



**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON POVERTY MEASUREMENT
IN ARAB COUNTRIES**

Tunis, Tunisia

23-25 July 2019

INFORMATION NOTE

Introduction and Background Information:

The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 brought increased attention to the international community on the need to strengthen the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the sustainable development goals, targets and indicators. Given this call for increased attention, the United Nations initiated the project entitled “DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT (DA) PROGRAMME ON STATISTICS AND DATA” and maximized its resources by working jointly with ten UN implementing entities including the five Regional Commissions.

Within the framework of the DA project, specifically the pillar on “Social and Demographic Statistics,” and as part of the programme to strengthen the capacity of target countries to improve data disaggregation and the quality of household surveys, the project’s component on “Poverty and Inequality Statistics”, including multi-dimensional poverty, addresses the lack of data coming from household surveys that are used for monitoring targets under Goal 1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere” and Goal 10 “Reduce inequality within and among countries”. Data from household surveys on living standards are either insufficient, not in line with international standards, or do not allow the necessary level of disaggregation, limiting their use for reporting on SDG indicators.

There is, therefore, a need for harmonizing such surveys, and revising them to provide consistent indicators on standard of living as measured by income and/or consumption as well as non-material dimensions, including health, education, housing, and social protection that could help constructing poverty indices in all its dimensions and consequently help monitoring progress toward achieving the SDGs and related targets.

For the purposes of this component, ESCWA has commissioned several studies to assess the availability of information and data gaps in existing household surveys in the Arab region and make recommendations for their improvements, specifically:

1. “Study on Feasibility of using high frequency surveys to report on SDG indicators, as an alternative for more comprehensive but less frequent surveys”. It is intended to inform Arab countries on the possibilities for implementing lighter surveys (instead of full-fledged, expensive household budget surveys) to maximize the quantity and frequency for data collection with limited resources. This study will provide useful inputs to reduce data gaps on household budget through high frequency surveys;
2. “Study on the Limits of Data Disaggregation in Household Surveys for Population Subgroups and Geographical Areas and the Requirements to Overcome them”. It will provide a review of small area estimation and an illustrative example of data disaggregation using recent raw data from Palestine’s census and expenditure survey;
3. “Study on Recommendations for the Measurement of Perceived Discrimination and Subjective Welfare”. This study describes the current situation in the measurement of perceived discrimination and other subjective welfare indicators (such as happiness and life satisfaction) and make recommendations for the ESCWA countries on how to advance in their measurement using household surveys;

4. “A critical review of Multi-dimensional poverty indexes (MPI) in the Arab region, with a focus on measurement issues”. This study aims to present a comparative analytical review of the experiences of Arab countries in measuring multidimensional poverty, while noting the comparison with selected international experiences to avoid replication with more detailed studies in this field;
5. “Availability of information on the different dimensions of poverty and access to basic services and proposals for their inclusion in current household surveys”.

AITRS aims to contribute to the implementation of comprehensive socioeconomic development in the region by promoting opportunities for the formulation of better development policies through building the capacities of the statistical systems in the Arab Countries to carry out their development duties at the national and regional level. In this framework, AITRS is trying to assess the needs of Arab countries for capacity building in the field of poverty measurement, and thus contribute to addressing the various gaps that exist within NSOs.

In this context, ESCWA and AITRS, in collaboration with the Tunisian National Institute of Statistics (L'Institut National de la Statistique: INS), are organizing the “Regional Workshop on Poverty Measurement in Arab countries” to be held in Tunisia during the period 23 to 25 July 2019.

A. Objectives

The regional workshop will aim to achieve the following goals:

1. To present the studies commissioned by ESCWA and receive feedback from participants;
2. To identify and discuss best practices and lessons learned at regional level and benefit from countries’ experiences in measuring poverty and inequality;
3. To identify the training needs of countries in the field of poverty and inequality measurement.

Expected outcomes:

- Informed countries about the studies conducted, resulting recommendations and national experiences that would contribute knowledge on improving their household surveys;
- Availability of the necessary inputs for improving the measurement of some household-based indicators for Goals 1 and 10;
- The training needs of countries in the field of poverty and inequality measurement.

B. Participants

The target group for the workshop is staff members from National Statistical Offices in Arab countries. The workshop will also be attended by representatives from UN-ESCWA, AITRS,

UN-Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), OPHI as well as experts from academic institutions and other international and regional offices.

C. Main topics of the workshop

The workshop consists of the following substantive sessions:

- (i) Indirect methods for poverty data disaggregation in the countries of Arab Region;
- (ii) Using the a reduced set of expenditure items to measure and track poverty over time;
- (iii) Multi-dimensional poverty indexes (MPI) in the Arab region, with a focus on measurement issues;
- (iv) Recommendations on how to advance in measuring inequality, perceived discrimination and other subjective welfare indicators, using household surveys;
- (v) Availability, comparability, adequacy and suitability of non-monetary indicators on basic services, from official statistics in the region for monitoring at the international level.

D. Documents

The above-mentioned studies, experts' reports and countries' presentations.

E. Language

The workshop will be conducted using both English and Arabic languages. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided during the meeting.

F. Venue and time of the workshop

The meeting will be held during the period 23 to 25 July 2019 in Tunis, Tunisia. The venue will be determined later.

G. Administrative arrangements

Participants are kindly requested to make their own arrangements to get the visa from the Tunisian embassy in their home country (if needed). Upon their arrival to Tunis airport, they will need to hire a taxi to reach the hotel.

ESCWA and AITRS will make the necessary administrative and logistical arrangements. For more information regarding the logistical arrangements, kindly contact Mrs. Nada Moudallal (ESCWA) at the following e-mail nmoudallal@hotmail.com or Ms. Mayada Laith (AITRS) at the following e-mail mayada@aitrs.org.

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