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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Statistical Committee
Twelfth session
Beirut, 4-5 April 2017

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Actions taken in the field of statistics since the previous session
of the Statistical Committee**

Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics

Note by the ESCWA secretariat

1. The ESCWA Secretariat transmits to the Statistical Committee the report of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics on its first meeting, which was held in Tunis, on 17 and 18 October 2016. The attached report presents the outcomes and recommendations of the meeting and a summary of the discussions. It also presents the draft terms of reference of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics and a list of proposed core and secondary indicators.
2. The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of the report and consider adopting the terms of reference and the proposed indicators.



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab countries on its first meeting Tunis, 17-18 October 2016

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics of Tunisia, held the first meeting of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries in Tunis on 17 and 18 October 2016.

The meeting considered a core set of demographic and social indicators and related sustainable development indicators, and reviewed opportunities and challenges for Arab countries in data collection. Participants also discussed the TAG draft terms of reference.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics of Tunisia, held the first meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries in Tunis on 17 and 18 October 2016. A total of 19 participants from 12 ESCWA member States attended the meeting, representing national statistical offices, the Statistics Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, and the Arab States Regional Office (ASRO) of the United Nations Population Fund.

I. OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Participants agreed on a set of outcomes and recommendations. Following discussion and review, they adopted the TAG draft terms of reference, proposed by ESCWA. They elected Tunisia as Chair of the meeting, and Oman and Palestine as Vice-Chairs. They also discussed and amended the list of proposed indicators for demographic and social data in Arab countries and related sustainable development indicators, and agreed on the core indicators that would be periodically provided to ESCWA. They issued recommendations on expected activities of national statistical offices, partner organizations and ESCWA.

Recommendation to national statistical offices

Provide data to ESCWA in line with agreed indicators.

Recommendation to international and regional organizations

Strengthen cooperation between United Nations organizations, regional organizations participating in TAG and ESCWA to support the work of TAG, and to build the statistical capacity of TAG and national statistical offices in the region.

Recommendations to ESCWA

- Involve other related international organizations in TAG work;
- Coordinate and act as secretariat for all related activities;
- Propose a strategy and workplan to bridge gaps and provide the required indicators, in cooperation with TAG leadership;
- Prepare a guide on metadata indicators, comprising concepts, definitions and calculation mechanisms; harmonize the indicator list with sustainable development indicators; and coordinate with statistical offices.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

3. The first session included two presentations: one on the workplan of the ESCWA Demographic and Social Statistics Section; and one on the availability of demographic and social data in the region.

4. Mr. Marwan Khawaja, Chief of the ESCWA Demographic and Social Statistics Section; and Mr. Romesh Silva and Mr. Ismail Lubbad, statistics experts from the Section, reviewed the Section's workplan. They said that the Section's main function was to assist member States in producing and publishing demographic and social data, in accordance with international standards. They also reviewed the Section's activities for the biennium 2016-2017, including publications; meetings, workshops and training sessions; national capacity-building activities; projects on poverty, civil registration, vital statistics and population censuses; and statistical projects to be undertaken by the Demographic and Social Statistics Section in the coming years.

5. Mr. Silva gave an overview of the gaps in demographic and social data in the region, and indicated how to classify them by year, country and topic. He also tackled the issue of data inconsistencies and of anomalies between sources. He stressed the importance of statistical offices in providing quality data, in accordance with international standards.

6. The session concluded with a discussion on the following:

- The importance of following up on sustainable development indicators;
- The role of ESCWA in sustainable development indicators, which currently entails providing indicators for the Arab region;
- The need to cooperate and coordinate with specialized agencies;
- How to develop the necessary indicators on migration statistics in the Arab region;
- The responsibility of the statistics system to provide sustainable development indicators;
- The challenge faced by ESCWA in providing data from its new member States;
- Multiple reasons for data unavailability, including methodology, funding, time constraints and numerous requests from many regional and international organizations;
- The difference between annual indicators and those that require multiple years;
- The need to clarify definitions and calculation methods used in questionnaires;
- Commitment by the ESCWA Statistics Division to use national data produced by statistical offices, in accordance with the recommendations of the ESCWA Statistical Committee.

7. At the second session, participants adopted the TAG draft terms of reference (annex III to the present report), following discussions and review by a team comprising representatives of ESCWA, the GCC Statistics Centre and Tunisia. Tunisia was elected as Chair of the meeting, and Oman and Palestine were elected as Vice-Chairs.

8. The ensuing discussion stressed that one of the goals of TAG should be to standardize agreed indicator definitions and measurements. Participants also emphasized the need to prepare a guide or booklet on the proposed indicators and their metadata, including data sources.

9. The third, fourth and fifth sessions focused on the proposed demographic and social indicators. Participants were divided into two groups in each session, and provided technical comments on the indicators and placed them into the following two categories: a core set that countries must commit to providing to the fullest extent possible; and a secondary set, not fully available in all countries. In conclusion, a representative of each session gave an overview of the work and opened the floor for discussions. The three sessions were conducted as follows.

- Session three: Mr. Isam Taha, Regional Programme Specialist at ASRO, chaired the session. Participants were divided into two groups: one on demographic statistics, and another on labour statistics;
- Session four: the session was chaired by Ms. Hessa Al Janahi, Acting Director of the Studies and Development Indicators Department at the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat). Participants divided health indicators into two categories because of their large number and diversity (e.g. reproductive health indicators, health expenditure, diseases and deaths);

- Session five: the session was chaired by Mr. Charles Obiero, Education Economist/Statistician and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at the UNESCO Regional Bureau. Participants were divided into two groups: one on education and culture indicators, and another on household budgets (income and expenditure) and housing.

10. Following the presentation by the groups, participants discussed and adopted the lists of demographic and social indicators (annexes IV and V to the present report).

11. The last session was chaired by Mr. Lotfi Hrizi of the National Institute of Statistics of Tunisia. Mr. Ismail Lubbad gave a presentation on the final list of proposed indicators, and on the strategic approach and vision of TAG. Participants discussed the list of indicators, focusing on the need to develop a standardized questionnaire for the strategy, to coordinate with specialized bodies at the regional level, to provide definitions for agreed indicators, to identify a working mechanism for member States and key activities for implementation, and to provide the necessary funding. Participants agreed on the importance of continuing TAG work and requested ESCWA, in collaboration with TAG leadership, to prepare a strategy and workplan to bridge gaps and provide related indicators for submission to team members, and to present the outcomes of the first TAG meeting to the next session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee.

12. Annex II to the present report sets out the list of documents distributed to participants at the meeting.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE OF THE MEETING

13. The first TAG meeting was attended by 19 participants from 12 ESCWA member States, representing statistical offices, with practical and operational expertise in demographic and social statistics. Participants also included a representative of the GCC Statistics Centre, a statistics expert from the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, and two experts from ASRO.

B. OPENING

14. Mr. Hedi Saidi, General Director of the National Institute of Statistics, opened the meeting. He welcomed the participants stressing the key role of Arab countries in providing quality statistical data to formulate policies and strategies, so as to strengthen development and monitor development goals. He noted the role of statistics in evaluating policies and achievements, emphasizing the need to identify methods to improve data collection, and the importance of adopting a new approach to statistical work. He also underscored the importance of cooperation and coordination in statistical work.

15. Mr. Marwan Khawaja, Chief of the ESCWA Demographic and Social Statistics Section, commended efforts in the field of statistics. He said that one of the incentives to hold the current meeting was the challenges faced by ESCWA in providing data for indicators, especially time series data, highlighting disparities between countries in data provision. He gave an overview of the activities undertaken by the ESCWA Statistics Division, and expressed his hope for a successful meeting.

C. AGENDA

16. Participants adopted the following agenda:

Opening of the meeting **Objectives and activities of the meeting**

- Overview: workplan of the ESCWA Demographic and Social Statistics Section;
- Availability of demographic and social statistics in Arab countries.

Terms of reference of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries

- Discussion on the TAG draft terms of reference;
- Election of TAG members.

List of proposed demographic and social indicators:

- Demographic statistics;
- Labour statistics;
- Health indicators (a);
- Health indicators (b);
- Education indicators;
- Household budget and housing indicators;
- Outcomes of working group discussions on the proposed indicators.

Final list of proposed indicators

Conclusion and the way forward

Annex 1*

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Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS (no symbols)

- Explanatory note
- Provisional agenda
- An overview of data availability on demographic and social statistical indicators in ESCWA member States
- Terms of reference of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries
- Report of the eleventh session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee
- Summary of Development Account projects: population and housing census, civil registration and vital statistics and poverty
- Presentation of ESCWA demographic and social statistics section workplan
- List of demographic and social indicators

List of participants

Annex III

TERMS OF REFERENCE

of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries October 2016

1. Background

Despite various efforts over the past decades to enhance the production and dissemination of demographic and social statistics, serious data gaps in the statistical series remain. Consequently, at its eleventh session held in Amman on 4 and 5 February 2015, the ESCWA Statistical Committee recommended establishing a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Demographic and Social Statistics for Arab Countries, and presenting its draft terms of reference to TAG members for consideration and adoption.

2. Purpose

TAG aims to provide recommendations on ESCWA strategies and work programmes in the field of demographic and social statistics, so as to develop them in Arab countries.

3. Role and responsibilities

To achieve its objective, TAG shall undertake the following functions:

(a) Approve the list of core demographic and social statistics for Arab countries and provide it by 2020, taking into account disparities in countries' national statistical capacity and priorities;

(b) Monitor gaps between countries in producing data and provide recommendations to bridge them;

(c) Offer guidance on formulating a regional programme for national capacity-building on demographic and social statistics, including a work programme and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism;

(d) Provide recommendations to ESCWA on formulating and implementing its work programme in the field of demographic and social statistics;

(e) Promote and ensure the implementation of international standards and methodologies in the compilation and dissemination of demographic and social statistics;

(f) Strengthen the exchange of information, expertise and best national, regional and international practices on issues related to demographic and social statistics.

4. Membership

Representatives of national statistical offices shall constitute the core membership of TAG. Balanced membership must be ensured in terms of expertise and administrative and technical level. It is preferable for representative to be managers in the field of demographic and social statistics (or their deputies) to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of TAG work. Appointments to vacant positions in TAG shall be decided by TAG decision-makers.

TAG may invite to its meetings national participants and experts from international organizations, such GCC-Stat, the International Labour Organization, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund, academia and related organizations.

5. Responsibilities and meeting chairs

TAG shall either hold annual meetings, or convene using communications technology (telephone, Skype or video conferencing).

TAG shall elect its Chair at its first meeting, pending the dissemination of election details and schedule by ESCWA.

TAG shall elect a Chair and two Vice-Chairs on a revolving biennial basis.

Responsibilities of the Chair

1. Prepare the provisional agenda for TAG meetings, in consultation with ESCWA and TAG members.
2. Moderate TAG meetings and summarize discussions.
3. Submit a report to the Statistical Committee on meeting outcomes and other work-related matters.

The Vice-Chairs and members shall facilitate the Chair's work and support TAG.

ESCWA shall act as TAG secretariat.

Responsibilities of the secretariat

1. Support the preparation of the provisional agenda for TAG meetings and required reports, and follow up on all logistical issues.
2. Prepare the TAG budget and annual work programme.
3. Offer guidance on a resource mobilization strategy for related programmes, in accordance with the needs and priorities set out in the workplan.
4. Exchange information on best practices, and take into account developments so as to improve and implement the work programme and its various elements.
5. Review performance according to desired outcomes.
6. Conduct periodic reviews of programmes following a request from the Statistical Committee.

6. Timeframe

At its sessions, the Statistical Committee shall review the activities and guidelines of TAG and shall decide on the possible continuation of its work.

Annex IV

LIST OF CORE INDICATORS

1. Demographic indicators		
Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Total population	Age group, Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	Disaggregated according to the availability of variables in each country
2. Annual population growth rate		
3. Sex ratio (males per 100 females)		
4. Percentage of population living in urban areas		
5. Number of individuals per household (1-7+)		
6. Average number of individuals per household		
7. Number of individuals per room (occupancy rate)		
8. Households headed by women (%)		
9. Household distribution (census or survey): (a) Loner (one person) (b) Nuclear family (father, mother and their children) (c) Extended family (nuclear family + married children) (d) Modified extended family		
10. Number of children per household type		
11. Elderly population (60+) per household type		
12. Number of registered marriages	Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural), Sex	
13. Number of registered divorces		
14. Average age at first marriage		
15. Marital status of individuals aged 15 and above		
16. Percentage of early marriages (before 18 years old)	Sex, Age group	
17. Number of registered births	Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
18. Crude birth rate	Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
19. Adolescent fertility rate		
20. Total fertility rate		
21. Number of registered deaths	Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
22. Infant mortality rate		
23. Under-5 mortality rate		
24. Mortality rate for children between the ages of 1 and 4		
25. Life expectancy at birth	Sex	
26. Registered causes of death		

2. Labour indicators

Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Labour-force participation rate	Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
2. Percentage of young people (aged 15-24) outside education, training and work	Sex, Age	
3. Persons outside the labor force (%)	Age group, Sex, Residence (urban/rural)	
4. Employment status of individuals aged 15 and above (%)	Age group, Sex, Nationality (national/non-national)	
5. Employment by economic activity (%)		
6. Employment by occupation (%)		
7. Employment by sector (public, private, other) (%)		
8. Employment to population ratio		
9. Unemployment rate (%)	Age group, Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
10. Average weekly working hours	Sector, Sex	Proposed

3. Health indicators

Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Maternal mortality ratio, per 100,000 livebirths	Residence (urban/rural) Nationality (national/non-national) Total	
2. Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)		
3. Antenatal healthcare (at least four visits)		
4. Usage rates of contraceptive methods (traditional and modern)		
5. Vaccines (DPT, measles, polio, tuberculosis) (%) (children over 2 years)	Sex	
6. Stunted children under 5 years (%)		
7. Wasted children under 5 years (%)		
8. Underweight children under 5 years (%)		
9. Prevalence of tuberculosis	Number and Percentage	
10. Prevalence of malaria		
11. Prevalence of contagious diseases, e.g. hepatitis.		
Prevalence of (selected) non-contagious chronic diseases		
12. Blood pressure		
13. Heart disease		

3. Health indicators

Indicators	Variables	Notes
14. Diabetes	Number and Percentage	
15. Cancer		
16. Respiratory diseases, e.g. asthma		
17. Disability prevalence (physical and/or mental)	Sex	
18. Disability distribution by type (visual, mental, hearing, mobility, self-care, social interaction)		
19. Health resources; doctors and nurses per 100,000 people		
20. Number and percentage of hospitals, hospital beds and pharmacies per 100,000 people		
21. Smoking rates (any type: cigarettes, cigar, Hubble bubble, ...)	Sex, Age	
22. Obesity rates for individuals over 18 (BMI>30)		
23. Deaths from road accidents (number and percentage)	Sex, Age	
24. War injuries (number and percentage)		
25. Deaths from conflict per 100,000 people	Sex, Age	
26. Percentage of population with health coverage (insurance) according to coverage type	Sex, Age	
27. General government expenditure on health as a percentage of total government expenditure.		
28. Per capita government expenditure on health		
29. Total health expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)		
30. Net expenditure as a percentage of health expenditure where health insurance is provided		Calculation and identification mechanisms differ between countries (determine which system of national accounts is used: 1993 or 2008)

4. Housing indicators

Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Type of housing	Residence (urban/rural)	Definitions and classifications available in Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses – Revision 3
2. Housing ownership (%)		
3. Source of water supply (%)		
4. Toilet type (%)		
5. Connectivity to sewage disposal systems (%)		
6. Electricity source (national grid, private grid, oil lamps, generators, other) (%)		
7. Source of drinking water (%)		
8. Bathing facilities (%)		
9. Kitchen availability (%)		
10. Number of rooms		

5. Education indicators

Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Net enrolment ratio in primary/basic education (%)	Residence (urban/rural), Sex, Nationality (national/non-national)	
2. Net enrolment ratio in secondary education (%)		
3. Gross enrolment ratio in primary/basic education (%)		
4. Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education by (%)		
5. Number and total enrolment ratio in higher education by sex (%)	Sex	
6. Student to teacher ratio in basic/primary education	Sector (public/private), Sex	
7. Student to teacher ratio in secondary education		
8. Student to teacher ratio in higher education		
9. Distribution of education institutions by sector for primary education (numbers)	Sector (public/private)	
10. Distribution of education institutions by sector for secondary education (numbers)		
11. Distribution of education institutions by sector for higher education (numbers)		
12. Literacy rates for those aged 15 and above by nationality and sex (%)	Nationality (national/non-national) Sex	
13. Youth Literacy rates (aged 15-24) (%)		
14. Education attainment – highest degree (%)		
15. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government spending		
16. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure)		
17. Education attainment by total school years	Nationality (national/non-national) Sex	

6. Culture indicators

Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Number of visitors to museums and historical sites	Sex	Culture indicators by sex, where possible
2. Number of public libraries		
3. Number of visitors to public library	Sex	
4. Number of daily newspapers and readership		
5. Number of books in public library		
6. Number of borrowed books from public libraries	Sex	
7. Number of borrowers from public libraries		
8. Internet users per 100 people by sex (%)		
9. Number of subscriptions in Internet mobile broadband per 100 people (%)		

7. Indicators on poverty and living standards

Indicators	Variables	Notes
1. Percentage of population living below the national poverty line (official)	Residence (urban/rural), Sex, Head of household	
2. Gini index		
3. Poverty gap/poverty level/poverty gap at national poverty line	Each country must determine its national poverty line	
4. Expenditure share of poorest 20 per cent of the population		
5. Expenditure share of richest 20 per cent of the population		
6. Expenditure share of poorest 10 per cent of the population		
7. Expenditure share of richest 10 per cent of the population		
8. Expenditure share of poorest 40 per cent of the population		
9. Expenditure share of richest 40 per cent of the population		
10. Share of total consumption expenditure (%) for poorest and richest 20 per cent of the population: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and beverages • Clothes and shoes • Housing, water, electricity and gas • Health • Education 		20 per cent or 40 per cent
11. Share of total consumption expenditure (%) for poorest and richest 10 per cent of the population : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and beverages • Clothes and shoes • Housing, water, electricity and gas • Health • Education 		
12. Share of total consumption expenditure (%) as a percentage of total household expenditure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and beverages • Clothes and shoes • Housing, water, electricity and gas • Health • Education 		

Annex V

LIST OF SECONDARY INDICATORS

Secondary indicator	Background variations	Notes
1. Demographic indicators		
1. Household distribution (census or survey) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Living alone (b) One family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Married couple with children 2. Married couple without children 3. A parent with one or more children (c) Extended family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Married couple (with no children) and others 2. Married couple with children and others 3. A parent with children and others 4. Non-related adults 		Indicator inclusion depending on reply and availability)
2. Consanguineous marriage rate	Age, Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
3. Polygamy marriage rate	Age, Sex, Nationality (national/non-national), Residence (urban/rural)	
4. Number of permanent migrants in a country	Country of origin	
5. Percentage of migrants in a population		
6. Number of refugees in a country		
2. Labour indicators		
1. Percentage of children aged 5-17 engaged in child labor	Sex and Age	
2. Informal employment		
3. Period of unemployment		
3. Housing indicators		
1. Means of solid waste disposal (%)		Housing indicators by residence (urban/rural) where possible
2. Type of construction material used for external/outer walls (%)		
3. Type of roofing construction material (%)		Proposed

Secondary indicator	Background variations	Notes
4. Type of flooring construction material (%)		Proposed
5. Service quality: electricity/water	Hours of availability	
4. Health indicators		
1. Post-natal health care – at least one visit	Residence (urban/rural), Nationality (national/non-national), Total	
2. Eye diseases	Number and Percentage	
3. Incidence of AIDS per 1,000 people		
4. Road injuries (number and percentage)	Sex, Age group	
5. Education indicators		
1. Number and net enrolment ratio in higher education by sex (%)	Sex	
2. Expected school years by sex	Sex	
6. Culture indicators		
1. Average cinema visits per person for those aged 5-79 years		
2. Average number of theatre visits		
7. Indicators on poverty and living standards		
Multidimensional Poverty Index		