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PROJECTS IN PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS

Summary

The present report summarizes the progress of ongoing activities and projects that the Statistics Division has implemented beyond its regular work programme. This document was prepared to enable members of the Statistical Committee to identify gaps, shortcomings and areas for future improvement. The document covers the implementation of eight projects over the past two years and their output irrespective of administrative aspects.

Members of the Committee may wish to express their views on the progress achieved and formulate lessons learned to guide the future work of the Committee and that of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

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Introduction

1. The role of subprogramme 5, Statistics for evidence-based policymaking, is to provide a platform for the development of official statistics in Western Asia. Within the framework of the regular work programme, the subprogramme supports the implementation of several projects which are funded by resources outside the regular budget and whose output directly feeds into the overall objective of the subprogramme.

2. The present report summarizes the activities and outputs of eight different ongoing projects which are being implemented under subprogramme 5. The main goal of that presentation is to update members of the Statistical Committee on the progress made and activities implemented, and to enable them to identify gaps, shortcomings and areas for future improvement. The document summarizes the progress and results of the past two years irrespective of administrative aspects.

I. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAM 2011 ROUND

Duration: 2010-2014¹
Donor: The World Bank
Partners: The World Bank, National statistical offices
Budget: US\$1,350,000

A. OVERVIEW

3. Rapid globalization has made the need for relevant and reliable statistics more urgent, and has further highlighted longstanding data comparability issues. When seen from regional or global perspectives, country data can offer valuable insight into price relativity, economic structure and the real volume of output. In order to compare data across countries, there is a need to account for price level differences and equivalence in the purchasing power of countries.

4. A global statistical initiative, the International Comparison Program (ICP) aims to estimate purchasing power parities (PPPs) that are used to convert gross domestic product (GDP) and its components from national currency denominations into a common international unit. It helps international organizations, which must estimate relative levels of economic output in order to provide policy advice for economic growth and poverty alleviation, to channel aid to the countries in greatest need. Multilateral corporations also require such data in order to determine the relative size of markets and comparability of business costs in different countries.

5. Following the success of the 2005 ICP round, all of the countries of Western Asia were interested in participating in the 2011 ICP round.² However, due to insurmountable obstacles, two countries, Lebanon and Syria, were compelled to withdraw from participation.

B. OBJECTIVES

6. The overall strategy of ICP is to enhance development through establishing international comparability which will lead to a measurement of the real size of the world economy. Measurements of the economies of the world in PPPs are used in currency conversions instead of market exchange rates, which do not reflect the real price level. Using PPPs controls for price level differences and other distortions in order to compare the output of economies and the welfare of their inhabitants in real terms. The aims of ICP are to

¹ More information available from <http://www.escwa.un.org/icp2011/>.

² The 2011 ICP round predates the membership of Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Thus, the 12 participating countries were Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

do the following: measure GDP, income and expenditure of participating countries in PPP real terms; calculate volume and price indices; estimate sizes of output, productivity and investment in real terms; and derive indicators that serve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as reducing poverty.

7. Those objectives will significantly impact member countries in the following ways: upgrading statistical systems; improving techniques in quantitative research; implementing sound planning and programming policies to promote advanced knowledge in all countries; and supporting efforts to achieve sustainable development and create MDG-oriented policies for poverty reduction.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Expected accomplishments	Main activities
<p>1: Developing a regional and a global product list for GDP, and conducting national household consumption price surveys and several special surveys.</p>	<p>1.1: Defining a comprehensive regional product list for GDP goods and services to be used during price data collection in the region;</p> <p>1.2: Building the capacity of national statistical offices in the field of price statistics and the estimation of national accounts expenditures;</p> <p>1.3: Implementing several national price surveys and enhancing data manipulation and the processing capability of national statistical offices by introducing specific software;</p> <p>1.4: Conducting verification rounds within and between countries to produce reliable data sets suitable for the calculation of accurate PPPs.</p>
<p>2: Establishing national and regional governing bodies and enhancing the statistical and technical capacity of national statistical offices.</p>	<p>2.1: Organizing regional workshops and training sessions for member countries to present methodologies and guidance, validate price data, discuss implementation challenges and difficulties and share knowledge and experience;</p> <p>2.2: Organizing training missions to participating countries to introduce ICP surveys and to provide guidance on several price surveys and activities of ICP, including the use of ICP software;</p> <p>2.3: Launching a newsletter and activating social networking to update stakeholders on progress, reach out to the public and raise awareness on the benefit of the end result of ICP, and share problems and solutions;</p> <p>2.4: Developing and regularly updating the ICP website.</p>
<p>3: Computing national and regional PPPs for all GDP and its components and other economic aggregates, and producing the final ICP output.</p>	<p>3.1: Maintaining continuous communication between the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and national statistical offices;</p> <p>3.2: Assuring consistency, reliability and validity of data collected in each country;</p> <p>3.3: Producing an official ICP publication of the major findings in the region including all the results of the estimated PPPs and the real size of national economies, real GDP aggregates, price level indices and real per capita volumes.</p>

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Implementation of price surveys

8. Eight countries carried out data collection during the first quarter of 2011. This number increased to 10 countries in the second quarter, and 11 countries during the third and the fourth quarters. The twelfth country, Bahrain, is conducting the entire price survey during the four quarters of 2012. Countries which could not collect price data for all quarters of 2011 will collect the missing price data during the matching quarters of 2012. In its role as the regional coordinating agency, ESCWA recovered household consumption price data for Egypt and the Sudan for all four quarters through missions to Egypt.

9. Currently, all 12 participating countries have implemented each of the special surveys. The status of the submission of corresponding price data is summarized in the following table:

Special survey areas	Data submission to the regional coordinator (Number of countries)
Housing rental	11
Housing quantity	7
Water	1
Private education	10
Compensation of Government employees	7
Machinery and equipment	11
Construction	9

10. As for the national accounts questionnaires, all the required files were partially completed, reviewed and submitted on time.

11. All the data received by the regional coordinator goes through several rounds of validation carried out by both the regional coordinator and national statistical offices to correct and reduce price discrepancies and ensure that only sound and clean data are submitted to the global office. The quality of the submitted data improved significantly over the quarters. That improvement came as a result of both collection methodology development and validation process enhancement. During training sessions, visits and workshops, participating countries shared and discussed the challenges they encountered during price collection in the first quarter. Participating countries were able to apply those experiences and lessons learned during the following collection rounds which resulted in considerably better price data with fewer discrepancies and lower outlier indicators.

12. In its role as the regional coordinating agency, ESCWA ensured that all the data were submitted to the World Bank on time. The efforts of the regional coordinator and national statistical offices resulted in Western Asia being the first region to submit the preliminary data, required by the end of June 2012.

Regional activities

13. The regional office organized and participated in many events and activities in the region and at the global level to ensure a proper implementation of the project in the ESCWA region.

(a) High-level meetings: A high-level meeting was held in Beirut to launch the 2011 round in July 2010 and an Executive Board Meeting was held in New York on 27 February 2012 to discuss ICP progress in the region, the budget status and future directions;

(b) **Intraregional activities:** Five regional workshops (July 2010, October 2010, January 2011, October 2011 and March 2012) were organized by the regional coordinating office for training, guidance, data validation and follow up with the participating countries on the progress of the 2011 ICP round;

(c) **Recovery missions:** A technical recovery mission was conducted to Egypt in February 2012 to help Egypt and the Sudan to extract and recover household consumption price data. Data transfer was hindered by the incompatible formats of ICP software kits, which resulted from the dual participation of Egypt and the Sudan in the African and Western Asia programmes;

(d) **Technical assistance:** Four missions were conducted by the regional team (April 2011, March 2012, and two missions in May 2012) to Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain to provide them with support and guidance on the implementation of ICP surveys and the use of the ICP software kit;

(e) **Special training:** A special national accounts training was organized in July 2012 focusing on the quality of national accounts data and aiming to enhance it, especially the compilation of expenditure data and metadata in the Mores questionnaire;

(f) **Interregional activities:** The regional office shared its experience in implementing ICP with other regions, including Asia and the Pacific at an ICP conference held by the Asian Development Bank in Manila in March 2011, and with the African region in its fourth ICP regional workshop held by the African Development Bank in Tunisia in June 2012;

(g) **International activities:** The regional office participated in six meetings of the regional coordinators and technical advisory group, which offered the opportunity to discuss methodologies, agree on implementation and validation criteria, share updates on global and regional status, share experiences including challenges and difficulties of implementing the surveys and solutions, validate results and agree on the workplan and global timetable.

Support and assistance

14. The regional office supported the implementation of the project in Western Asia in every possible way, mainly providing technical support to participating countries coupled with grants allotted to some national statistical offices to support the implementation of the project in their country.

(a) **Financial support to four countries:** humble financial grants of US\$20,000 each were appointed to Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Yemen to support the implementation of ICP national surveys;

(b) **ICP software kit and guidance:** A special ICP software kit including several modules for the different surveys was circulated among the countries for data entry and validation purposes, in addition to computation and archiving of results. The regional office organized several training sessions to introduce the kit and provide users with hands-on training on all the modules. All the operational material and guidance manuals were provided in Arabic in addition to English;

(c) **Technical assistance and follow up:** During the current round, the regional office conducted technical assistance missions upon request and maintained fast turnaround times. The regional team worked closely with participating countries by telephone and through daily email correspondence.

Outreach and innovative tools

15. The following creative outputs were developed:

(a) **ICP Newsletter for Western Asia monthly:** Beginning in October 2011, Western Asia became the first region to produce its own monthly ICP publication. It communicates the latest news about ICP, such as

general information about ICP and PPPs, technical material, updated information on special surveys, queries raised by participating countries along with clarification and possible solutions;

(b) ‘REAL Currency Converter’: ESCWA developed this innovative, online tool which uses PPP results of the 2005 ICP round to convert currencies instead of traditional exchange rates. This tool extends the use of PPPs beyond multinational corporations, international agencies and policymakers by making estimates of the power of currencies available to the general public;

(c) ICP website: ESCWA developed and modified the ICP website to meet the needs of all its visitors. It offers basic information about the project and its concept, which are easily understood by everyone. In addition, it offers the latest news regarding implementation of the project and the meetings, documents and all the operational material for experts;

(d) Facebook group and page: The Facebook group offers experts a space to share their experiences, discuss obstacles, solutions, ideas and innovations related to the 2011 ICP round. Lately, experts from Africa, Asia and the Pacific joined the group, which extends the potential for knowledge sharing and technical discussions beyond Western Asia and encourages the exchange of experiences and lessons learned between regions. By contrast, the Facebook page serves as an outreach tool to spread the ideas behind ICP and explain its purpose and goals to the general public.

E. FUTURE DIRECTION

16. While considerable progress has been made in the ESCWA region in the area of price statistics, improvements in data collection and production mechanisms are still needed. The first and second ICP rounds in 2005 and 2011 have played a key role in enhancing the capacity of national statistical offices. However, as price information becomes more valuable to decision makers in the public and private sectors, producing it in a timely, frequent, reliable and comparable way becomes even more important.

17. Price statistics that depict real purchasing ability and inflation rate movements are fundamental variables for developmental, monetary and fiscal policymakers, individuals and firms looking to manage their businesses and investment portfolios. In addition, price statistics allow for analysis across countries (spatial) and across time (temporal) and are imperative for benchmarking purposes, negotiating and setting the terms of bilateral and multilateral agreements and pacts.

18. There is a growing demand for a more frequently updated series of PPP estimates and a real valuation of GDP aggregates. However, there is a lack of comparability of inflation and movements in the consumer price index (CPI) across countries, and there is a critical need to harmonize CPI and integrate data on inflation into it. Some regions of the world have attempted to harmonize CPIs and integrate ICP and CPI, and ESCWA has been working to develop a scenario that would maximize the benefits of such a step at minimal cost.

19. Although CPI and PPP are temporal and spatial measures of price movement, the conceptual similarities between them allows for their integration. Integrating CPI and ICP is mutually beneficial to both as it will assist in the process of harmonizing CPI by improving the quality and timeliness of estimates and establishing their comparability. In addition, it will allow for a more frequent production of a series of reliable PPP estimates based on the identical overlap of goods and services. Moreover, integration will save time, effort and resources in future ICP rounds because the process of harmonizing CPI requires the collection of monthly price data with classifications and mechanisms that match ICP requirements. Price statisticians at national statistical offices will build expertise during that process.

20. Currently, ESCWA is studying the feasibility of integrating CPI and ICP in the region or in subregions and has outlined some key requirements for success. The full commitment of participating countries is fundamental and requires national statistical offices to do the following: complete technical surveys

concerning consumer price collection practices; improve their CPI data production methods; attend regular meetings to agree on strategies and common product lists; and allocate appropriate resources for this initiative. Outlines for the appropriate courses of action are being prepared and ESCWA will discuss those outlines with member countries in order to customize the integration process according to their needs and priorities.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2008 SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

Duration: 2012-2014
 Donor: ESCWA
 Partners: National statistical offices, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics
 Budget: US\$60,000

A. OVERVIEW

21. The 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA) was adopted as the international standard for the compilation and dissemination of national accounts at the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Furthermore, the Statistical Commission mandated a global initiative to implement 2008 SNA.

22. The 2008 SNA has the flexibility to accommodate all countries and economies, regardless of their level of statistical development. Each country must review the changes from 1993 SNA to 2008 SNA that are applicable to it and consider adopting the new standard. Consultations with users should revisit the scope, detail and quality of the accounts and supporting economic statistics, considering which socioeconomic and financial policies have to be informed by structural and short-term economic statistics, including annual and quarterly national accounts.

23. There are three distinct stages of a multi-year programme for the implementation of 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, irrespective of the level of statistical development. The stages are as follows:

(a) Stage I: Review of the strategic framework and detailing of national and regional implementation programmes;

(b) Stage II: Adaptation of classification frameworks, business registers and frames, surveys, administrative data sources and information technology infrastructure;

(c) Stage III: Application of adapted frameworks and source data, 'backcasting' and changeover to 2008 SNA.

24. The efficiency and sustainability of the implementation of 2008 SNA rest on the agreed principles of the implementation strategy, namely: (a) strategic planning; (b) coordination, monitoring and reporting; (c) improving statistical systems. The strategy takes the different levels of implementation of SNA in various countries as a starting point. It acknowledges the need for coordinated action, not only at the international level but also at regional and subregional levels, and emphasizes the need for close cooperation with regional commissions and subregional organizations.

25. During the ninth session of the Statistical Committee, the ESCWA Statistics Division presented the governance and coordination structure of a strategic action plan for the implementation of 2008 SNA in the region. Because of the diversity of the national accounts systems and levels of implementation in the countries of the region, members of the Committee agreed that the implementation plan should start at the national level in four pilot countries that represent the national accounts situation in the entire ESCWA region. The four countries proposed for the pilot project were Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman. Each pilot

country represents a subregion of ESCWA in terms of national accounts compilation and system implementation. Separate missions to each country will be undertaken to assess their needs and tailor a strategic action plan for it. After each pilot country has initiated its implementation plan, a workshop will be conducted to share their experience, knowledge and implementation techniques with each subregion and the broader ESCWA region. Pilot countries will also discuss difficulties and challenges they encountered and propose recommendations to overcome obstacles. The outcome of the regional workshop will be included in a guidance manual for the ESCWA region on the implementation of 2008 SNA. It will feed into to the development and initiation of a regional action plan, which will be drawn up in collaboration with national accounts experts involved in the pilot implementation plans.

B. OBJECTIVES

26. The project aims to formulate an implementation programme for 2008 SNA and support the development of comparable economic statistics for ESCWA member countries and to monitor the integration of their economies. It is expected that this initiative will lead to a multi-year programme to move the countries over to 2008 SNA and establish a minimum common data set of annual and high-frequency statistics.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

27. Deliverable outputs:

(a) A report on the implementation status of each of the four pilot countries;

(b) A regional action plan and guidance manual, consolidated by the Statistics Division in collaboration with national accounts experts from each pilot country as consultants and the regional advisor.

28. Regional activities:

(a) Separate missions to each pilot country to work on initiating a strategic plan for the implementation of the 2008 SNA;

(b) A four-day workshop, held for all member countries in one of the pilot countries, to learn best practice and share experience between pilot and non-pilot countries;

(c) A two-day meeting of national accounts experts from each pilot country, together with ESCWA, to draft a regional guidance manual and documenting their expertise, challenges, techniques of implementation and lessons learned for developing a regional action plan for the implementation of 2008 SNA in the ESCWA region.

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

29. A prerequisite for the implementation of 2008 SNA is the availability of an Arabic version. A draft Arabic translation was provided by the Central Statistical Office of Kuwait, after which ESCWA provided a translation of the glossary terms and forwarded the full document to UNSD for revision and finalizing.

III. ENERGY STATISTICS AND BALANCES

Duration:	2011-2013 ³
Donor:	United Nations Development Account
Partners:	UNSD, MESDTAT, International Energy Agency (IEA), national statistical offices, ministries of energy and electricity
Budget:	US\$509,000

A. OVERVIEW

30. Member countries of ESCWA face several problems concerning the availability and collection of quality data on energy. Energy data represent a basic input to all sectoral and national development plans, particularly in ESCWA member countries where the energy sector plays a vital role in economic and social development. Some member countries are developing energy policies in the absence of data collected according to international standards.

31. Such countries require capacity-building to produce quality energy statistics to better formulate national development plans that ensure sustainable development. Therefore, there is an urgent need to upgrade the capacity of national officials to compile statistics on supply and use of all energy sources and all sectors and to harmonize definitions and classifications and to produce yearly energy balances.

B. OBJECTIVES

32. The project aims to strengthen national statistical capacity in developing energy information systems and energy statistics and balances in ESCWA member countries. Through training activities and sharing knowledge, the project will support member countries in adopting corrective policies and programmes and promoting the production of statistics and indicators on energy according to international standards.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Expected accomplishments	Main activities
1: Assessing regional and national energy statistics and balances and identifying areas of improvement according to the priorities of member countries.	1.1: Conducting technical assistance missions to assess the needs of member countries and their priorities in preparing energy balances. Producing an assessment report and assisting countries in compiling and publishing energy balances; 1.2: Setting up national working groups representing related departments and developing a knowledge network to identify and share experiences related to energy statistics and balances and improving the visibility of energy statistics for ESCWA member countries through a 'docubase' on energy statistics and balances and an official website.
2: Strengthening the skills of national statistical offices to produce energy balance.	2.1: Producing an outline of a training manual on energy balance and specialized surveys on energy use that will be built for use in activities 2.2 and 3.1 related to training and 3.2 on database application; 2.2: Holding a regional training workshop on data collection related to energy balance and survey methodologies for national statistics offices and related departments;

³ More information available from <http://web.escwa.un.org/esab/>.

Expected accomplishments	Main activities
	<p>2.3: Holding a training of trainers seminar for selected participating national statistical offices on energy balance; trainers will contribute to the national trainings in 3.1;</p> <p>2.4: Organizing five study visits for practitioners from selected member countries to learn best practice from leading countries or agencies (three horizontal and two to Europe).</p>
3: Producing and disseminating annual energy balance.	<p>3.1: Organizing five national workshops on compiling and publishing energy balance;</p> <p>3.2: Developing national databases, including hardware and software, cataloguing metadata and compiling energy balance;</p> <p>3.3: Holding one regional seminar to discuss the energy balance produced by countries and formulate plans of action for regular energy balance production according to international standards.</p>

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

33. During 2012, ESCWA focused on the following: technical assistance tailored to the needs of countries; capacity-building through expert group meetings (EGMs) and the development of methodological documents and trainings that are relevant to countries of the region; and enhancing regional and international coordination and networking.

34. The needs assessment and technical assistance missions created synergy and raised the profile of energy statistics and knowledge sharing in the region. The mission teams met with national officials to explain the objectives of the project and discuss data collection and coordination within statistical offices and with other departments.

35. Four needs assessments were completed in 2012. The first two were conducted by a consultant in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. The consultant delivered a report to the countries and to ESCWA on the existing status of energy statistics and provided a workplan, along with the requirements to develop a system for energy statistics which would enable the countries to compile energy balance and energy accounts. The third and fourth needs assessments were conducted by a second consultant in Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic. ESCWA is contacting concerned member countries to enlarge national working group on energy statistics

36. In addition, ESCWA implemented capacity-building activities through EGMs, the development of methodological documents and trainings that are relevant to countries of the region. For example, ESCWA held an Expert Group Meeting on Energy Statistics and Balance in Beirut, 18-20 April 2012, in cooperation with UNSD, MEDSTAT, IEA, and delegates from national statistical offices, ministries of energy and electricity and regional organizations such as the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) and the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE). The meeting focused on statistical methodologies for the compilation of oil, gas, electricity and renewable energy statistics according to international standards, to prepare energy balances and accounts and derive energy indicators. In addition, participants reviewed the needs assessment reports and the outline for the manual on data collection on energy use in different sectors with case studies from Arab countries, which is being prepared by the two consultants. The experts presented recommendations to overcome the difficulties in collecting and disseminating data on energy.

37. Study visits continued in 2012. Three Iraqi delegates from the statistical office, the Ministry of Oil and the Ministry of Electricity participated in a one-week training on energy statistics compilation and the development of energy balance and energy efficiency indicators which was held at IEA headquarters in Paris. The training also benefited IEA which is planning a case study on Iraq in the next edition of the World Energy Outlook. In 2011, representatives of Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates attended a MEDSTAT workshop and visited IEA. Participants in the study visit learned from the experience of MEDSTAT member countries and discussed the compilation of energy statistics and development of energy balance with IEA experts.

38. Partnerships and coordination were enhanced in 2012. Representatives of IEA and UNSD participated at EGMs and provided substantive presentations and material on the compilation of energy statistics and balance. Several organizations including OAPEC, MEDSTAT and RCREEE provided input on the progress made on data collection with countries and their work plan for 2012-2013.

39. As agreed in 2011, IEA and UNSD shared documentation and training material with ESCWA. In turn, ESCWA offered to translate the material into Arabic, which is an important step to enhance and build the capacity of participants for the planned training workshop from 26-30 November 2012. In addition, ESCWA provided input to the revision of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics and the revised UNSD questionnaires on energy statistics.

40. In coordination with RCREEE, ESCWA held a meeting in Cairo on 28 February 2012 to coordinate activities and output to avoid duplication and join expertise and budgets to provide training to Arab countries.

41. Progress has been made on establishing a network of experts and developing a regional and national database on energy statistics. Experts that are nominated as project focal points along with the participants in meetings and study visits are added to a mailing list. An online forum to facilitate interaction has yet to be designed and developed.

42. Many organizations have planned to develop a database on energy balance (RECREE, ESCWA, MEDSTAT). More time is needed to finalize the joint questionnaire on energy statistics, to decide on the type of database, be it national or regional, and to ensure that compiled data is reliable.

43. In August 2011, ESCWA submitted a request to the Islamic Development Bank for complementary funding for energy consumption surveys in the transport sector in eight member countries with a budget of about US\$700,000. The request has not been approved yet. ESCWA is seeking funding for the surveys to improve the information on energy use in those countries.

IV. ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: MEASURING PROGRESS

Duration: 2012-2013
 Donor: United Nations Development Account
 Partners: National statistical offices, three regional commissions (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Europe, ESCWA) and UNSD
 Budget: US\$686,400

A. OVERVIEW

44. The project responds to clear and repeated demands for more and better data and statistics on women and men, and gender-based indicators. At the global level, the need for strengthening statistical capacity development was highlighted in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 of 24 July 2006, which called upon the United Nations system to support national efforts in building and strengthening national statistical capacity and to enhance the database on all MDGs. That was reiterated in 2007 in decision 38/111 of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which emphasized producing necessary data in a sustainable way rather than an ad-hoc approach limited to finding short-term solutions. In decision 42/102, the Statistical Commission emphasized the need to further strengthen work in this area, including the global programme coordinated by UNSD.

45. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 286 (XXV) of 29 May 2008 concerning gender statistics for equality and empowerment of women, which recognized the need to address the lack of timely, reliable, sex-disaggregated data and statistics, and called upon member countries to develop a mechanism for the collection, dissemination and analysis of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data for the formulation of gender-related and gender-sensitive policies and programmes. Furthermore, ESCWA resolution 297 (XXVI) of 19 May 2010 concerning the Arab MDG monitor for societal progress noted the lack of requisite data and information on development indicators in some member countries and requested the secretariat to develop an MDG monitor for societal progress, including gender equality and youth empowerment.

46. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics informed the forty-third session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2012 of the establishment of a minimum set of indicators addressing the key issues in gender equality and empowerment of women that are common across countries and regions, with indicators specific to regional and national contexts to be added by regional and national entities.⁴

47. At the regional level, ESCWA is implementing a number of projects and capacity-building activities under the Gender Statistics Programme, which has developed a customized framework of MDGs on gender issues specific to the Arab region. Gender indicators were identified during the first Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender and MDGs for the Arab Countries, which was held in Cairo, from 10 to 11 September 2007. The framework links MDGs and other major existing international conventions, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in a three-dimensional framework called the Arab Gender Goals, Issues and Indicators (Arab Gender GIsIn). In 2011, ESCWA assessed the availability of data, outputs and activities at the country level to identify data gaps and plan for capacity-building activities. To standardize and harmonize the compilation and computation of indicators, ESCWA has also published an e-handbook as an accompanying metadata compilation tool for the Arab Gender GIsIn framework, adopted in the third meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries, which was held in Beirut, 14-16 November 2011.

B. OBJECTIVES

48. The project is designed to provide specific support to ongoing capacity-building initiatives of the main implementing partners of the projects. Project activities will increase the capacity of institutions and their staff to overcome the current gaps and weaknesses in data systems and to use, analyse, disseminate and communicate existing data and statistics, guided by a coherent framework of gender statistics and indicators relevant to their specific contexts.

⁴ Economic and Social Council, *Gender statistics: Report of the Secretary-General*, forty-third session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2012/19).

49. The project aims to improve the capacity of relevant national institutions, focusing on national statistical offices and entities responsible for mainstreaming gender in development policies and programmes, in the selected countries, to use data and statistics to monitor, measure and analyse progress in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Expected accomplishments	Main activities
<p>1: National statistical offices and other relevant national institutions using a coherent framework of gender statistics and indicators in providing, selecting and improving objective and standard measures for monitoring and assessing progress in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.</p>	<p>1.1: Holding an expert group meeting and online discussions to prepare the framework and regional core sets of gender statistics and formulate recommendations on their production and use;</p> <p>1.2: Holding a regional consultative workshop to validate and finalize the framework and regional core sets of gender statistics and prepare a regional implementation plan;</p> <p>1.3: Holding two national-level stakeholder consultations in participating countries in each region, to formulate a time-bound national action plan for improving gender statistics.</p>
<p>2: National statistical systems producing data and improving statistical estimates, overcoming the current gaps and weaknesses in data systems for assessing progress in achieving gender-related development goals.</p>	<p>2.1: Holding one interregional workshop to take stock of good practice specifically overcoming data gaps related to the production of gender statistics with the use of existing data;</p> <p>2.2: Collecting data in two pilot countries in each region and devising, adapting and testing common instruments to overcome data gaps (initial priority gaps: disability, violence against women, unpaid work/time use) and prepare estimation studies;</p> <p>2.3: Holding an interregional expert group meeting to recommend mechanisms for establishing sustainable communities of knowledge that facilitate compilation, sharing and analysis of gender statistics.</p>
<p>3: Strengthening relevant national institutions to use, analyse, disseminate and communicate existing data and statistics for measuring progress in gender-related national development goals, including MDGs.</p>	<p>3.1: Complete two national studies and consultation workshops in each region on legislation, institutional mandates and structures and national mechanisms to improve the capacity to mainstream gender in policy and decision-making processes;</p> <p>3.2: Holding a regional-level EGM of national statistical training institutes to provide recommendations on the standardization of training curricula on selected priority areas and appropriate modes of training and design for in-country training;</p> <p>3.3: Holding two pilot in-country trainings for national statistical training institutes or appropriate training entities on selected priority areas based on standardized training curricula;</p> <p>3.4: Applying the framework and regional core sets of gender statistics in two participating countries, and preparing analytical reports on gender-related issues in national development plans and MDGs.</p>

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

50. The project will be initiated as soon as budget allocations are made available in each regional commission. Member countries are invited to express interest in participating in the project and implementing its regional and national activities.

V. MONITORING THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Duration: 2010-2013
Donor: United Nations Development Account
Partners: National statistical offices, five United Nations regional commissions and UNSD
Budget: US\$1,192,000

A. OVERVIEW

51. The need to monitor the progress towards MDGs has given many different regions the opportunity to develop their statistical systems and produce better information in support of evidence-based policies for development. Nevertheless, many countries face pervasive statistical challenges in monitoring MDGs, including the following: persistent data gaps; insufficient use of official data produced by the national agency in charge of the national MDG reports and by international agencies; and statistical discrepancies between indicator values that are produced or compiled by national, regional and international sources. Those issues are of great concern to countries and the international community. The Statistical Commission has formally recognized those problems and has urged stakeholders to take immediate action to find solutions. Key points include strengthening statistical capacity for data and metadata production, and improving the organization of statistical information exchange between international agencies and countries, as recommended in 2007 by the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2007/13).

52. The United Nations system as a whole has assigned high priority to those matters, on the understanding that there should also be more transparency in the way that international agencies use imputed data. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDGs recommended producing a detailed explanation of the difference between global and national monitoring and the related implications on methods and data presentation, and constructing metadata on population estimates used as denominators to calculate many MDG indicators. It further recommended involving the regional commissions more extensively in identifying discrepancies between national and international sources, in assisting in the organization of data and metadata exchanges between national statistical systems and international agencies and in improving data-sharing at the international level.

53. The five regional commissions have increasingly taken an active role in responding to the demand of member countries, strengthening statistical capacity to monitor MDGs and promoting the collaborative work within countries and regions in order to share experiences and learn from each other. The statistical divisions of the regional commissions have coordinated efforts in resolving data gaps and discrepancies between national and international sources. A joint document was presented for discussion at the Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting on MDG Indicators.

54. Furthermore, ESCWA has been working on various subjects related to improving the availability and quality of data and metadata, resolving discrepancies between national and international sources, monitoring and reporting on MDGs in close cooperation with member countries, UNSD and United Nations agencies. To resolve methodological problems, ESCWA provides technical assistance through country missions and capacity building workshops. In addition, ESCWA is building the capacity of national statistical offices and line ministries to use DevInfo to enhance collaboration in the exchange of data within the statistical system and through statistical data and metadata exchange registers with United Nations agencies. Also, ESCWA has initiated the Arab MDG Network to identify key producers of statistics at the national level and connect

them with regional and global focal points in the United Nations system. All documents related to the work of ESCWA on MDGs are available in the MDG Virtual Library.⁵

B. OBJECTIVES

55. The objective of the project is to have more up-to-date and comparable MDG data at the national and global levels, improve statistical capacity and institutional coordination for the production of MDG indicators, decrease statistical discrepancies between national, regional and global sources on MDG indicators, and strengthen regional MDG networks.

56. It is expected that the networking and integration of different national, regional and international actors will multiply the direct results of the project, strengthen national and regional capacity in the long-term and provide support to the implementation of sustainable development strategies in participating regions.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Expected accomplishments	Main activities
<p>1: Achieving improved and increased national and regional MDG statistical production and use, according to international standards and regional benchmarks, through regional collaborative practices.</p>	<p>1.1: Organizing an interregional MDG indicators meeting to share and discuss good practice, instruments, benchmarks and other national and regional advancements and shortcomings;</p> <p>1.2: Organizing a regional MDG capacity-building workshop for national statistical offices, other key partners and regional or international agencies, with a view to improving the inter-institutional coordination procedures for the production, description and adjustment of data;</p> <p>1.3: Implementing regional MDG indicator databases along with the corresponding metadata, with a view to making data comparability transparent and encouraging its use at the national, regional and international levels.</p>
<p>2: Decreasing statistical discrepancies in MDG indicators in national, regional and international sources, improving MDG monitoring capacity and strengthening inter-institutional coordination, within and between countries and international agencies, facilitated by regional statistical bodies.</p>	<p>2.1: Constructing interregional MDG data reports, assessing MDG strengthening of statistical inter-institutional capacity and assessing data gaps and discrepancies with a view to developing interregional conclusions and recommendations;</p> <p>2.2: Producing and updating comparative data (national, regional, United Nations millennium database) for selected countries and identifying the causes of discrepancies;</p> <p>2.3: Providing technical assistance missions to selected national statistical offices, agencies and sectoral Ministries in order to assist them in achieving statistical conciliation at the national, regional and global levels;</p> <p>2.4: Producing and disseminating regional reports of good practice in statistical production and the use of information to highlight good examples of inter-institutional arrangement for national MDG reports.</p>

⁵ Available from <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/themes/index.asp>.

Expected accomplishments	Main activities
3: Strengthening the network of MDG statistical and reporting experts and practitioners at the national and regional levels, through increased interchange of experiences, good practice and methodologies.	<p>3.1: Developing an interregional web-based discussion and holding video conferences and teleconferences of the regional commissions and selected regional partners, to ensure the effectiveness of the project and substantive follow-up, and to coordinate interaction with the global Inter-Agency and Expert Group and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs;</p> <p>3.2: Producing and disseminating documents and publications on a regional basis in support of training workshops and technical assistance, including methodologies, good practice and regional benchmarks.</p>

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

57. Based on its comparative analysis of national and international data, ESCWA identified discrepancies at the indicator level for all member countries. At the regional level, major discrepancies or data availability issues were identified on indicators on poverty, employment, maternal mortality and water and sanitation. Work is in progress to compile national MDG indicator metadata in one database.

58. Two regional workshops on MDG data reconciliation have been planned. Their objectives are: (a) to improve statistical capacity for the production of MDG indicators; (b) to improve inter-institutional coordination for the production of MDG indicators; (c) to improve data description (metadata); (d) to increase availability and comparability of MDG data at the national and global levels; (e) to understand and reduce discrepancies between the data available at the national and international levels. The workshops will strengthen the capacity of countries to do the following: produce statistics and indicators of relevance to MDGs; understand the adjustment and calculation methods used by international agencies; and improve MDG data exchange between national and international agencies.

59. The first regional workshop on MDG data reconciliation related to employment indicators was organized in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and took place in Beirut from 12 to 13 July 2012. Nine participants from eight ESCWA member countries attended the workshop, namely: Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The workshop concluded with a set of recommendations for member countries and ESCWA to implement, and workshop resources and the final report can be accessed on the Statistics Division home page.⁶

60. In collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank and the World Health Organization, ESCWA is planning to hold a second regional workshop on MDG data reconciliation related to water and sanitation in December 2012.

61. The workshop on Effective Use of Statistics for Policymaking was held in Amman from 26 to 29 September 2012. One statistician and one policymaker represented each participating country, namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Palestine. The representatives presented national experience and good practice.

62. The workshop participants discussed a framework for effective use of statistics for policymaking proposed by ESCWA. The draft document is presented to the tenth session of the Statistical Committee for

⁶ Available from <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1885E>.

adoption. A proposed recommendation is to publish that framework and improve on it with new national statistical policy case studies every two years, and to organize training seminars for statistical experts and policymakers from different sectors to enhance the use of statistics in policy.

63. In collaboration with ILO, ESCWA has developed a handbook on the five MDG employment indicators providing comprehensive metadata with example exercises to be produced in English and Arabic. Moreover, ESCWA has produced MDG Report Writing: Best Practice from ESCWA Member Countries, which includes information on statistical production and the use of information to highlight good examples of inter-institutional arrangements for the elaboration of national MDG reports.

64. In addition, ESCWA will regularly update the regional DevInfo database of MDG indicators for all Arab countries along with the corresponding metadata, with a view to making data comparability transparent and encouraging its use at the national, regional and international levels.

65. Focused interventions and technical missions will be implemented for selected countries and upon request to improve the monitoring and reporting of MDGs. Three technical missions to member countries have been planned. Technical assistance missions to the selected national statistical offices and sectoral ministries will be provided in order to assist them in achieving statistical conciliation at the national and global levels, and to build and strengthen statistical and institutional capacities.

66. Along with representatives of three member countries, ESCWA participated in the Interregional MDG Indicators Meeting organized by the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) which was held in early 2012. The meeting brought together experts and representatives from the statistical offices and policymakers, along with representatives of the regional commissions to share and discuss good practice, instruments, benchmarks and other national and regional advancements and shortcomings.

VI. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITY IN SOCIAL STATISTICS AND PREPARING FOR THE UPCOMING FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT BEYOND 2014

Duration: 2011-2014
 Donor: United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA)
 Partners: The Economic Commission for Africa, League of Arab States and UNFPA
 Budget: \$161,250 in 2011. Contributions for subsequent years will be based on annual work plans developed and signed by UNFPA and ESCWA

A. OVERVIEW

67. Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/13 of 22 July 2005 concerned the implementation of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (2005-2014). The resolution focused on the importance of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses in meeting data needs for follow-up activities to the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), and to the other United Nations regional meetings. In addition, the resolution noted the importance of population and housing census outcomes in the development of national data sets which feed into development planning and decision making.

68. UNFPA and ESCWA signed an agreement to implement a series of workshops and training sessions in the field of population censuses for eight Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen).

B. OBJECTIVES

69. The programme of cooperation will focus on policy dialogue advocacy for ICPD beyond 2014, and the enhancement of regional capacity in data analysis, dissemination and use in developmental planning processes and will enhance joint youth and gender programming.

70. Available data on population dynamics, gender equality, young people, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS will be analysed and the outcome of this analysis will be used at national and subnational levels for development and to monitor relevant policies.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

71. The expected accomplishment is to strengthen the regional and national capacity to collect, analyse, disseminate and use disaggregated data for evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue in support of integrated programming and in preparedness for emergency conditions.

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Objectives	Main activities
1: Assessing regional census preparedness, jointly funded and implemented by UNFPA and ESCWA	<p>1.1: Developing a concept note and an assessment tool for the status of census preparedness;</p> <p>1.2: Preparing a summary report on the status of census preparedness of eight countries;</p> <p>1.3: Organizing a two-day workshop on census preparedness in Jordan in 2011 and preparing a report in Arabic on the outcome of the workshop with recommendations;</p> <p>1.4: Implementing a three-day follow-up workshop in Tunis in 2012 to assess improvements in the area of census preparedness and to identify the needs of each country in that area.</p>
2: Enhancing regional capacity in demographic analysis	<p>2.1: Identifying and recruiting a consultant to prepare training materials</p> <p>2.2: Implementing a training workshop in December 2012</p>
3: Training workshop on enhancement of the Geographic Information System (GIS) using population and housing census data	<p>3.1: Developing a concept note and an assessment tool for the status of GIS use in national statistical offices;</p> <p>3.2: Organizing a two-day training workshop on GIS in Jordan in 2011 and preparing a meeting report in Arabic on the outcome of the training workshop.</p>

VII. ANALYSIS OF GENDER EQUALITY GAPS IN THE ARAB REGION

Duration: 2011-2012
 Donor: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)
 Partners: UN-Women, Pan-Arab Project for Family Health (PAPFAM) Survey Management, League of Arab States
 Budget: US\$100,000

A. OVERVIEW

72. Despite progress and the improvement of sex disaggregated statistics in the Arab region, variations in the availability of data within and among countries still exist. While sex disaggregated data are generally available at the national level in areas such as educational attainment or participation in the labor force, much less data is available on measuring gender-based violence, control of women over resources and their access to decision-making roles, especially at local levels. Through national women machineries, Arab countries report on their implementation of international conventions using available data, but those data remain insufficient to cover the vast area of the rights of women, they vary widely in terms of quality, and originate from fragmented sources, including several administrative bodies, national statistics offices and international organizations. Although there is an increasing amount of literature on the situation and progress of Arab women, relatively little of it aims to statistically measure and analyse the gaps between men and women. Previous analyses relied heavily on readily available macrolevel indicators, without much disaggregation by background variables including socioeconomic factors. The two widely known household surveys, namely PAPFAM and the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), provide a unique opportunity to undertake an in-depth assessment of gender inequality in the region, and identify gaps in data availability at the individual level. Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) have been conducted in several countries, including Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen and DHS was conducted in Jordan and Egypt. The surveys cover many topics such as population and households, health, education, labour force and others with sub-areas under each topic. They provide sex disaggregated data that could be used to statistically assess the gender gap in each area. If analysed, the data provided by those surveys may contribute to the knowledge of gender disparities in the region and may be used to inform policy.

73. The focus of the initiative is on statistically measuring the gap between men and women in various areas of life using data from national surveys. Although the scope of that initiative will not provide qualitative analysis that specifically looks at causes and issues perpetuating the gap, it will be useful in indicating areas that require special attention by policymakers at the regional and national levels. The initiative is expected to prompt for further discussion of gender measurement issues, challenges and opportunities in the Arab region.

B. OBJECTIVES

74. The overall objective of this project is to make sufficient knowledge about gender disparities in the region accessible so that it can be used in regional and national strategies. It will contribute to the knowledge base with statistical evidence and analysis of the gender gap in selected areas. The scope will be regional, covering the following Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The countries will provide updated comparable data that shed light on important aspects of gender inequality for use by policymakers, researchers, donors and the general public. The project will mainly depend on analysis of fairly comparable national household surveys, namely PAPFAM surveys and DHS as applicable. It will shed light on youth as an important target group that must be better understood by policymakers. Thus the project strategy is research-based with advocacy components as will be explained below.

75. Furthermore, the project aims to build the capacity of national statistical offices in sex-disaggregated data collection, tabulation and analysis, enhance the relationship between data producers and users to enable the production of demand-driven gender statistics, and enhance the capacity of policymakers to better interpret and monitor gender equality through statistics.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

76. The project is expected to enhance the capacity of national statistical offices to produce and disseminate relevant, timely, reliable and comparable economic and social statistics and indicators, including MDG indicators and gender-disaggregated data, in compliance with international standards and recommendations.

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

77. The following activities aimed to disseminate the results of the comparative statistical analysis of the gender equality gap in Arab countries:

(a) A report entitled “Comparative statistical analysis of gender equality gaps in Arab countries” was prepared which used data from DHS for Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine, and MICS data for Iraq, Mauritania, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The report used recent PAPFAM microdata from Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen and DHS microdata from Egypt and Jordan. Household microdata were examined and analysed statistically to provide a profile of the gender equality gap in those countries focusing on the following areas: population; health; education; labor force participation and empowerment; and gender-based violence where applicable (Egypt and Jordan DHS). The analysis focused on providing a descriptive portrait of gender inequality across countries and trends over time for selected countries based on the availability of data from the same survey. The end product was a quantitative comparative report that showed similarities and disparities between countries and trends over time and provided a basic descriptive analysis of the results and ended with conclusions on areas that require attention and recommendations for future research;

(b) A group of regional experts were identified and a meeting was organized in Jordan in November 2011 to discuss and review the report and to validate its findings. Participants also discussed issues in measuring gender equality. Recommendations were drawn from the meeting to improve the report.

78. The following activities aim to identify gaps in statistics and literature on gender equality in the Arab region:

(a) A literature review of available studies on gender disparities in the Arab region will be conducted and will identify the gaps in those studies. The review will cover the available scholarly literature in the region on gender inequality using common bibliographic databases in social sciences and public health. That should result in the identification of research gaps and in recommendations for future in-depth qualitative studies;

(b) A regional consultative meeting will be held with country representatives that combines representatives of national women machineries in the above countries and national statistical offices to launch and distribute the regional report and country booklets. The meeting will aim to raise a discussion with participants about data gaps identified in the above reports and expert meetings and agree on common priority topics in gender statistics and propose recommendations for addressing them.

79. The following activity aims to enhance understanding of the knowledge and attitudes of young men and women on several gender issues: a regional statistical report is being prepared on youth using available raw data. The report will be prepared in the countries where PAPFAM youth survey is implemented to provide a comparative analysis of knowledge and attitudes of young men and women aged 15-24 years regarding gender roles, marriage, empowerment and health issues and show the similarities and differences between them.

VIII. STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF NATIONAL POLICY ANALYSTS IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SECTORS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF NATIONAL TRANSFER ACCOUNTS

Duration: 2011-2013
 Donor: United Nations Development Account and UNFPA
 Partners: ESCWA, ECLAC, ESCAP
 Budget: US\$306,000

A. OVERVIEW

80. The project builds on past experience and ongoing collaboration between the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), ECLAC and the National Transfer Accounts (NTA) international network, which includes research centres and institutions in all major regions of the world, and leverages resources. This Development Account project is being led by the Population Division of DESA, in collaboration with ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA.

81. The NTA Research Network, which includes research centres and institutions all over the world, and existing and prospective funding to undertake capacity-building activities in selected countries, will support ongoing efforts to develop national expertise in the estimation and use of NTA. Countries will be selected according to agreed criteria. The continued substantive and organizational support of DESA and the regional commissions will also enhance that sustainability.

82. The project is related to subprogramme 2 on social development and subprogramme 5 on statistics for evidence-based policymaking of the strategic framework of ESCWA.

83. The project will facilitate the integration of population factors into national planning and decision-making processes, as stipulated in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the design of national strategies to achieve the goals of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The project is also expected to assist in formulating measures to accelerate progress towards MDGs, especially those related to poverty reduction and education.

B. OBJECTIVES

84. The objective of this project is to improve national capacity to produce NTA based on the NTA framework and to analyse the results in order to guide policy and action to adapt to the consequences of population ageing.

85. Implementing the NTA framework allows countries to derive distributions by age, income, consumption and savings, and to estimate transfers related to expenditure in education, health and pensions. To achieve the objective of this project, countries will acquire better tools to understand the implications of national funding of education, health or pension systems on key MDGs including the prevalence of poverty or the bottlenecks in ensuring and sustaining universal education.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

86. The expected accomplishment is to improve the capacity of government officials and country analysts in the economic and social sectors to produce and use age-distributed statistics of the national accounts based on the NTA framework. A deeper understanding of the economic and social consequences of changing population age structures will allow for improved policy analysis.

D. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

87. The following activities were implemented:

(a) A manual with guidelines for the estimation of NTA was prepared. The manual will be used to train technical staff involved in the estimation and analysis of NTA in participating countries;

(b) To assess the manual from substantive and pedagogical perspectives, an EGM took place in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 6-7 December 2011;

(c) A training workshop on NTA for the two participating countries was held in Amman, 22-24 July 2012;

(d) An interregional training workshop on the preparation and use of NTA which focused on building the capacity of participants from six developing countries took place in Bangkok, 17-20 September 2012.

IX. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

88. The Committee is invited to make recommendations for the continuation of ongoing statistically-oriented projects executed by ESCWA, notably the following:

- ICP 2011 round;
- Implementation of the 2008 SNA;
- Energy statistics and balances;
- Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women;
- Monitoring the MDGs;
- Strengthening national capacities in social statistics and preparing for the upcoming follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014;
- Analysis of gender equality gaps in the Arab region;
- Strengthening capacity of national policy analysts in the social and economic sectors of developing countries in the production and use of NTA.
