

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDD/2013/IG.1/3  
17 April 2013  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

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

Committee on Social Development  
Ninth session  
Amman, 12-13 October 2013

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ACTIVITIES  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS UNDER ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK  
SINCE THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT****Summary**

Since the eighth session of the Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 24-25 March 2011), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has implemented a number of planned activities within the framework of Subprogramme 2 of its programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013, which deals with integrated social policies, including activities set out in the recommendations of the Committee on Social Development. Those activities focused on national capacity-building and the provision of advisory services in the area of social development. They also included the preparation of studies, guides and technical references; the implementation of field projects related to social development; and consultations with member countries on the best strategies for designing integrated social policies.

This document reviews progress made in the implementation of the above activities. It is presented to the Committee on Social Development during its ninth session for information and to seek proposals on follow-up actions.

## CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction .....	1	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
<b>I. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION .....</b>	<b>2-14</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Meetings and workshops.....	3-8	3
B. Reports, studies and other publications.....	9-14	4
<b>II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SOCIAL PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT SECTION.....</b>	<b>15-31</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Guidelines for the implementation of a participatory social development approach .....	16-18	6
B. Meetings and workshops.....	19-23	7
C. Reports, studies and other publications.....	24-25	8
D. Technical advisory services .....	26-28	9
E. Projects.....	29-31	10
<b>III. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SOCIAL POLICY SECTION ....</b>	<b>32-50</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Meetings and workshops.....	33-36	11
B. Reports, studies and other publications.....	37-45	12
C. Programmes and projects .....	46-50	14
<b>IV. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE POPULATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTION.....</b>	<b>51-64</b>	<b>15</b>
A. Reports, studies and other publications.....	52-58	15
B. Projects.....	59-60	17
C. Meetings and workshops.....	61-64	17

## **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 of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013. This subprogramme deals with integrated social policies, and aims to promote social policies that are based on social justice and equal opportunities for all, taking into account the specificities and cultural sensitivities of the region. SDD seeks to achieve that goal through the following: (a) preparing analytical studies, holding meetings and implementing technical cooperation activities, including the organization of workshops, training programmes and field projects, and the provision of advisory services in priority social areas; and (b) promoting the establishment and strengthening of partnerships between stakeholders at the local and national levels, in order to consolidate the participatory approach to development, and subsequently design sensible social policies that take the needs of all population groups into consideration. The following is a review of progress made by SDD sections in the implementation of social development-related programmes and activities under the ESCWA programme of work since the eighth session of the Committee on Social Development.

### **I. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION**

2. The office of the director of the division carries out the following functions: (a) identifying emerging social issues in the member countries of ESCWA as well as strategic social and economic issues, including the social effects of globalization and the social dimensions of urban development; (b) outlining and drafting a chapter on social development to be included in the annual Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region; and (c) coordinating the contributions of the division to such intergovernmental bodies as the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and other decision-making bodies. The following is a review of the undertaken activities.

#### A. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

##### 1. *Expert Group Meeting on Social Security in Western Asia: Accessibility and Sustainability* (Beirut, 8-9 September 2011)

3. The meeting was held in Beirut, on 8 and 9 September 2011. Its objective was to identify the policy options available to enhance the role of social security systems in ESCWA member countries, with a view to promoting social development. It also aimed to consolidate regional cooperation on issues related to integrated social policy and promote a common understanding of the accessibility and sustainability of social security systems, in preparation for the Third World Social Security Forum to be held in Qatar in 2013.

4. The meeting brought together representatives from a number of national social protection offices and United Nations agencies, in addition to regional and international experts from key international organizations and academic institutions. Conference participants agreed on a number of conclusions and recommendations. They pointed to the need for political will, accountability and good governance in order to develop sustainable and well-functioning social protection systems in the region. They also stressed the need to provide universal coverage, which in turn requires sustainable funding and an adequate balance between required services and available resources. A revision of fiscal policies and existing financing mechanisms could thus be undertaken to enhance social protection programmes at the national level.

##### 2. *Meeting of the Advisory Board on the Report "A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda"* (Beirut, 8-9 November 2012)

5. The meeting was held in Beirut, on 8 and 9 November 2012. Its aim was to review three draft chapters of the report entitled "A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda", which was being drafted by the United Nations regional commissions, namely the Economic

Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa and ESCWA, in a joint effort coordinated by the latter. The meeting was attended by representatives of the United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in addition to a number of experts.

6. The meeting sought to develop a regional perspective on the issues that should be addressed under the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, and to draft a proposal for the content of the report, in particular its final chapter which included recommended mechanisms for the implementation of the future United Nations development agenda. Participants also exchanged views on a number of regional concerns to be included in the report and in the debate over the United Nations agenda beyond 2015. The document is expected to constitute a global plan jointly implemented by all countries and to contribute in reshaping the global partnership for development, on the basis of a more balanced and inclusive approach.

7. The meeting sessions covered the areas addressed by the four main chapters of the report, as follows: (a) a historical perspective on the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda; (b) a review of the progress made in the implementation of MDGs; (c) international and regional development priorities beyond 2015; (d) the way forward.

8. The opening session reviewed the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on Accelerating progress towards MDGs: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Participants touched on the ongoing intensive consultations and debates taking place in preparation for the report drafting and sought to identify the framework within which the results of that consultation process could be included both in the report and in the “Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda.

## B. REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

### 1. *Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region: Towards Inclusive Cities* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/1)

9. The member countries of ESCWA face challenges resulting from the widening urban disparities and gaps between different population groups and geographical areas. The report entitled “Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region: Towards Inclusive Cities” focused on the spatial dimension of those disparities and the types of spatial development interventions undertaken in the region, comparing them to interventions carried out within the framework of comprehensive strategies for inclusive urbanization, social justice and economic balance. The report also discussed patterns of polarization at the regional, national and city levels. Key patterns included: (a) national and transnational migration flows from less-developed regions towards more developed ones which offer more job opportunities; (b) the polarization of urban populations in terms of income, decent living conditions and access to basic urban and social services, as well as to job opportunities in the formal sector; (c) the stratification of urban societies according to income, ethnicity or place of origin.

10. The report contained a number of examples and case studies, and focused on the following: (a) spatial development strategies adopted by the countries of the region in order to reduce urban disparities, achieve balanced national development and promote inclusive urbanization; and (b) the gap between the good intentions expressed in national policies and the implemented urban planning and development practices. The report underlined that adopting an entrepreneurial approach to the formulation and implementation of development plans tended to increase spatial divide and social inequality. The report also discussed the kinds of barriers that contribute to the fragmentation of spatial interventions and reduce the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives, thus hindering the formulation and implementation of policies at various levels. It finally outlined a framework for integrating the concept of inclusive development into the formulation and

implementation of spatial planning policies, and emphasized the importance of integrated and participatory development.

2. *Social Development Bulletin No. 4  
Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.3)

11. The Social Development Bulletin No. 4, “Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region”, shed light on the social challenges that result from urban divisions in the Arab region. It documented spatial interventions carried out in several ESCWA member countries in order to promote balanced urban development. It also offered an overview of related activities undertaken by ESCWA, including expert group meetings, publications and the regional follow-up to the international debate on the challenges of accelerated urbanization.

3. *Working Paper on Poverty in Western Asia:  
Some Social Considerations*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2010/WP.4)

12. The paper entitled “Poverty in Western Asia: Some Social Considerations” addressed main poverty trends and challenges in the Arab region, in addition to global poverty trends. Despite the limited availability of data, a number of indicators revealed that the region had witnessed varying levels of progress in the fight against poverty. Corrective measures may be required to accelerate poverty reduction, especially in the most disadvantaged countries and subregions. The paper emphasized the importance of providing reliable data on poverty and inequality, and suggested a change from a measurement based on per capita income to one that takes into account the multiple dimensions of poverty. The paper also laid out policy options to combat poverty in three key social areas: social protection, integrated social development and job creation.

4. *Contribution of ESCWA to the 49<sup>th</sup> Session  
of the Commission for Social Development on Poverty Eradication*

13. During the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development (New York, 9-18 February 2011), the Director of SDD contributed a speech entitled “The Eradication of Poverty: A Key Priority”. He reviewed the progress made in the fight against poverty and the efforts then underway to build inclusive societies in the Arab region. He noted that the most recent figures on poverty indicators in Western Asia revealed that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty had witnessed a three-fold increase between 1990 and 2005, and that Western Asia was one of three regions of the world not likely to meet the goal of halving extreme poverty rates by 2015. In addition, he called for the recognition of the multifaceted nature of poverty, and for its assessment based not only on per capita income, but also on factors including limited access to basic services such as health, education and housing; discrimination and exclusion; and a dearth of opportunities for participation in public life. He underscored the role of ESCWA in providing technical assistance to member countries to help them establish institutional frameworks that allow for an integrated approach to tackling poverty, achieving social development, providing social protection and creating jobs.

5. *Poverty in Western Asia*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Brochure.1)

14. The brochure entitled “Poverty in Western Asia” addressed three major frameworks related to poverty reduction in the region, namely social security, social integration and employment. It reviewed a number of poverty indicators in the region, comparing it to other developing regions of the world in that respect. Discussing social protection, the brochure pointed to the successful experience of Jordan in expanding the coverage of social security and improving its accessibility. The section on social integration touched on the experiences of a number of ESCWA member countries in the enhancement of social protection and the

provision of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, as a means for combating poverty and exclusion. The brochure was distributed during the fiftieth session of the Commission for Social Development, which was held in New York in 2012.

## **II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SOCIAL PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT SECTION**

15. The Social Participatory Development Section is responsible for the achievement of the following objectives: (a) developing an integrated approach to participatory development, devising guidelines on developmental interventions based on an integrated participatory approach, and enhancing the involvement of civil society in policymaking and democratic transition processes; (b) providing an objective analysis of policies related to citizenship and civil society participation, and identifying mechanisms to enhance participatory decision-making; (c) facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the region by issuing studies, reports and publications, with a view to promoting an integrated approach to development, evaluating the opportunities for civil society participation in achieving development, and assessing progress in that regard; (d) providing technical assistance and advisory services to Governments and civil society organizations (CSOs), in order to design a unified and integrated approach to the concept of participatory development and its mechanisms, and enhancing the effective participation of civil society in governmental decision-making processes; (e) organizing regional and country-level meetings, workshops, think tanks and e-forums to enhance knowledge-exchange frameworks, support coordination mechanisms and reinforce participation mechanisms at all levels; and (f) supporting efforts to achieve interactive national dialogue, build consensus and facilitate democratic transition.

### **A. GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PARTICIPATORY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

#### **1. *Manual on Building Capacity for Partnership in Democratic Governance* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/3/Manual)**

16. This manual is a reference guide to the establishment of a partnership between political powers and civil society in policymaking processes. It relies on scientific references, international and Arab research and experiences that could be of benefit to countries undergoing transition, particularly in determining appropriate means to confront current challenges while maintaining peace and forging successful partnerships for the management of the transition process. The manual reviews a number of tools to achieve a successful transition, including: (a) a strong political leadership to ensure good governance; (b) an innovative and participatory approach to policymaking; (c) effective coalitions and partnerships to engage all stakeholders in the successful implementation of policies; (d) efficient, transparent and accountable public institutions; (f) a suitable environment for dialogue and consensus-building on issues of public concern; (g) civil society participation in the reform and transition processes; (h) community development and administrative decentralization; and (i) communication and social media strategies.

17. This manual was presented during seminars and training workshops to help develop the skills and capacities needed to achieve democratic governance. It was revised and corrected in the light of feedback from a workshop, held in Beirut from 16 to 19 April 2012, which sought to develop the content of the manual, adapt it to the needs of its users and improve the related training programmes.

#### **2. *Programme for Building Capacity for Partnership in Democratic Governance***

18. Following the publication of the manual on Building Capacity for Partnership in Democratic Governance, a complementary training programme to be implemented in 2013 was devised. The programme aims to develop organizational expertise and provide technical knowledge on the participatory approach to democratic governance. It highlights the various skill sets needed to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy, on the basis of the manual. The programme also provides technical guidance for the

organization of capacity-building workshops addressed to political leaders, civil society and all parties concerned with the transition process. The Beirut workshop that addressed the manual also discussed the results of a survey conducted to seek the views of the potential programme beneficiaries, and helped to better formulate the envisaged actions.

## B. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

### 1. *Civil Society Forum on the Implementation of Recommendations for Civic Participation in Public Policy Processes: Arab Uprisings and Prospects for Renaissance* (Cairo, 9-10 April 2011)

19. The forum brought together civil society activists, ordinary men and women who had participated in the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, and Arab and international experts. Its objectives were to exchange experiences; enhance the governance skills required to ensure a smooth democratic transition; discuss the current challenges and a new social contract; and safeguard the transitional process. The forum included two round tables which tackled the dynamics of change in light of the testimonies of a number of those who had helped trigger change in their countries. Participants reached a number of conclusions and recommendations that were further discussed in later events.

### 2. *Expert Group Meeting on the Follow-up to the Civil Society Forum on Arab Uprisings and Prospects for Renaissance* (Beirut, 25-26 August 2011)

20. This meeting brought together experts and field actors, namely representatives of CSOs, the media, the private sector, research centres, academic institutions, United Nations agencies, and regional and international organizations. It was held as part of the follow-up on the uprisings in the Arab region and their aftermath, and aimed to draw lessons and identify obstacles to a smooth transition. It also aimed to translate recommendations into action plans and initiatives that reinforced the role of civil society as a key partner in decision-making. The meeting focused on identifying the dynamics of change in the region and the multiple challenges facing the related processes, including legislation and institutional reform; functions and priorities of national councils; the participation of women in decision-making; safeguarding the transitional process; and the role of the media in promoting civic participation. The meeting reached a number of conclusions and issued recommendations on the need to build capacity to ensure effective civil participation in the reform process and the development of a political system that would safeguard transition.

### 3. *Interregional Seminar on Participatory Development and Conflict Resolution: The Path of Democratic Transition and Social Justice* (Beirut, 23-24 November 2011)

21. The objectives of this seminar were as follows: (a) to shed light on the systems and standards of democratic governance; (b) to review successful and unsuccessful international experiences in democratic transition; and (c) to discuss the interventions needed to build capacity and promote participation in confronting the challenges to such a transition. In addition, the forum sought to explore prospects; underline the components of a new social contract; and rethink the role of decision-makers and their relation to one another. The meeting was attended by both experts and field actors, namely political activists, representatives of Governments, CSOs, journalists, as well as members of research centres, academics, and representatives of United Nations agencies, and regional and international organizations. The recommendations of the participants emphasized the need to develop a new approach to the ongoing change in the Arab region, and to involve new political forces emerging from the upheaval in designing that approach: its conceptual framework, its objectives and its implementation mechanisms.

4. *Subregional Workshop on the ESCWA manual*  
*"Enhancing Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Processes"*  
(Amman, 8 April 2011)

22. ESCWA held this workshop in collaboration with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and the League of Arab States. It was attended by representatives of government entities, local administrations, CSOs, the media, academia and of United Nations bodies in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the ESCWA Manual on Enhancing Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Processes, shedding light on the concept of community development and the related culture of development. It underlined the needed individual and institutional capacities to achieve community development, and the importance of professional networks and mechanisms for the transfer of expertise and knowledge. The workshop also aimed to promote participatory systems for the design, implementation and assessment of public policies.

5. *E-forum on Democracy and Participation*  
(4 June - 30 September 2012)

23. Representatives of six Arab countries made approximately 130 interventions in this e-forum, organized between 4 June and 30 September 2012. It also attracted 941 followers and the total number of hits on the dedicated website reached 15,016 throughout the duration of the e-discussion. The forum proved to be a good opportunity for dialogue and the sharing of experiences between stakeholders from government entities, CSOs, research centres and academic institutions, in addition to social activists and experts in social affairs. Participants discussed various challenges to democratic transition, the requirements for democratic governance, and the relationship between democracy and civic participation. They formulated proposals aimed at better understanding the ongoing process of change.

C. REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

1. *Report on the E-forum on Democracy and Participation*

24. ESCWA prepared a comprehensive report on the outcome of the debates which took place during the e-forum on democracy and participation, and on proposals and recommendations made by participants. The report also included a set of lessons learned, and a brief assessment of the e-forum and of the related technical difficulties.

2. *Social Development Bulletin*  
*Promoting Participatory Democracy in the ESCWA Region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/Technical Paper.2)

25. This publication formed part of the series of the Social Development Bulletin issued by SDD (vol.4, No.2). Its objective was to disseminate information on the concept of participatory democracy, on its implementation and development mechanisms, and on the role of stakeholders in those mechanisms. The publication shed light on the benefits of participatory democracy, its pillars and the challenges it faces. It also reviewed key tools and methods for the implementation of a participatory democratic system. The bulletin provided instructions and practical examples drawn from international experiences in applying participatory democracy as part of change and reform processes. It focused on the important role of participatory democracy in enhancing the partnership between Governments and civil society, and in strengthening the foundations of the democratic process and culture in the Arab region. In doing so, it discussed the interlinkages between participation and democracy and evaluated their current standing in the region. Finally, the bulletin reviewed activities carried out by ESCWA between 2011 and 2012 to promote the participation of civil society in the transition to democracy.



## D. TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICES

26. ESCWA favourably responded to requests for technical advisory services submitted by the following institutions and organizations:

(a) Khadija Charitable Society in Yemen, which received technical assistance including training and programming tools, as well as technical and organizational materials for workshops held between 24 and 28 July 2011 on the participatory research approach for development;

(b) Al-Shifa College of Paramedical Sciences, which received technical and organizational support for a workshop on capacity-building for actors in participatory local development, held in Sana'a from 20 to 23 March 2012 in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Administration in Yemen;

(c) The Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Rural Development) in Palestine, which received technical and organizational support for a training workshop on participatory development, held in Bethlehem from 22 to 25 March 2011;

(d) The National Union for the Coalition of local CSOs in Palestine, which received technical and organizational support for six training workshops on the approach of ESCWA to local development, participatory development and participatory research. The workshops were held in Ramallah between February and November 2011;

(e) Sorouh Foundation for Sustainable Development in Iraq, which received technical assistance from ESCWA including training and programming tools, as well as technical and organizational materials for two workshops on participatory development and participatory research. The workshops were held in Kirkuk and Erbil in February 2011 and April 2011, respectively;

(f) The Islamic University in Baghdad and Mosul University, which received technical and organizational assistance for two workshops on capacity-building for actors in the local development and participatory development fields. The workshops were held from 24 to 28 May 2011 and from 20 to 24 August 2011, respectively. Assistance included the provision of training manuals and programmes, in addition to technical and organizational materials on participatory development;

(g) The Centre for Development Services in Rashaya al-Wadi, run by the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon, which received technical and organizational assistance for a programme on capacity-building in participatory research. ESCWA also provided the technical and organizational materials needed for a workshop in December 2011 for central administrators from the Ministry and other related centres;

(h) The governorates of Diwaniyah and Sulaymaniyah in Iraq, which received technical and organizational assistance for two workshops on the approaches of ESCWA to local and participatory development. The workshops were held, respectively, from 18 to 22 March 2012 and in June 2012.

27. Upon the request of the Libyan Forum for Civil Society and the European Centre for Electoral Support, ESCWA provided technical advisory services through its participation in a coordination meeting held in Belgium from 23 to 25 July 2011. The objective of the meeting was to plan the technical contribution of ESCWA to training and capacity-building in participatory development, democratic governance, leadership, citizenship, dialogue and consensus-building.

28. In addition, ESCWA provided technical advisory services to the Al-Fikr al-Arabi Foundation, upon its request, by preparing a workshop on Towards Partnership Policies: The Involvement of Direct Stakeholders. This workshop was held in the context of the Foundation's eleventh conference entitled "Citizens and Government: Future Vision" (Dubai, 26-27 November 2012).

## E. PROJECTS

### 1. *Implementation of a Participatory Approach in Public Policy Processes in ESCWA Member Countries*

29. The objective of this project, which was launched in 2012 and is expected to be completed in 2014, is (a) to promote the concept of participatory development in Western Asia, in particular in Yemen and Palestine, through capacity-building programmes, dialogue sessions and networking; (b) to achieve effective partnerships between Governments and CSOs in the policy design, implementation and monitoring processes. The project, implemented in collaboration with a number of governmental entities, CSOs, research centres and academic institutions, is expected to build capacities in implementing the participatory development approach of ESCWA, and in implementing fair and comprehensive public policies in the region. Strategies for achieving the objectives include: transferring knowledge and strengthening capacity in political leadership and participatory policymaking; promoting the principles of transparency and accountability; improving communication and reform strategies, and effective networking methods; building confidence; promoting dialogue and building consensus on public issues. In addition, the project is expected to contribute in establishing national committees responsible for the follow-up and assessment of the application of the approach of ESCWA to participation in the design of public policies, and for drafting national development plans.

### 2. *Participatory Human Development in Post-Conflict Countries in the ESCWA Region*

30. ESCWA implemented this project from 2009 to 2012, with the assistance of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Development Programme in Lebanon, Oxfam's partnership programme for the Middle East, and the Arab Center for the Rule of Law and Integrity. The project targeted Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, as those countries suffer greatly from the repercussions of war including increased poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, the violation of human rights, the proliferation of administrative corruption and political instability. The project involved government officials from concerned ministries, representatives of CSOs, the media, the private sector, academic institutions, research centres, local leaders, and field workers in development programmes and projects.

31. The objective of the project was to strengthen the partnership between Governments and CSOs in the design, implementation and follow-up of public policies. Focal points were designated in the targeted countries; they later participated in a roundtable at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut in 2009 to discuss the modalities of the project implementation. A field survey was then conducted to determine stakeholder governmental institutions and organizations in the four countries. Two workshops on capacity-building for actors in participatory development, two workshops for instructors on training approaches and methods, and two further workshops on the participatory research approach for development were also held. In addition, three e-forums were organized on participation in public policy, the role of the media and social inclusion. At the end of the project, a seminar on participatory development in countries stricken by conflict was held. It served as an opportunity for the beneficiaries of the project to exchange experiences with experts from European and Latin American countries, and discuss successful and unsuccessful experiences of participation in public policy processes. Following the completion of the project, an analytical report was issued in 2012 which assessed its strengths and shortcomings, highlighting its outcome and impact, and offering recommendations for follow-up on its activities.

## III. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SOCIAL POLICY SECTION

32. The Social Policy Section of SDD cooperates with member countries and other concerned parties in order to develop a common understanding of integrated social policy in the region. The section helps Governments to develop frameworks and tools for a social policy that enhances social justice, primarily for the poor. The section is responsible for the following: (a) promoting the adoption of integrated social policy

approaches that ensure social justice in the decision-making process; (b) assisting Governments in developing a national vision of social policy as a result of an open dialogue with the concerned parties; (c) collaborating with member countries to analyse existing social policy gaps and challenges, and formulating policies in the light of successful international and regional experiences; and (d) identifying suitable mechanisms for institutionalizing and monitoring social policies. The section also assists member countries in achieving people-centred development through the organization of conferences and expert meetings on the national and regional levels, and the preparation of reports, studies, and analytical and field research. Within that framework, the section has undertaken the following activities since the Eighth session of the Committee on Social Development:

#### A. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

##### 1. *Expert Group Meeting on Labour Markets and Labour Market Policies in the ESCWA Region* (Beirut, 22 March 2011)

33. This meeting was held in response to the challenges faced by ESCWA member countries in providing sufficient job opportunities for a growing population in labour markets with limited capacity. Considering that employment is an integral part of social development strategies, it is important to fully understand the challenges faced by labour markets, identify effective approaches to address those challenges and steer social policy accordingly. The meeting included discussions on labour market data, legislation and government policies intended to improve market performance. It was attended by focal points from member countries, who coordinate with ESCWA on matters related to labour market data and policies.

##### 2. *Regional Workshop on Labour Market Policy: Informal Economic Activity in the ESCWA Region* (Beirut, 23 March 2011)

34. This regional workshop served as a platform for the discussion of the concept of informal employment and related issues. It provided an overview of measurement methods; discussed policy approaches; and provided examples of good programmes for skills development, addressed to those employed in the informal sector. The workshop discussions lead to recommendations for tackling the persistent challenges related to labour market data and policy in the ESCWA region, primarily in the following areas: improving data and information; managing the labour market; adopting integrated policies and programmes; and adapting education and training to the needs of the labour market.

##### 3. *Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Economic and Employment Policies in the ESCWA region* (Beirut, 31 October 2011)

35. During the meeting, a number of experts from ESCWA and academic institutions presented research on regional economic policy, green job creation, labour costs and other topics. Representatives of Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic made presentations on employment and economic policy in their respective countries. Discussions centered on the draft of the fourth report on integrated social policy and the economic aspects of the integrated labour market policy. The meeting provided an opportunity for ESCWA member countries to exchange expertise and experiences about the impact of economic policies on labour markets.

##### 4. *Arab Forum on Towards a New Welfare Mix: Rethinking the Role of the State, Market and Civil Society in the Provision of Basic Social Services* (Beirut 19-20 December 2012)

36. The forum brought together a number of experts from member countries and contributed to raising awareness on ways to provide social services through mutual aid organizations, kin associations, religious organizations, waqf endowments and zakat. Discussions focused on identifying gaps in the provision of

social services by the public sector, and on how non-governmental actors could fill such gaps. The forum addressed challenges and opportunities related to justice, governance, organization and employment sustainability. It touched on the role of both market-based and public services in the dialogue on the improvement of social welfare systems in the region. The forum was held in collaboration with the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

## B. REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

### 1. *Integrated Social Policy Report IV Labour Market Policy in the ESCWA Region* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/3)

37. The objectives of this report were as follows: to present statistics on labour markets collected from ESCWA member countries; to track recent changes in policies related to labour market regulation and employment governance; to analyse government policies aimed at improving the performance of labour markets; and to examine selected aspects of economic policy, such as labour elasticity and its role in economic growth. The report concluded with a call for a broader and more integrated approach to labour market in related policies, as segmentation leads to the fragmentation of social security systems and of the economy in general. It stressed that policies must address that segmentation and confront the challenges to labour in ESCWA member countries, through the promotion of a more inclusive approach.

### 2. *Labour Market Data, Structures and Challenges in the ESCWA Region* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.7)

38. This paper assessed the availability and comparability of data on labour markets in ESCWA member countries. In addition to an overview of data sources in the region, it underlined gaps and recommended measures to improve the collection and use of data. It also discussed the types of studies, surveys and systems needed to improve knowledge on labour markets in order to achieve better economic results. The paper then analysed key economic and social indicators related to labour market performance in ESCWA member countries. Available data revealed sectoral, quality and age disparities among the work force, and explained the classification of employment as formal, informal, national and non-national.

### 3. *Report on Priority Issues in the Field of Social Development in the ESCWA Region: Proposed Methods to Combat Poverty among Persons with Disabilities* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part I))

39. This report was prepared in the framework of the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities (2004-2013) and in the context of resolution 2010/12 on Promoting Social Integration, adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in July 2010. It presented international experiences that point to a correlation between disability and poverty, and encouraged member countries to explore this link in their respective communities, with a view to better facilitating the social integration of persons with disabilities. The report also reviewed data from latest censuses on the number of people with disabilities in ESCWA member countries, and highlighted provisions on their participation in the labour market and their access to social protection. It finally recommended the following: revising definitions and improving statistics and monitoring mechanisms; increasing social awareness and efforts to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in policymaking; ensuring adequate attention and support from Governments; and improving the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market.

### 4. *Active Labour Market Policies in Arab Countries* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/1)

40. This study examined the experiences of a number of Arab countries in designing policies aimed to improve the performance of labour markets, and laid out options, opportunities and challenges related to

designing inclusive and efficient policies. It underlined that the choice and design of active labour market policies were context-specific and determined by the economic, political and social objectives of policymakers, the structure of the labour market, and the administrative and financial capacities of the State. The study also described key trends in the Arab countries, noting that the impact of policies was limited by the fact that most targeted a narrow category of workers, primarily youth. Indeed, some segments of the labour force benefited less from employment services than others, in particular women, rural workers and those employed in the informal sector. Research has shown that the design of policies often suffered from a lack of information about the labour market and poor coordination between different stakeholders, which undermined the effectiveness of policies and their relevance to the state of the market.

5. *Economic Policy in the ESCWA Region and its Impact on Employment*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/2)

41. This study analysed the role of economic policies in promoting job creation in a number of ESCWA member countries. It underlined the structural weaknesses of those economies that were heavily invested in extractive industries, while other economic sectors were left to a large number of small and medium enterprises with weak productivity and low returns. The report concluded that this imbalance posed important challenges to employment in the economies in question.

6. *ESCWA Social Development Division Bulletin: Vol. 4, No. 1*  
*Employment and Education: Repairing the Broken Link*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/Technical Paper.1)

42. This bulletin analysed the links between education and employment policies in the ESCWA region, and suggested that improving the knowledge and skills of the population through educational reform would help correct the mismatch between work and education; but only if such reforms were complemented by appropriate economic policies. Avenues for intervention included public sector reform and support for the growth of the private sector through sound competition policies and transparent economic regulation.

7. *Policy issues in the ESCWA region: The Role of Participation and Social Justice*  
*in Achieving Sustainable and Balanced Development*  
(E/ESCWA/27/4(Part I))

43. This paper, presented at the twenty-seventh session of ESCWA in May 2012, was prepared at the request of the ESCWA Technical Committee in December 2011. It focused on the interlinkages between the political, social, economic and environmental dimensions of public policy, on the basis of research related to economic prospects, labour markets, social policy and sustainable development. The paper also discussed the interdependence of social and economic development challenges, namely high unemployment rates, increasing poverty, food insecurity, and insufficiently broad-based and diversified economic growth. It highlighted possible entry points to build on existing strengths and harness synergies. It indicated, for instance, that Arab political institutions should respond to the aspirations of youth and their expectation of greater participation in economic and public life, while devoting greater attention to justice and social responsibility.

8. *Working Paper on Towards Comprehensive Social Policy for Equality*  
*and the Millennium Development Goals*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/WP.1)

44. This paper called for the adoption of a comprehensive social policy in order to address inequality and drive development in the ESCWA region. It suggested that investing in citizens and social protection measures could have a multiplier effect on income generation and on the provision of education and health services, leading to a virtuous cycle of social and economic development.

## 9. Brochure

### *Managing Change: Mainstreaming Disability into the Development Process* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2012/Brochure No.1)

45. This brochure analysed the exclusion of people with disabilities in the Arab region. It highlighted the challenges facing policymakers in their efforts to achieve social inclusion. It also presented the activities undertaken by ESCWA in that respect and underscored the need to exert more efforts to integrate people with disabilities into society.

#### C. PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

##### 1. *Technical Cooperation Services*

46. ESCWA provided technical advisory services to the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities and the Department of Statistics in Jordan, in October 2012. To this end, it organized a joint mission of experts from SDD and the Statistics Division, which sought to assist the Jordanian authorities in developing a strategy to improve the collection and production of data on disability. This strategy included the establishment of a statistics database on disability; the development of a set of indicators to help identify disabilities; and the integration of those indicators into surveys and censuses. ESCWA's assistance resulted in the strengthening of the partnership between the Government and CSOs in the design, implementation and monitoring of development policies.

47. In the light of the outcome of the eleventh meeting on cooperation between the League of Arab States and ESCWA, held in Vienna in July 2012, ESCWA undertook planning and coordination to assist the League of Arab States with a training workshop for Arab countries on the Preparation of Reports on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, from 9 to 11 October 2012 in the United Arab Emirates. ESCWA participated in the training workshop, hosted and co-organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The workshop underlined the need to ratify the Convention and improve the capacity of member countries to prepare the national reports it required. Member countries are expected to start an ongoing assessment of their data and policies in preparation for those reports.

48. In response to a request from the World Bank, ESCWA provided advisory services to a group of stakeholders on employment, social insurance and safety nets in countries in transition. The consultations were held in Beirut and Tunis on 15 and 16 January 2012. ESCWA gave electronic presentations and participated in e-discussions on social safety nets in the region.

##### 2. *Projects*

###### *Strengthening Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific*

49. Four regional commissions of the United Nations, namely the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and ESCWA, cooperate under a joint project aimed at strengthening national capacities to develop effective policies and programmes that expand the scope of social protection and include the informal sector in its coverage. The project also aims to promote the use of innovative tools and approaches to tackle emerging social challenges. It seeks to build regional information systems for knowledge management, with a view to supporting national initiatives, exchanging experiences, designing capacity-building activities and documenting innovative practices.

###### *Strengthening Knowledge and Policy Infrastructure for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Arab region*

50. The primary objective of this project is to strengthen knowledge about disability in the Arab region by raising awareness, and improving the availability and comparability of data and information. The project

contributes to an ongoing dialogue on disability policies; it seeks to improve the infrastructure needed to design such policies, and bolster government commitment to integrating persons with disabilities into public life. To this end, the project aims (a) to devise a time-bound regional action plan to identify the gaps and needs in capacity-building in Arab countries; (b) to assist Arab countries with the implementation of the United Nations Convention; and (c) to create a mechanism to monitor the achievement of the project's goals. Upon the successful completion of this phase of the project, the second phase is expected to begin with the evaluation of each country's strengths and weaknesses and the implementation of the regional action plan at the national level. The search for funding is ongoing.

#### **IV. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE POPULATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTION**

51. Since the eighth session of the Committee on Social Development, the work of the Population and Social Development Section included: (a) raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities created by recent demographic changes, which have enhanced the youth bulge and increased the numbers of elderly persons; (b) encouraging member countries to rise to the challenges posed by international migration, while also benefitting from the opportunities it creates; (c) monitoring progress made by Arab countries in the implementation of the programmes of action adopted by international conferences, including the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY); and (d) disseminating knowledge and sharing information on population and development. The following activities were undertaken:

##### A. REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

1. *Social Policy Brief, Issue No.4, Reinforcing Social Equity: Mainstreaming Ageing Issues in the Process of Development Planning in the ESCWA Region*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.2)

52. This brief was issued in 2012, on the occasion of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It underlined the importance of mainstreaming ageing into the debate over policymaking, and noted that, as in the case of women's and youth issues, ageing issues should be an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process of development plans and programmes. The objective of this brief was the dissemination of information on the links between ageing and other trends affecting the region, the implications of population ageing for ESCWA member countries, and the challenges faced by the elderly population of the region as identified by the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012. The brief emphasized the need to integrate ageing issues into development plans, in order to advance the cause of social justice in member countries.

2. *Social Policy Brief, Issue No.5, Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Youth Strategies*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.4)

53. This brief included an overview of national youth policies in the ESCWA region, and underscored the importance of the social participation of youth and women in order to achieve sustainable development. It also included an assessment of how gender issues could be integrated into strategies that target young people, in Bahrain and Palestine in particular, on the basis of the following actions: revising national youth policies in Bahrain for the period 2005-2009 and in Palestine for the period 2011-2013; assessing the integration of gender issues into the analyses, objectives and suggested areas of intervention identified by those policies; making recommendations that would assist Bahrain and Palestine in mainstreaming gender into national policies and related indicators; identifying good practices and lessons learned; and exchanging that information with Governments and other actors in the ESCWA region.

3. *International Migration and Development in the ESCWA Region:  
Challenges and Opportunities*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.5)

54. Migration and development are inextricably linked, and the relationship between them is multidimensional. This paper discussed migration policies and their impact on development on both the theoretical and practical levels, focusing on ESCWA member countries and highlighting good practices and major gaps. In order to shed light on the importance of the relationship between migration and development, the paper relied on six studies covering the following topics: international migration and development: introduction and overview; migration policies in ESCWA member countries; fundamental issues of international migration and development in the Arab Mashreq and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries – labour migration; migrant remittances and their impact on development in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic; transnational communities and development; and brain and talent drain from the Arab Mashreq.

4. *Population and Development Report, Issue No. 5, Youth Exclusion in the ESCWA Region:  
Demographic, Economic, Educational and Cultural Factors*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/2)

55. In recent decades, the youth of the Arab region have suffered among the highest levels of exclusion, and social and economic marginalization in the world. This report defined the concepts of exclusion and social marginalization of young people (age group 15-24), identified factors that contributed to those phenomena, and assessed their impact on Arab countries. It also analysed the implications of the demographic situation in the region on young people, explaining the scope of the youth bulge and its consequences, in particular the rapid growth of the labour force, and describing the relation between the demographic window and demographic gift phenomena. The report selected a number of quantitative indicators related to education, communication channels, and community and political participation, in order to analyse the role of educational and cultural institutions in the exclusion of young people. It also discussed the nature and characteristics of the economic exclusion of young people in the Arab region by analysing a set of quantitative indicators pertaining to the labour market. The publication finally made recommendations on organizational and institutional matters, with the goal of eliminating various aspects of youth exclusion in ESCWA member countries and promoting youth participation in shaping the future and achieving development.

5. *Survey and Assessment of Research Carried out  
by United Nations Organizations on Youth*

56. This paper reviewed the major conclusions of the survey of research conducted by a number of United Nations organizations on youth issues. Its objective was to contribute to building a long-term strategy to empower this social group. It referred to high-priority issues addressed by those organizations in research on youth, including employment, education and training, poverty and hunger, health, gender equality and participation. Topics that were devoted less attention included leisure time activities of youth, drug abuse, armed conflict and juvenile delinquency. The paper included recommendations that emphasized the need for coordination and quality improvement in research on youth.

6. *Demographic Profile of the Arab Countries: Analysis of the Ageing Phenomenon*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.9)

57. This report was informed by the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It analysed ageing in the context of the demographic changes taking place in the region, and examined their repercussions on the development process. The report presented the demographic profile of the 22 member countries of the League of Arab States. It discussed current trends of ageing and their variations in those countries between 1980 and 2025. It focused on the change in fertility and mortality rates and its impact on the ageing of the



population. In addition, it pointed to trends in the net rates of migration; the impact of migration outflows and inflows on the elderly; the impact of the shift in the population's age structure on economic growth using the potential support ratio; the implications of this shift in the light of the Madrid International Action Plan of Action on Ageing; and the concept of exclusion, especially with reference to gender.

*7. Population in the Arab Region: Trends and Implications*  
(E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.6)

58. This paper provided an overview of the levels and trends of key demographic indicators in the Arab region. It served as a regional reference for policymakers and researchers on the patterns of various socioeconomic and demographic indicators, and their impact on development. The paper also examined the issue of ageing, which had gained great importance in light of the tenth anniversary of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2012. It finally proposed general recommendations intended to advance equity and social inclusion for the elderly, improve their quality of life and create an inclusive society for people of all ages.

B. PROJECTS

*1. Strengthening Capacities of Policymakers in the ESCWA Region to Formulate National Youth Policies and Plans of Action: Responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth*

59. The objective of this project is to strengthen capacities to formulate national policies and action plans for youth, by identifying the priority issues and indicators needed to monitor progress made in youth empowerment in ESCWA member countries, in light of WPAY. The project also seeks to enhance the skills of officials involved in the design and implementation of youth policies and action plans, and to follow up on achievements related to WPAY. A regional survey was prepared on youth policies in the region, which also examined the political trend towards reform among Arab youth involved in the recent popular uprisings. A reference guide for policy design and implementation on the national level was also prepared. The project is scheduled to reach the implementation phase in five countries in 2013, namely Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen.

*2. Project for the Establishment of a Regional Information System on Migration and Development in the ESCWA Region*

60. Within the framework of the Development Account project on Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact, ESCWA, in partnership with the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University of Cairo, is developing a database that will contribute to the dissemination of demographic data and reference templates. It is also setting up new electronic templates on researchers and research institutions, aiming to create a unified database for migration issues and facilitate networking between researchers and experts. The project also seeks to enable Governments to identify services which could be provided in the area of migration, and use those services to reform migration policies and align them with international good practices.

C. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

*1. Expert Group Meeting on Developing National Youth policies in Western Asia*  
(Beirut, 29-30 March 2011)

61. This meeting was attended by government officials, heads of national youth councils in ESCWA member countries, researchers and experts from non-governmental organizations concerned with youth policies and issues, and experts from the United Nations. The objective of the meeting was to exchange

experiences in the implementation of WPAY and identify the technical and institutional obstacles to the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes. This meeting was an opportunity to identify lessons learned and good practices that could be replicated in other countries of the region. Participants issued practical recommendations, calling on countries to use WPAY as a guide in the design of national youth policies, and on ESCWA Secretariat to support that endeavour and implement the related regional project.

*2. Workshop on Strengthening Dialogue Between ESCWA and ESCAP Countries  
on International Migration and Development  
(Beirut, 28-30 June 2011)*

62. This workshop was held within the framework of the development account project on Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact. The workshop brought together decision-makers, experts and professionals concerned with migration and labour in three ESCWA member countries, namely Egypt, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, and in five member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), namely Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. In line with the objectives of the above-mentioned project, the workshop addressed migration and protection; migration and gender; and interregional cooperation. It served as an opportunity to raise awareness among participants on the situation of migration to and from countries of the ESCAP and ESCWA regions, discuss measures taken in the light of international good practices, and examine ways of enhancing cooperation in the different areas of migration, for the benefit of all concerned. The workshop also focused on national experiences, and on how to better identify issues related to migrant protection that are of concern to the countries of origin and destination. It discussed good practices in that area, and touched upon cooperation in migration management between countries.

*3. Second Regional Review Meeting  
of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing  
(Beirut, 6-7 December 2011)*

63. The objective of this meeting was to review major developments in issues related to elderly persons in the ESCWA region since 2002, through the discussion of national reports on the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the assessment of government commitment to that plan and the identification of obstacles to its implementation. The meeting concluded with recommendations to draft a roadmap to ensure full implementation. It also called on ESCWA to persevere in its efforts toward the adoption and monitoring of the Plan and the evaluation of its implementation on the regional level.

*4. Regional Workshop on Youth Issues and Priorities in the ESCWA Region  
(Beirut, 16-18 October 2012)*

64. Arab youth make up 20 per cent of the population of the Arab world and currently face unprecedented economic and social challenges, which affect both their ability to develop skills and their role in society. Given the importance of this topic, ESCWA convened a regional workshop on youth issues and priorities in the Arab region, within the framework of a project that seeks to develop the technical capacity of decision-makers to engage with WPAY. The discussion, which brought together representatives of eight countries, focused on the implications of recent events in the region for youth-related issues. It also reviewed the experiences of countries that had adopted WPAY, identifying shortcomings in the formulation and implementation of strategies for young people, as well as in the adoption of quantitative and qualitative indicators to ensure an effective review of progress made. The workshop also served as an opportunity to discuss the draft reference guide prepared by ESCWA, and its use for the design and development of participatory policies that address the needs and interests of Arab youth, primarily employment, participation and well-being, which are among the biggest challenges faced by the region.

-----