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PROGRAMME OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES FOR 2013

Summary

This report presents the planned activities in the field of statistics for 2013, within the strategic framework of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the biennium 2012-2013.

Representatives of the ESCWA member countries are invited to review those activities and make recommendations for further refinements when needed.

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Introduction

1. The objective of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) subprogramme 5, “Statistics for evidence-based policymaking”, for the biennium 2012-2013, is to improve the production, harmonization and dissemination of quality demographic, social, economic and environmental indicators, including indicators on societal development and progress towards development goals, gender-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators, in order to facilitate evidence-based policymaking by national and international decision makers and civil society. The responsibility for implementing subprogramme 5 is vested within the Statistics Division and the Statistical Committee plays a steering role in that implementation.

2. This document presents the activities planned in the field of statistics for the remainder of the biennium 2012-2013. The programme of work in the field of statistics for that biennium was approved by the Statistical Committee at its ninth session (Beirut, 13-15 October 2010) and, as part of the ESCWA programme of work, at the twenty-seventh session of ESCWA (Beirut, 7-10 May 2012). Some adjustment of priorities and focus may be needed to reflect the present needs of official statistics and address the current developments in the Arab region. Therefore, the Committee is invited to review the planned statistical activities and outputs and to provide guidance to the secretariat in that regard.

I. STRATEGIC AND MANAGERIAL ISSUES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

3. *Strategic objectives:* promoting progress in institutional building of official statistics in the Western Asia region, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and national strategies for the development of statistics; and providing official statistics for the region and its countries, based on scientific knowledge and on the respect of principles of independence of statisticians. Subprogramme 5 should provide a forum for exchange of knowledge, experience, good practice and ideas between national statistical offices in the region.

4. *Goals for 2013:* to conduct consultations prior to the forty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (New York, 26 February - 1 March 2013), with greater involvement of subject matter experts from national statistical offices; to develop a capacity-building programme on quality of official statistics; and to strengthen the role of the Statistical Committee and national statistical offices in coordinating official statistics. In particular, the Statistics Division at ESCWA and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics will take part in the work of the Friends of the Chair Group on Statistical Coordination within the United Nations system.

A. STRATEGIC AND MANAGERIAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES

Meetings

- Meeting of the Working Group of the Statistical Committee (February 2013);
- Meeting of the bureau of the Statistical Committee (October 2013);
- Meeting of the Task Force on Statistical Coordination (June 2013).

Documents, publications and technical material

Statistical Newsletter (2013).

Advisory services

Support to the improvement of national institutional frameworks of official statistics, including development of quality frameworks.

B. MANAGEMENT OF THE STATISTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Documents, publications and technical material

- Maintenance and update of ESCWA homepage on statistics, including virtual library, good practice, standards and classification, meetings and documentation;
- Maintenance and update of the e-glossary of statistical terms;
- Maintenance and development of databases, including ESCWA Statistical Information System, DevInfo and specialized databases.

Advisory services

Support to building and managing the statistical infrastructure, including statistical metadata, registers, geographical information systems, population censuses, etc.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS

5. *Strategic objectives*: improving population and vital statistics produced by national statistical offices; enhancing reliability of national data and estimates, and encouraging the use of administrative registers and records for that purpose, with a view to ensuring close involvement of national statistical offices in the production of population estimates; developing gender statistics to meet the needs of policymakers; increasing the capacity of national statistical offices in producing statistics on household income, expenditure and poverty; and promoting regular production of statistics on labour force and quality of employment.

6. *Goals for 2013*: to continue activities towards improved population statistics, population censuses and gender statistics, in cooperation with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Women and the United Nations Statistics Division; and to pursue programmes of capacity-building on population, labour and gender statistics.

A. POPULATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

Documents, publications and technical material

Bulletin on Population and Vital Statistics, Fifteenth Issue (November 2013).

Training courses, seminars and workshops

- Expert group meeting on migration statistics (June 2013);
- Expert group meeting on census data quality (date to be set).

Advisory services

- Support to the production of improved demographic statistics and the adoption of new or revised international statistical standards;
- Support in processing, evaluating, analysing and disseminating census data.

Projects

ESCWA/UNFPA project: strengthening national capacity in social statistics and preparing for the twenty-year review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development that will be undertaken at a special session of the General Assembly in 2014.

Contribution to joint outputs of ESCWA

Provision of expertise related to demographic data for publications and activities of other ESCWA divisions.

B. SOCIAL STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Documents, publications and technical material

Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators 2012-2013: Arab Society, Issue 11 (October 2013).

Advisory services

Support to the improvement of the production of social statistics, and to the adoption of new or revised international statistical standards and foundational socio-economic classifications.

Contribution to joint outputs of ESCWA

Provision of expertise related to social statistics and indicators for publications and activities of other ESCWA divisions.

C. LABOUR STATISTICS

Meetings

Training workshop on labour statistics, “school-to-work transition survey”, to be held in the United Arab Emirates in the first quarter of 2013.

Projects

A programme of capacity development in labour statistics, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, subject to extrabudgetary funding.

D. GENDER STATISTICS

Meetings

- Expert group meeting on gender statistics (March 2013);
- Third meeting of the Task Force on Gender Statistics and Time-Use Statistics (March 2013).

Documents, publications and technical material

- Report on progress in gender statistics, to be prepared for the tenth session of the Statistical Committee (January 2013);
- Data collection for the 2013 publication “Gender in Figures”.

Training courses, seminars and workshops

- ESCWA/UNFPA training on gender analysis (Beirut, 19-21 December 2012);
- Workshop on time-use surveys (Cairo, 13-15 November 2012).

Advisory services

Support in processing, analysing and disseminating gender statistics.

Projects

Implementing Arab Gender Statistics Programmes.

Contribution to joint outputs of ESCWA

Provision of expertise related to gender for publications and activities of other ESCWA divisions.

III. ECONOMIC STATISTICS

7. *Strategic objectives:* promoting full implementation of the System of National Accounts (SNA) by ESCWA member countries and, ultimately, the migration to the 2008 SNA; increasing comparability of price statistics across member countries and producing purchasing power parity indices for homogenous scalability in the measurement of development indicators; establishing a quarterly time series record of inflation rates behaviour in various countries and sectors, and promoting the harmonization and improvement of consumer price index (CPI) production through regional integration; improving collection and harmonization of concepts for informal sector statistics; enhancing consistency and harmonization of trade statistics data and improving quality of data in such global databases as the United Nations Comtrade; revitalising activities in the field of industrial statistics; and assisting member countries in the collection of data and the production of industrial statistics.

8. *Goals for 2013:* to compile and validate price data for the International Comparison Program (ICP) in the Western Asia region, and compute the preliminary results of purchasing power parities and major findings; to collect price data for ICP in the Western Asia region; to implement SNA; and to track quarterly sectoral price inflationary movement and promote the proposal for CPI-ICP integration.

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

Meetings

Expert group meeting on national accounts and economic statistics (March 2013).

Documents, publications and technical material

- National Accounts Studies of the ESCWA Region, Issue 33 (September 2013);
- Study on methodological issues of economic statistics (September 2013).

Projects

Global Implementation and Outreach for the System of National Accounts (2012).

Advisory services

Support to the development of national accounts methodologies, implementation of economic surveys, and the training of national staff working on national accounts.

B. PRICE STATISTICS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAM

Meetings

- Regional executive board meeting for the International Comparison Program (February 2013);
- Eighth regional workshop for the International Comparison Program (March 2013);
- Ninth regional workshop for the International Comparison Program (July 2013);
- Meeting for evaluating the feasibility of regional ICP-CPI integration (July 2013);
- Meeting to release the preliminary results of the International Comparison Program (December 2013).

Documents, publications and technical material

- International Comparison Programme for Western Asia Region Newsletter (Monthly);
- Regional Inflation Outlook (Quarterly).

Projects

Implementing the ICP.

Advisory services:

Support to the production of improved price statistics and capacity-building for the ICP.

C. TRADE STATISTICS

Documents, publications and technical material

External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region, Twenty-first Issue (November 2013).

Advisory services

Support to the production of statistics on trade in merchandise and services.

D. INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS

Documents, publications and technical material

Data collection for the Bulletin of Industrial Statistics for the Arab Countries, Eighth issue (to be published in 2014).

Advisory services

Support to the production of industrial statistics.

IV. ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY STATISTICS

9. *Strategic objectives:* devising a framework for environmental-economic accounting for countries in the ESCWA region, with a view to improving harmonization of data on the region in regional and global databases; maintaining activities in statistics on water resources and sharing achievements and results of ESCWA countries with others, considering that the ESCWA region is a leader with respect to water resources; harmonizing concepts and measurements for energy statistics and increasing quality and coverage

of disseminated data on energy; and advancing the implementation of sustainable development indicators in the Arab countries.

10. *Goals for 2013*: to engage in dialogues with regional and international partners, including the International Energy Agency, MEDSTAT III and the European Environment Agency, on a joint approach to activities in environment and energy statistics; and to make progress on the United Nations Development Account project on energy statistics and energy balances.

Documents, publications and technical material

Compendium of Environment Statistics in the ESCWA Region 2012-2013 (October 2013).

Advisory services

Support to the improvement of environment and energy statistics and to the adoption of new or revised international statistical standards and classifications.

Projects

Regional project for strengthening statistical capacity of ESCWA member countries in energy statistics and energy balance.

V. MEASURING DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETAL PROGRESS

11. *Strategic objectives*: making monitoring of progress an integral component of official statistics in the region; keeping abreast of new developments in measuring societal progress; and using the framework of the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the analysis, localization and implementation of indicators to measure societal progress.

12. *Goals for 2013*: to work with other regional and international organizations participating in the Task Force on Statistical Coordination for Arab States on establishing a database on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) comprising international and national data, and using that database to reconcile discrepancies and variations in data; and to carry out activities aimed at reconciling variation and discrepancies in MDG related data.

Documents, publications and technical material

- Joint database on MDG related indicators comprising international and national data;
- Wall charts on selected issues of statistical monitoring;
- Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region, Issue No. 32 (November 2013);
- ESCWA Country Profiles (December 2013).

Projects

Development Account project: strengthening statistical and inter-institutional capacities for monitoring the MDGs through interregional cooperation and knowledge sharing.

Advisory services

Support to the improvement of the production of development indicators, including MDG monitoring and analysis (2012).

Contribution to joint outputs of ESCWA

Providing data and expertise on MDGs to publications of other ESCWA divisions.

VI. ACTION REQUIRED BY THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

13. The Committee is invited to:

- (a) Take note of the activities planned for 2013;
- (b) Consider the schedule and agendas of meetings of heads of national statistical offices, particularly those of the Working Group of the Statistical Committee (February 2013 and 2014);
- (c) Provide guidance, when applicable, for individual outputs, such as narrowing their scope.
