

EVALUATION BRIEF “INSTITUTIONAL AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PARLIAMENTS IN SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO IMPLEMENT SCR 1325 (2000) ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY”



Background & Context: The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security provides an international legal and political framework on women’s role in conflict, conflict resolution, peace building and sustainable peace. Despite the growing need for legal frameworks on this topic in Arab countries, due to the protracted conflict and instability in the region, these frameworks have not been institutionalized at the national level, with parliaments and agencies working on such issues often lacking relevant knowledge and capacity.

Building upon its previous work on violence against women and gender-based violence, ESCWA developed the United Nations Development Account project “Institutional and Capacity Building for Parliaments in Selected Arab Countries and Other Stakeholders to Implement SCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security” with a budget of USD\$510,000, implemented December 2013 to 2016. The project sought to provide capacity building support to nine member State parliaments and National Women Machineries in these countries to support implementation of SCR 1325 and encourage knowledge sharing among these institutions. The project targeted parliamentarians and members of National Women Machineries at a time of major political instability in Arab countries.

Purpose of the evaluation: The end of project evaluation assessed the achievements of the project, and determined key challenges, best practices and lessons learned. The

evaluation exercise was forward looking and based on four OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability), with a view to contribute to ESCWA's future project implementation and strategic decision-making processes. The evaluation undertook a desk review of 17 documents, including concept note and project document, progress reports, partnerships agreements, the evaluation results of missions and workshops, and the knowledge products produced by this project. This desk review was paired with 22 semi-structured individual and collective interviews with participating parliamentarians and members of National Women Machineries, partner organizations and experts, as well as the observation of two project activities.

Key Results: The evaluation determined that the project produced a regional study to identify gaps in national legislation regarding SCR 1325 and developed a user-friendly training manual. Additionally, ESCWA organized five training workshops covering the main tenets of SCR 1325 for lawmakers from nine member States, and one consultative workshop for National Women Machineries to develop national action plans, which applied the project's training manual. Finally, in conjunction with the project, ESCWA provided targeted support to Palestine to develop a national action plan on SCR 1325.

"This is the first time, through the project trainings, I hear of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Awareness is crucial to any further work" (male parliamentarian, member of Legal Committee)

The evaluation found that the project over-performed in terms of planned activities and outputs, with the exception of providing an online forum for parliamentarians and parliament administrators, which was hindered by administrative challenges. More specifically, the project increased knowledge and capacity of parliaments in targeted countries through knowledge products including a regional study and a training manual, both in Arabic. While the regional study identified legislative, budgetary and policy gaps in targeted countries, the training manual utilized these findings and presented how parliaments and lawmakers can play a role in implementing this Security Council Resolution, through national action plans. ESCWA utilized the six workshops both to train lawmakers and members of National Women Machineries and to encourage project participants to exchange their experiences and challenges on peace, security and gender justice in their countries.

"I liked the training techniques that are simplified and rely on exercises and exchange, which is excellent and maintains a good dynamic. Though the information presented can be found online, the training gives it to us more practically and more comprehensively" (female National Women Machineries member)

The evaluation demonstrated that project participants found the project relevant and effective. Many participants also said they plan to apply the new knowledge in trainings in their own national contexts, and will continue to use the manual as a guide in their work – testifying to the sustainability of the project outputs.

Key Accomplishments: In addition to increasing knowledge and skills, the evaluation concluded that ESCWA's efforts resulted in two member States taking tangible steps to change policy during the project's implementation. First, Sudan initiated a process to develop a national action plan on the implementation of SCR 1325, which project participants contributed to the trainings and knowledge they acquired through this project. Second, ESCWA supported Palestine in the development of a national action plan on the implementation of SCR 1325.

"This is a foundational start in a collective concept learning stage; To implement the resolution I have to think nationally with relevant stakeholders in the country"(male lawmaker)

Taking note of the interest in and relevance of this topic to the region, ESCWA's Centre for Women plans to build upon the achievements of this project in its upcoming work. Finally, a dedicated platform (<https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/women-peace-and-security>) showcasing relevant knowledge products will serve as a knowledge hub on the implementation of SCR 1325 in the Arab region.

Recommendations: The evaluation made four key recommendations that will inform future decision-making and programming processes. First, ESCWA is encouraged to continue its work on peace, security and women, with longer term and tailored programming targeting parliaments, political parties and civil society. Second, a more flexible approach to project goals is proposed, and project teams are urged to monitor, revise and update their targets and activities in line with realities on the ground. Third, projects are encouraged to be more clearly linked to existing programmes of work, and to ensure more staff are dedicated to projects, to ensure staff turnover does not affect project implementation. Finally, future capacity building projects are urged to consider tailoring trainings and materials according to the varying needs and capacities of targeted countries, with a greater utilization of a "training of trainers" methodology to enhance sustainability.