilities for sustainable development in the Arab region:  
fostering resilient partnerships among development stakeholders*  
([E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/Pamphlet.1](#))

53. ESWCA presented this pamphlet as a contribution to the fifty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development, which was held in New York from 3 to 12 February 2016 under the theme “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world”. The pamphlet addresses the progressive and distinctive role played by civil society in development processes, political transitions and participatory policymaking, particularly in the Arab region where it has made headway on several fronts.

*The role of civil society in the implementation  
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region*  
([E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/Technical Paper.1](#))

54. This paper discusses the role of civil society in implementing the 2030 Agenda in the region. It was presented as the main paper at the Regional Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region, held in Doha in April 2016. The paper calls for strengthening the legal framework to empower CSOs as a key enabler of the realization of the SDGs (Arabic only).

*Equality in the new global agenda: integrating a gender perspective in the implementation  
of Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 in the Arab region*  
([E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/Technical Paper.2](#))

55. This policy brief presents an analysis of SDGs 1 and 2 on poverty and hunger from a gender perspective and highlights existing gaps. It proposes an adaptation of these Goals to the context of the Arab region and concludes with concrete policy recommendations on how achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women can contribute to ending poverty and hunger in Arab countries.

*Demographic profile of the Arab region: realizing the demographic dividend*  
([E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/Technical Paper.3](#))

56. This paper analyses the demographic transition in the Arab region as an unprecedented phenomenon and interprets the concept of the demographic dividend through four case studies of countries that have benefitted from it by implementing sound policies. It then draws conclusions and policy recommendations for the whole region.

*Slum upgrading in the Arab region*  
([E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/Technical Paper.4](#))

57. This study analyses policies of slum upgrading and eradication in Arab countries and outlines best practices at the regional and global levels in that regard.

*Social Protection Country Profile: Tunisia*  
([E/ESCWA/SDD/2016/CP.1](#))

58. This report presents a comprehensive profile of social protection in Tunisia. It covers pensions, health care, cash transfers, housing, and food and energy subsidies, as well as other social insurance and assistance programmes in place in the country. It also highlights ways for improving coverage and strengthening governance of the social protection mechanisms in place.

*Achieving social justice in the Arab region: from concept and vision to policy and practice*  
(E/ESCWA/29/9)

59. Submitted to the twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA, this report provided highlights of the forthcoming guide on mainstreaming social justice in development plans, policies and programmes in Arab countries, prepared within activities carried out in implementation of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region of 18 September 2014.

*The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: promoting a nexus approach in development planning*  
(Background paper)

60. This background paper to the report on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States, submitted to the twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA held in Doha in December 2016, contributes to developing a conceptual framework on the implementation of the Agenda. It analyses the principle of integration and explores means to identify key entry points to integrated development planning, priority setting and policymaking. It provides examples on how to explore the links among the Goals and targets and concludes with a list of areas where ESCWA can provide technical assistance to its member States.

*Challenges to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region: capacity*  
(Background paper)

61. This background paper to the report on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States, submitted to the twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA, focuses on the capacity challenges facing Arab Governments in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and the means to ensure that knowledge and capacity deficits are addressed. It provides an assessment of the main needs in institutional development, knowledge and area-specific skills, and advocates outreach to and partnership with academic institutions, research centres, CSOs, the private sector, and United Nations agencies as key providers of expertise and support. The paper also highlights the role of peer learning and intraregional cooperation by referring to various projects and platforms, including the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

*Priority issues in achieving social development in the Arab region: the population dimension in achieving sustainable development*  
(Background paper)

62. This paper served as an input to the 2015 Arab Sustainable Development Report. It advocates the importance of focusing on vulnerable social groups in the region, particularly youth, international migrants, older persons and persons with disabilities, in order to bridge development gaps between them and the rest of the population.

*Regional assessment of the structures and roles of national population councils in the Arab region*

63. This assessment provides an institutional profile of the national population councils or equivalent institutions in 11 Arab countries, and highlights their structures and roles. It proposes recommendations to enhance their capacity as key enablers for the full integration of the population dimension in development processes (Arabic only).

*Assessment of national capacities and knowledge gaps  
in the areas of population and development in the Sudan*

64. The study examines the relationship between government institutions and civil society organizations in the Sudan, and assesses capacities, needs and priorities in terms of population issues. It served as a background paper to a national workshop organized by ESCWA to help the National Population Council in identifying key population priorities in the Sudan (Arabic only).

*Population policy in Tunisia: specificities, challenges and priorities*

65. The study provides an overview of the demographic situation in Tunisia and an analysis of key demographic indicators. It highlights the country's achievements over the past four decades in population issues, stresses the need to prevent neglect of population concerns and reversal of gains, and offers policy recommendations in that regard (Arabic only).

*Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.9)

66. ESCWA developed this toolkit to help member States to enhance participation and engagement of citizens in social protection policy processes. It provides the requisite tools and policy options, and an opportunity for users to deepen their knowledge of social protection concepts and participatory approaches in social policy processes (Arabic only).

*Age-structural transitions and sustainable development in the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Pamphlet.1)

67. ESCWA presented this pamphlet as a regional contribution to the fiftieth session of the Commission on Population and Development, which was held in New York from 3 to 7 April 2017. The pamphlet examines demographic trends and prospects in the Arab region, which reveal an increase in the proportion of older persons in the population of several countries. It highlights the consequences of this fast and unprecedented age structure phenomenon on sustainable development in the region, and advocates for the full integration of age structural changes into policymaking.

*Policy Brief No. 6*  
*Inequality in the SDGs: fighting multidimensional inequality in the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.1)

68. This brief tackles the issue of inequality, explaining the concept, presenting measurement tools and discussing the adverse effects of inequality on welfare, prosperity and stability. It sheds light on the different facets of inequality in the Arab region and concludes with policy recommendations to policymakers and CSOs in that regard.

*Social Development Bulletin, vol. 6, Issue No. 1*  
*Measuring urban poverty in the Arab region: localizing global and national strategies*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.2)

69. This bulletin examines how urban poverty is addressed in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and the New Urban Agenda. It also considers urbanization and urban poverty in the Arab region and sheds light on an urban poverty measurement index developed by ESCWA and one of its regional partners in a pilot case study. The bulletin concludes with a key message on the need to adapt urban poverty measurement strategies to local conditions while maintaining their relevance to monitoring implementation of international development agendas.

*Intergenerational justice: meeting the needs of the future Arab generations*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.3)

70. This paper focuses on the concept and meaning of intergenerational justice and discusses its relationship with social justice and sustainable development. Given the interdisciplinary nature of intergenerational justice, it examines selected dimensions of the concept that are of relevance to Arab countries and for which data are available. It also explores a set of indicators to track the situation of intergenerational justice in the region. It then proposes mechanisms and policy options to promote intergenerational justice that can be adopted by Arab countries to ensure that the rights of the future generations are protected.

*Conditional cash transfers in the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.4)

71. This paper presents the concept of conditional cash transfers and describes worldwide and regional experiences in that field, drawing examples from Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Yemen.

*The social impacts of energy subsidy reform in the Arab region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.5)

72. This paper discusses potential social impacts of subsidy reform in Arab countries and examines how policymakers have sought to mitigate them.

*National institutional structures for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:  
exploring implementation of article 33 in the Arab region*  
(Forthcoming)

73. This technical paper focuses on the implementation of article 33 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Arab region, analysing the institutional set-ups in that regard.

*Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development  
Regional Report for the Arab Region: "Towards Inclusive, Safe, Resilient  
and Sustainable Arab Cities"*  
(Forthcoming)

74. The regional report, whose drafting was piloted by ESCWA, identifies emerging urbanization issues in Arab countries. It presents a baseline picture of the status of Arab cities and towns against which progress can be monitored, and identifies priorities in the context of the New Urban Agenda.

C. TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICES

75. ESCWA continues to respond to requests of member States by providing advisory and technical support services in the areas of disability, urban development, social justice and inequality, participatory democracy, consensus-building, social mediation, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and mainstreaming the SDGs in development planning.

*Workshop on tools for enhancing participation of women in political life in Lebanon*  
(Beirut, 29 May 2015)

76. ESCWA provided technical expertise on electoral laws supporting the participation of women in political life in Lebanon. Beneficiaries expressed satisfaction in terms of increased knowledge of the political system and elections in Lebanon, and of participatory tools for furthering electoral reforms towards greater participation of women.

*Mission to Morocco on inclusion of persons with disabilities*  
(Rabat, 26 March – 2 April 2016)

77. ESCWA held two consultative workshops on disability policy in Morocco with the objective of assisting the Government in developing a monitoring framework for the implementation of the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities.

*Capacity-building workshop on social and family mediation*  
(Rabat, 10-11 May 2016)

78. At the request of the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development of Morocco, ESCWA provided a training on social and family mediation as an alternative form for conflict resolution in the social sphere. Representatives of NGOs and ministry officials attended the workshop, which increased their knowledge of the conceptual and legal framework of family mediation, its characteristics and goals, and on various available mediation instruments.

*Mission to the Sudan on inclusion of persons with disabilities*  
(Khartoum, 22-28 October 2016)

79. ESCWA assisted the Government of the Sudan in conducting a review of the disability assessment process, which defines entry points for persons with disability into the social protection system in order to increase compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Classification of Functioning and the 2030 Agenda.

*Workshop on supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Palestine: mainstreaming the SDGs in development planning*  
(Amman, 26-28 November 2016)

80. Participants to this workshop included members of the Steering Committee of the Office of the Prime Minister, responsible for mainstreaming the SDGs into development planning exercises, and members of the National Committee overseeing the preparation of the National Development Plan. The activity was assessed as a timely initiative that contributed to raise awareness of possible approaches to mainstream the SDGs throughout all phases of national development planning.

*Workshop on supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Sudan: awareness-raising and advocacy of the SDGs*  
(Khartoum, 15-19 January 2017)

81. Organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, the workshop focused on the communication and advocacy challenges related to the 2030 Agenda. In its first part, it targeted members of the national team responsible for localizing the SDGs. A wider range of stakeholders, including government representatives, the National Population Council core team, civil society organizations, media representatives and activists, joined in the second part, the objective of which was to raise awareness and strengthen national ownership of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

82. Other training and capacity-building services were provided by ESCWA in response to specific technical cooperation requests. They include:

(a) Workshop on raising awareness of CSOs on SDG 11 in cooperation with the United Nations Information Centre (Saida, Lebanon, 15 June 2016);

(b) Workshop on promoting the 2030 Agenda and partnership with CSOs in the Arab region, in cooperation with Oxfam and ANND (Beirut, 23-24 June 2016);



- (c) Expert group meeting on supporting regional CSOs in producing an Arab report on the informal sector in the Arab region, in cooperation with ANND (Beirut, 25 June 2016);
- (d) Online distance training of the regional human rights network on social and economic rights, in cooperation with the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) (31 July – 6 August 2016);
- (e) Regional training workshop on gender and SDGs (Beirut, 17 August 2016);
- (f) Training workshop for newly elected women in Lebanese municipalities, in cooperation with the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research and the Democratic Lebanese Women NGO (Beirut, 1-4 September 2016);
- (g) Training workshop on social policies and participation in GCC countries (Muscat, 2-3 October 2016);
- (h) Training workshop on social and economic rights as a follow up to the distance learning provided from 31 July to 6 August 2016, in cooperation with the AIHR (Tunis, 4-9 October 2016);
- (i) Training on the gender dimension of SDG 5, in cooperation with the League of Arab States (Amman, 15-16 October 2016);
- (j) Training on the 2030 Agenda and internally displaced persons in Iraq (Beirut, 21-23 February 2017);
- (k) Continuous support to the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, including for a census and a publication on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon;
- (l) Continuous support to the Common Space Initiative, including for a dialogue among stakeholders on the recommendations of the United Nations Economic and Social Council to Lebanon and on the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the country.

#### D. UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT AND OTHER PROJECTS

83. In addition to a three-year project concluded in March 2016, on operationalizing the ESCWA participatory approach in public policy processes, which had led to the creation of national committees of practice in Iraq and Yemen, ESCWA has implemented or is implementing the following Development Account projects in the area of social development.

##### *Time for equality: strengthening the institutional framework of social policies*

84. This interregional project sought to promote social protection policies and institutional arrangements that would help to reduce poverty, inequality and social exclusion, in accordance with the first Millennium Development Goal and the SDGs.

##### *Fostering institutional development for participatory approaches towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Western Asia*

85. This project aims to build the capacity of ESCWA member States to adopt participatory approaches in formulating policies and improve individual and institutional capacity in public-civic partnerships. It will assist three target countries, Iraq, Lebanon and Tunisia, in strengthening resilience to conflicts through the establishment of national committees of practice.

##### *Promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region*

86. This project aims to strengthen the capacity of ESCWA member States to operationalize social justice principles and integrate them in their development strategies and programmes. The toolkit for Building

Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies using a Participatory Approach was updated and used in two training workshops in 2015 and 2016 under this project. Another toolkit on Mainstreaming Social Justice in Development Plans, Policies and Programmes in Arab countries was also developed in the framework of this project.

*Promoting equality: strengthening the capacity of selected developing countries to design and implement equality-oriented public policies*

87. This project seeks to strengthen member States' capacities to conceptualize, design and implement public policies oriented towards greater socioeconomic equality and adopt more progressive social spending and fiscal policies, in the context of the newly adopted 2030 Agenda. Tunisia and the Sudan are the focus countries. To date, a regional study on the dimensions, drivers and challenges of socioeconomic inequalities in the Arab region was completed, based on which two technical toolkits will be developed.

*Strengthened national capacities for integrated, sustainable and inclusive population and development policies in the Arab region*

88. This project aims to build the capacity of government institutions and CSOs to integrate population priorities in development policies. Consultations during the initial phase led to the identification of national partners in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia. Outputs include policy proposals and frameworks in the area of population and development. To date, five national workshops have been organized in Jordan, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia and have led to the selection of key population priorities in each country; the initiation of national dialogue workshops involving a wide range of stakeholders; and the identification of knowledge gaps and areas for capacity enhancement.

*Strengthening the capacities of Governments in the ESCAP, ECA, and ESCWA regions to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies*

89. In the context of this interregional project, a wide range of technical materials are being developed to strengthen the capacity of policymakers to foster youth participation in policy design and decision-making processes. The project includes targeted technical assistance to Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia.

*Sustainable, inclusive and evidence-based national urban policies in selected Arab States*

90. The project, led by the regional office of UN Habitat, aims to strengthen the capacity of policymakers and other stakeholders in four selected Arab States in adopting and implementing more informed, sustainable and inclusive national urban policies, in the framework of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11.

## **II. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT ITS TENTH SESSION**

91. At its tenth session held in Rabat on 8 and 9 September 2015, the Committee on Social Development made recommendations addressed to ESCWA member States and others to the ESCWA secretariat. The main activities and follow-up actions undertaken in implementation of those directed to the secretariat (in italics) are as follows:

(a) *To take into account comments from member States when implementing the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of social development, in line with resources available to ESCWA, with special focus on issues relating to social justice, migration, social protection, peace, social cohesion and inclusion, and young people.*

- Pilot workshop for testing the toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach;

- Workshop on strengthening institutional capacities and partnerships for disability-inclusive development in the Arab region;
- Workshop on conditional cash transfer programmes in the Arab region;
- Subregional training workshop on the toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach;
- 2015 Situation Report on International Migration: Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region;
- Social Development Report No. 1: What Remains of the Arab Spring: Challenges Impeding the Achievement of Social Justice in the Arab Region;
- Social Policy Brief No. 8: Unemployment of young women in the Arab region: causes and interventions;
- National profile of social protection for development in Oman;
- National profile of social protection for development in the United Arab Emirates;
- Social Protection Country Profile Series: Tunisia;
- Paper on slum upgrading in the Arab region;
- Policy Brief No. 6: Inequality in the SDGs: fighting multidimensional inequality in the Arab region;
- Paper on intergenerational justice: meeting the needs of the future Arab generations;
- Mission to Sudan on inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- Mission to Morocco on inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- Workshop on supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Palestine: mainstreaming the SDGs in development planning;
- Workshop on supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Sudan: awareness-raising and advocacy of the SDGs;
- Development Account project: Time for equality: strengthening the institutional framework of social policies;
- Development Account project: Fostering institutional development for participatory approaches towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Western Asia.

(b) *To work with member States on including the population dimension when formulating development policies, plans and programmes so as to empower social and demographic groups, especially young people, older persons, migrants, displaced populations and persons with disabilities, and to protect their rights and facilitate their social inclusion.*

- Workshop on disability and development: operationalizing the post-2015 development agenda for persons with disabilities;

- Workshop on strengthening institutional capacities and partnerships for disability-inclusive development in the Arab region;
- First meeting of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability;
- Paper on organizations of persons with disabilities in the Arab region: a preliminary study;
- Report on Inclusive Social Development;
- Social Protection Country Profile Series: Tunisia;
- Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development Regional Report for the Arab Region: Towards Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Arab Cities;
- Mission to Morocco on inclusion of Persons with Disabilities;
- Mission to Sudan on Inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- Development Account project: Strengthening national capacities for integrated, sustainable and inclusive population and development policies in the Arab region;
- Development Account project: Strengthening the capacities of Governments in the ESCAP, ECA, and ESCWA regions to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies.

*(c) To enhance member States' technical capacity in developing, implementing and monitoring national development plans aimed at achieving social justice through human rights by implementing capacity-building, research and analysis programmes on public policies.*

- Pilot workshop for testing the toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach;
- Subregional training workshop on the toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach;
- Toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach;
- Providing technical expertise on the electoral laws supporting the participation of women in political life in Lebanon;
- Field project: Operationalizing the ESCWA participatory approach in public policy processes;
- Development Account project: Promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region;
- Development Account project: Promoting equality: strengthening the capacity of selected developing countries to design and implement equality oriented public policies.

*(d) To provide necessary research and technical support to mainstream a participatory approach in formulating development policies for Governments and stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector.*

- National communities of practice inception workshops for Iraq and Yemen;

- Pilot workshop for testing the toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach;
- Regional Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region;
- ESCWA Civil Society Dialogues (2016): In search of justice: civic liberties and political rights in electoral processes in Arab countries;
- Social Development Report No. 1: What Remains of the Arab Spring: Challenges Impeding the Achievement of Social Justice in the Arab Region;
- Social Development Bulletin vol. 5, Issue No. 2: Social protection as a tool for justice;
- Paper on the role of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region;
- Toolkit on Building Capacities in Developing Social Protection Policies Using a Participatory Approach.

(e) *To prepare a guide on including social justice concepts in national and local development plans, in accordance with the Tunis Declaration; and to provide necessary programmes to build the capacity of States and provide training on applying the Declaration.*

- Paper on achieving social justice in the Arab region: from concept and vision to policy and practice;
- Development Account project: Promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region.

(f) *To build member States' capacity in developing public policies that are inclusive to all and that ensure social cohesion, through training, research and technical cooperation at the national and regional levels.*

- Workshop on disability and development: operationalizing the post-2015 development agenda for persons with disabilities;
- Report on Inclusive Social Development;
- Development Account Project: Time for equality: strengthening the institutional framework of social policies;
- Field project: Operationalizing the ESCWA participatory approach in public policy processes;
- Development Account project: Fostering institutional development for participatory approaches towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Western Asia.

(g) *To support member States in streamlining the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda in national development strategies and in their implementation.*

- First meeting of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability;
- Background paper on challenges to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region: the capacity challenge;
- Workshop on supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Palestine: mainstreaming the SDGs in development planning;

- Workshop on supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Sudan: awareness-raising and advocacy of the SDGs.

(h) *To support member States in their efforts and strategies to eradicate poverty, with special focus on the most vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, young people, older persons, marginalized communities and informal sector workers.*

- Tenth session of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development;
- Paper on slum upgrading in the Arab region;
- Social Development Bulletin, vol. 6, Issue No. 1: Measuring urban poverty in the Arab region: localizing global and national strategies;
- Development Account project: Time for equality: strengthening the institutional framework of social policies.

(i) *To provide member States with technical support in building national capacities for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

- Workshop on strengthening institutional capacities and partnerships for disability-inclusive development in the Arab region;
- First meeting of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability;
- Paper on organizations of persons with disabilities in the Arab region: a preliminary study;
- Mission to Morocco on inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- Mission to the Sudan on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

(j) *To enhance cooperation between the ESCWA Social Development Committee and the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs and other entities of the League of Arab States.*

- 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development;
- Training on the gender dimension of SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda 2030, in cooperation with the League of Arab States;
- Development Account project: Sustainable, inclusive and evidence-based national urban policies in selected Arab States.

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