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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO REVIEW PUBLICATION OF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION IN SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES BEIRUT, 1-2 DECEMBER 2010

Summary

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held an expert group meeting to review a publication of *Comparative Analysis of Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Formulation in Selected Arab Countries* at the United Nations House in Beirut on 1 and 2 December 2010. The meeting was attended by a group of experts and specialists from Governments, civil society, regional academic and media institutions, and United Nations agencies.

The meeting was aimed at discussing the publication and submitting practical proposals about the following three topics: (a) a general overview of civil society and the modern orientations of its functions; (b) case studies on civil society participation in policymaking, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen; and (c) the impact of civil society participation in policymaking.

This report reviews the recommendations and conclusions of participants, summarizing presentations and discussions raised with regard to every topic of the meeting.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-6	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	7-8	4
A. Recommendations	7	4
B. Conclusions	8	5
II. TOPICS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION	9-12	6
A. Modern orientations of civil society functions	9	6
B. Case studies on civil society participation in policymaking	10-11	7
C. Impact of civil society participation in policymaking	12	9
III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK	13-17	10
A. Opening	13-14	10
B. Participants	15	10
C. Date and venue	16	10
D. Documents	17	10

ANNEXES

I. Questionnaire to evaluate the meeting	11
II. List of documents	15

Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) derives its interest in participatory social development from international and regional resolutions and treaties. This interest is clearly reflected in the ESCWA programme of action, which involves issuing references and technical materials, organizing trainings, meetings and panel discussions, and providing technical support and advice, which all contribute to enhancing Government and civil society participation in policymaking.
2. The capacity of civil society organizations to influence policymaking was strengthened by their modern experiences in several Arab countries. Over the past three decades, the capacity of civil society has grown as a result of a governmental and social need for a sector that regulates the relationship a State has with its citizens outside of the market framework and addresses key issues related to laws, policies and regulations on public affairs in society. Civil society is a non-profit, volunteerism-oriented sector advocating public affairs. Its role started to gain importance with the continuous calls for reform in the Arab region along with regional and international initiatives highlighting the important role of civil society in furthering modernization, developing plans and initiating the required reforms. As a result of initiatives and implementation attempts, Arab civil society organizations have accumulated experiences and expertise that deserve in-depth analysis to draw out lessons learned.
3. The Social Participatory Development Section (SPDS) of the Social Development Division at ESCWA prepared a comparative analysis as a follow-up to the key roles and functions of civil society. The analysis explores the experiences of four Arab countries, namely Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen in terms of civil society participation in and influence on policymaking. In this context and in cooperation with Arab researchers from the four countries, SPDS prepared case studies on the successful experiences of civil society having access to decision-making or influence on policymaking. The case studies review the stages of policymaking and implementation in each country, and analyse the tools and methods used as well as the tangible outcomes. Each study reaches conclusions about civil society activities in the Arab region.
4. The comparative analysis methodology is based on the field experiences of several civil society organizations in each of the four countries. In addition, researchers reviewed literature related to those experiences and conducted field interviews with persons in charge of the concerned organizations. In all studies, researchers relied on a theoretical framework developed by SPDS at ESCWA, which includes research questions that helped to systematically complete the study and reach the required outcomes. Field studies were compiled in a single integrated study which includes a general introduction about civil society in Arab countries, followed by highlights of each of the four countries, and a final comparative chapter that reaches conclusions and recommendations about policymaking in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen.
5. The desired outcome of this comparative research is to acquire in-depth knowledge of civil society roles and functions in Arab countries, and analyse them by highlighting and comparing case studies. As such, this publication aims to explore similarities and discrepancies in terms of civil society influence on policymaking and its influential and effective representation of societal demands. The chapters of this comparative analysis review the existing mechanisms and tools in order to identify and build on them through discussion and detailed analysis. Moreover, the comparative analysis addresses opinions and conclusions to decision makers and civil society organizations first and foremost, as well as to entities concerned with public affairs and researchers.
6. Stressing the important participation of stakeholders in development planning, implementation and evaluation, ESCWA held the expert group meeting to review publication of *Comparative Analysis of Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Formulation in Selected Arab Countries*. This meeting was held in the implementation framework of ESCWA Resolution 285(XXV), dated 29 May 2008, which strengthens and follows up participatory dialogue about social policy among concerned governmental entities, civil society organizations and the private sector. The meeting was also held in the implementation framework of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011. This publication includes recommendations and

conclusions of participants, summarizing their presentations and discussions with regard to every topic of the meeting. Besides, the publication gives an overview of the organization of work including opening remarks, date and venue and documents distributed during sessions.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Participants in the meeting agreed on the following recommendations that are either general or related to the discussed topics:

1. *Modern orientations of civil society functions*

(a) Promoting the role of civil society organizations in policymaking by building institutional capacity, developing legislation and laws, strengthening efficiency, transparency and accountability, providing access to information, exchanging expertise and supporting coordination and networking mechanisms;

(b) Emphasizing the key role of civil society organizations as a Government partner that can contribute to policymaking, and follow up on the implementation of policies, knowing that this role should not be to the detriment of the role of the State to avoid any imbalance that could undermine stability and social security, notably in vulnerable societies; and strengthening the media message in this regard;

(c) Supporting civil society against challenges hindering its effective participation by strengthening its institutional and individual capacities, recognizing its independent role and creating conditions that are conducive to the fulfilment of its functions, especially its freedom of action and respect of its rights in accordance with international treaties and laws.

2. *Case studies on civil society participation in policymaking in selected Arab countries*

(a) Adopting clear standards to classify the functions of civil society organizations, developing suitable indicators to measure their performance and monitor their influence on decision-making, and publishing outcomes to exchange expertise and knowledge;

(b) Preparing further case studies and research about civil society participation in public affairs, following up on development issues, influencing policymaking, as well as identifying the paradigms or mechanisms that civil society organizations could take from the private sector to effectively influence decision-making.

3. *Impact of civil society participation in policymaking*

(a) Emphasizing the linkage between civil society influence and capacity to participate in reforms, decentralization systems and democratization on the one hand, and the capacity of political parties and the empowering conditions provided by existing systems on the other hand;

(b) Supporting interactive frameworks and forums that provide civil society with opportunities to consult, exchange expertise, promote knowledge about issues of social and economic development, and developing the necessary participatory skills to address those issues;

(c) Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to shape their developmental vision, set their priorities and promote their management of participation either in terms of representing interests, preserving stability and defending rights and freedoms or in terms of organizing mobilization campaigns,

disseminating knowledge, managing local development programmes and projects, or in terms of coordination, networking, negotiation and participation in policymaking and implementation control.

4. *General recommendations*

(a) Establishing communication by holding meetings, forums and workshops to promote the content and outcomes of the comparative analysis, and publish information about issues concerning Governments and civil society in member countries; strengthening the participation of civil society organizations in policymaking and building institutional capacity to face existing social problems;

(b) Organizing regular forums to discuss civil society issues and participation with Governments, where local, national, regional and international entities are represented, including the private sector and media, in order to exchange expertise, strengthen partnership and support networking and interaction frameworks;

(c) Welcoming the ESCWA initiative to create a consultative group including civil society organizations to contribute to the discussion of United Nations programmes and orientations; and strengthening civil society relation with Governments. Clear standards should be adopted in selecting members of the consultative group to discuss its objectives and work mechanisms.

B. CONCLUSIONS

8. Participants discussed a set of conclusions related to the modern orientations of civil society functions and to case studies on the impact of civil society participation in policymaking. In order to highlight the areas of confusion in the comparative analysis, participants held a round table meeting to review their conclusions, submit practical proposals to expand the scope of civil society participation in policymaking, strengthen participation mechanisms, and further develop research about participation. Participants reached conclusions and proposals that would refine the final version of the comparative analysis and enrich meetings and forums held to discuss civil society experiences. Below are some of the most important conclusions:

(a) The concept of civil society in Arab countries lacks clarity due to poor principles and standards of equality, rule of law, citizenship and democracy. Furthermore, civil society components are not accurately defined as they overlap with local community components, are dominated by political parties, biased to ruling authorities, and are penetrated by religious associations with growing influence. Besides, civil society organizations are not accurately classified due to the existing confusion between ongoing activities and their beneficiaries;

(b) Reconsidering the formulation of social contract requires building cognitive capacity, raising awareness about public affairs, strengthening participation mechanisms, and supporting participation systems. It also requires discussing a common vision among active players in society with regard to social priorities, institutional functions, roles and the distribution of responsibilities. The outcome of that discussion will certainly contribute to strengthening Governments and their transparency, and enabling civil society organizations to participate in public affairs. In this context, it would be useful to review the Arab social contract which offers a modern perspective about basic freedoms;

(c) The comparative analysis reveals the importance of civil society participation in policymaking in terms of providing opportunities and conditions for empowerment, shaping public opinion and encouraging peaceful and civilized means of putting social problems on the public agenda, and contributing to the transformation of agendas into practical policies, programmes and plans provided that civil society participates in their implementation, in their evaluation for the purpose of correction and sustainability, and follows up on issues of accountability, with due consideration to the interests involved;

(d) The importance of interest groups and lobbies is growing in civil society along with their influence on public opinion and decision makers in the region. Furthermore, intermediary organizations which bring local organizations closer to decision makers are having a growing importance, such as research centres and local governance councils;

(e) Due to obstacles hindering civil society participation in policymaking, civil society organizations are playing an increasingly important role in providing humanitarian services and in complying with local developmental issues in order to respond to urgent socio-economic needs in the region;

(f) The evolution of civil society organizations is problematic in the light of the prevailing revenue-generating economic structure, and socio-political conditions where the culture of partnership and citizenship is weak, the rule of law is receding, tendencies to dominate are increasing, corruption and ostentatious consumerism are widespread, tribal, sectarian and familial polarization is growing, and the linkage between wealthy people and politicians is strengthened;

(g) It is necessary to look into the dynamism, classification and growing capacity of religious movements to compete with civil society organizations, especially in providing humanitarian and care-oriented services. It is also necessary to influence decision-making, quantify resources and identify the expanding popular bases. Furthermore, civil society organizations should organize their relation with decision makers and with the popular bases whose interests they are representing;

(h) It is necessary to follow up civil society expertise and experiences, and monitor the sustained impact of the new functions of civil society organizations concerned with reform, democracy, defence and advocacy by conducting serious research to establish adequate conceptual and regulatory frameworks such as observatories or joint councils, or by issuing annual follow-up and monitoring reports;

(i) The role and impact of security institutions are strengthened in all aspects of political, economic, social and even cultural life. This role is growing to the detriment of other State institutions, thereby adversely affecting the empowering conditions for civil society organizations and their freedom of action which may contradict the interests of those in charge of security institutions;

(j) The influence of civil society on policymaking is the result of the accumulated achievements of organizations providing development services. Therefore, developing the work of those organizations and enabling them to provide high-end services, through capacity-building, as well as learning about key global experiences in providing development services will enlarge the horizons of those organizations. Besides, promoting local and national networking among organizations will strengthen their visibility and influence.

II. TOPICS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

A. MODERN ORIENTATIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY FUNCTIONS

9. Under this topic, the concept of civil society was first reviewed based on a set of applied definitions. Besides, participants discussed the emergence of civil society, the evolution of its functions and challenges faced through participation in policymaking, notably in the current period where promoting the role of civil society has become inevitable. Moreover, participants tackled the classification of civil society in the Arab region, modern trends shaping its functions and roles, and conditions influencing its performance. Finally, a set of conclusions were reached and submitted for discussion about the following main issues:

(a) The cultural approach clarifies the role and influence of civil society without using standard classifications that do not take into consideration the existing shifts between a primary society and a political one. Besides, the approach based on institutional and organizational functions reveals the difference and common ground between the civil and political sectors as reflected in the functions of local authorities or municipalities;

(b) As a result of the absent political environment that supports civil society functions, the scope and implementation mechanisms of those functions are reduced; therefore, it is important to focus on democratic regimes which provide mechanisms for participation, the culture of citizenship which implies a social contract that distributes responsibilities and protects rights, institutional capacity-building including resources, knowledge and negotiation skills, and the need to crystallize development visions and policies that pave the way for civil society contribution;

(c) It is hard to talk about civil society without addressing the existing political systems, factors influencing them, as well as their standards and values that generally reveal a downward trend in creating empowering conditions for civil society. Besides, it is hard to talk about participation and its impact without having a space where this participation takes place, without having institutional mechanisms where stakeholders evolve and interact, and without having frameworks to follow up initiatives, evaluate their outcomes and use them to enhance the representation of interests and to strengthen the Government-civil society relationship.

B. CASE STUDIES ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN POLICYMAKING

10. Under this topic, the four consultants who prepared case studies on civil society participation in policymaking gave their presentations. Those studies represent a fundamental chapter in the comparative analysis and were presented as follows:

(a) **Presentation on the experience of Jordan:** The presentation focused on two active organizations in Jordan, namely the Young Entrepreneurs Association (YEA) and Hamzat Wasel which contributed to social policymaking and societal development. It also tackled such mechanisms used by both organizations as conducting interviews, workshops and mobilization campaigns to exert pressure on decision makers to gear their attention towards disadvantaged and marginalized regions and provide them with public services. Furthermore, a brief overview was given about problems faced by civil society organizations in Jordan in general, and by those two organizations in particular, such as bureaucracy, administrative hierarchy, weak technical capacities in research, collection of information, representation and control, as well as limited financial resources and absent administrative structure that supports the creation of joint committees between ministries and civil society organizations. Finally, the presentation identified reasons behind the success and popularity of YEA and Hamzat Wasel in Jordan;

(b) **Presentation on the experience of Lebanon:** This presentation tackled the efforts deployed by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections to reform the electoral system, as well as the efforts of Kafa organization, concerned with reducing violence against women, to promulgate a law that protects women against domestic violence. Besides, the presentation addressed the different reasons that hindered successful electoral reform and highlighted the successful experience of Kafa in endorsing a law for protecting women against domestic violence. It also covered the methodologies and mechanisms adopted by Kafa to influence decision-making such as resorting to stakeholders and concerned authorities during the formulation of a draft law on the one hand, and using the media to counter domestic violence and unveil domestic scandals on the other hand;

(c) **Presentation on the experience of Palestine:** This presentation covered a set of methodologies and mechanisms used by Palestinian civil society to exert pressure on the Palestinian Government to endorse a draft law on the female quota, which allocates a specific number of parliamentary seats to women, and to establish a mechanism for the draft law implementation. Those methodologies and mechanisms included conducting awareness-raising campaigns and opinion polls with the support of political parties, unions and local committees. Finally, the presentation was concluded with the positive effects of this national campaign especially the representation of woman in the Palestinian Legislative Council and reform in Palestine;

(d) **Presentation on the experience of Yemen:** The presentation highlighted the leading experience of the Human Rights Information and Training Centre in promulgating a law that assigns the registration of

associations to a single governmental authority, and amending articles about foreign aid offered to associations without governmental intervention. A general overview was also given about methodologies and mechanisms adopted by the Centre to exert pressure on governmental authorities to amend articles. Besides, the presentation reviewed the reasons that hindered the endorsement of a law regulating local organizations in Yemen and that prevented the media law amendment. Moreover, successful initiatives taken by active local organizations in Yemen were discussed in addition to other failed experiences with a focus on the reasons of failure, namely the lack of coordination among organizations, the deep-rooted traditional values of tribal and religious forces or even the low efficiency and professionalism of activists.

11. Presentations were followed by an extensive debate about their content, the possible implementation of recommendations proposed by case studies, and the required changes to facilitate implementation on a case basis. The debate also covered a set of proposals aimed at upgrading the role of organizations and strengthening their participation in policymaking. The major issues covered by the debate on case studies were as follows:

(a) **Case study of Jordan:** This study shows that civil organizations in Jordan operate in a political environment that is open to the modernity of the international community, albeit in the light of aggravating social problems such as unemployment, exclusion and tribal pressure. Despite security constraints imposed by the political regime, the role and efficiency of civil society go beyond the experiences mentioned in the case study, especially with regard to the impact of the Jordanian Women's Union and labour unions.

The case study confirms that orientations adopted by some political figures to encourage civil society initiatives or non-intervention, albeit within specific frameworks and areas, create new opportunities to potentially upgrade the role and position of civil society. The most important areas are economic contribution through development programmes and projects, notably at the local level, in addition to the exertion of peaceful pressure, to which decision makers are now increasingly responding.

Furthermore, the case study reveals that a civil society, whose role and functions are evolving, does not always contradict the State. Whenever the role of civil society grows, it creates a direct or indirect impact on State policy. However, this impact is not always decisive and radical, as even the simple and limited impact has to be considered in the framework of a cumulative evolution of the role and functions of civil society;

(b) **Case study of Lebanon:** The study refers to pre-war Lebanon where cross-religious social powers emerged and civil society performance advanced. Conversely, in the aftermath of war, the State became the weakest link compared with religious groups. As a result, the role and position of civil society organizations decreased, and pressures were further exerted on organizations that are independent from religious groups and hamper their sustainability and effective performance.

According to the case study, when constraints are imposed within religious groups, the call for religious pluralism as a source of freedom becomes controversial due to the impact of constraints on the role and functions of civil society. Nevertheless, this fact does not hinder the emergence of cross-religious organizations with modern visions about their functions and mechanisms, and does not prevent their participation in useful experiences as presented in the case study. Those experiences revealed that election campaigns raised awareness among decision makers regardless of the electoral law endorsement.

The case study considers that reforms of the political regime in Lebanon stem from a divided vision into which civil society should not be dragged when dealing with public affairs. Some experiences of organizations are the result of a real conflict with the State such as the campaigns launched about several issues including enforced laws and regulations. Therefore, despite existing difficulties, frameworks should be developed to coordinate or follow up divided interventions according to specific mechanisms;

(c) **Case study of Palestine:** The study reveals the clear linkage between civil society organizations and political parties. This linkage is reflected in some organizations which have emerged from parties and serve as a facade to promote the legitimacy of parties by providing public and social care services. However, it is worth mentioning that some organizations emerged through local initiatives.

Therefore, this case study shows the problematic issue of implementing the electoral process as a mechanism of democracy. Political parties that use this process to win in elections may not be committed to democratic values and practice. As such, political parties do not allow civil society to undertake its activities and even provide care-oriented services, unless through the institutional structures of parties.

Furthermore, the case study raises questions about the relation between a unilateral request to strengthen the female quota in representative entities on the one hand, and the development of democracy on the other hand. It also raises questions about following up the outcome of this experience, its impact on the status of women, and the potential use of civil society alliances in similar future activities;

(d) **Case study of Yemen:** This study reveals the political hegemony imposed on social mobility in Yemen, which weakens the conditions conducive to a civil society that is actively engaged in defence and advocacy. As such, the experience mentioned in the study is important, along with the remarkable achievement made by the alliance of civil society organizations in this field.

Moreover, the study points to the increasing power, role and position of security authorities to the detriment of State institutions which become less able to fulfil their functions. As such, pressures increase on public freedoms, thereby posing further obstacles to civil society role and modern functions.

The case study confirms that political and security repercussions weaken stability, boost tribal influence and increase the provision of care-oriented services to respond to degrading living conditions.

C. IMPACT OF CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN POLICYMAKING

12. This topic was introduced by a presentation that covered the process of policymaking in Arab countries and identified its fundamental stages as well as civil society influence on policymaking. Besides, the presentation identified effective ways to influence policymaking and the common aspects of policymaking in the four countries covered by case studies and the comparative analysis. Furthermore, the presentation tackled the conclusions and recommendations addressed to decision makers in Governments and civil society organizations, which aim to strengthen participation in policymaking. Below are the major issues discussed:

(a) The comparative analysis uses a fixed variable to evaluate the conditions created by political regimes to empower civil society and evaluate its influence on decision-making. However, this variable raises automatic questions about the outcome of decisions taken in the light of civil society influence and about the contribution of those decisions to change and modernization. For instance, what may happen if civil society oversees elections and influences the amendment of electoral laws without inducing any change in the political structure;

(b) The comparative analysis reveals that existing frameworks and mechanisms are too weak to identify acquired expertise and accumulated experiences. As such, initiatives aimed at launching an interactive dialogue and developing adequate follow-up mechanisms for accumulated expertise could be used. In this regard, ESCWA created electronic forums, within its participatory development programmes, thereby allowing active players in civil society to discuss their experiences and expertise in public affairs, and submit interesting viewpoints about the management of public affairs by the persons in charge;

(c) Due to changes witnessed by some civil society groups, the concept of civil society should be reconsidered, such as the structure and functions of unions in several Arab countries like Iraq, the

information promoted by some media outlets which are increasingly involved in public affairs, mobilization, defence and advocacy, as well as the skills acquired in negotiation, to which decision makers sometimes positively respond.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. OPENING

13. Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), delivered a statement whereby he asserted that it is important to adopt objective standards in the evaluation of the role of civil society and the influence it has on policymaking, based on a clear definition of civil society, and identify stakeholders and conditions conducive to an effective fulfilment of its activities. He also discussed the valuable contribution of the comparative analysis which was prepared by SPDS, and commended the ESCWA initiative aimed at creating a consultative group of civil society organizations to contribute to the debate on policies and programme orientations of ESCWA and other United Nations organizations, as well as establishing a forum of dialogue about democracy and development challenges. Mr. Abdel Samad concluded with a call to strengthen civil society capacity and create a suitable environment that fosters its role as an active partner.

14. The Chief of the Social Participatory Development Section (SPDS) in the Social Development Division (SDD) at ESCWA, Mr. Walid Hilal, discussed the outcome of experiences of Arab countries in policymaking and in updating the orientations of civil society participation. Moreover, he tackled the components of society and their capacity to influence policymaking, as well as the growing influence of tribal and religious groups and groups representing business organizations as compared with the influence of civil society organizations. Finally, Mr. Hilal stressed the importance of this meeting in refining the conclusions reached by the comparative analysis and put the final touches on the recommendations of participants with regard to the frameworks, legislations and capacity needed to strengthen civil society participation and influence on policymaking.

B. PARTICIPANTS

15. The meeting was attended by experts and specialists from Governments and civil society as well as representatives from regional and international organizations. Annex I includes the results of the meeting evaluation by participants on the basis of their answers to the questionnaire distributed by the executive secretariat of ESCWA.

C. DATE AND VENUE

16. The expert group meeting to review publication of *Comparative Analysis of Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Formulation in Selected Arab Countries* was held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 1 and 2 December 2010.

D. DOCUMENTS

17. The documents submitted to the meeting are contained in annex II of this report.

Annex I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO EVALUATE THE MEETING

The meeting achieved its targets as to discussing and adopting the comparative analysis publication prepared by ESCWA for enhancing civil society participation in policymaking. It also succeeded in mobilizing experts on case studies, which were submitted in PowerPoint presentations, and on changes required to facilitate implementation on a case basis. An overview of answers to the evaluation questionnaire, including participants' opinions and observations divided according to the following chapters and questions, is presented as follows:

(1) Quality of the Expert Group Meeting

Question 1: How do you evaluate the quality of the Expert Group Meeting in general?

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
6 (37.5%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (6.25%)	0	0

(2) Participants' expectations

Question 2: What were your expectations as to the meeting?

- Discussing and refining the comparative analysis publication;
- Exchanging experiences and expertise about civil society influence on policymaking;
- "Pragmatism" should outweigh "academism" to enhance and influence reality without falling into the trap of "theorizing";
- Learning about civil society and obstacles hindering its role.

Question 3: Were your expectations met?

Yes	No	Partly
13 (81.25%)	0	3 (18.75%)

(3) Usefulness and benefit of the Expert Group Meeting

Question 4: What is your evaluation of the meeting usefulness as to the following aspects:

(a) Importance of the topic concerning work scope and expertise

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
14 (87.5%)	2 (12.52%)	0	0	0

(b) Acquired information and skills that may help you in your future work

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
5 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)	4 (25%)	0	0

(c) Providing the opportunity for information-sharing with other participants in the meeting

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
4 (25%)	12 (75%)	0	0	0

(d) Providing the opportunity for establishing new and profitable work connections

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
7 (43.75%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	0

(e) Scope of benefit from expertise and experience-sharing among participants

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
8 (50%)	5 (31.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0	0

(4) Organization of the meeting and available instruments

Question 5: how do you evaluate the usefulness of the Expert Group Meeting as to the following aspects:

(a) Clarity of presentations made

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
6 (37.5%)	8 (50%)	2 (12.5%)	0	0

(b) Quality of the written material distributed by the organizers

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
1 (6.25%)	11 (68.75%)	4 (25%)	0	0

(c) Organizational arrangements before and during the Expert Group Meeting

Very Good	Good	Intermediate	Bad	Very Bad
12 (75%)	4 (25%)	0	0	0

(5) Duration of Expert Group Meeting

Question 6: The duration of the meeting should have been:

Shorter	As is	Longer
2 (12.5%)	10 (62.5%)	4 (25%)

If your answer is for the duration to be longer or shorter, specify the session(s) that should have been shortened or extended during the meeting:

- Case study presentations should be made during morning sessions;
- Discussion sessions should be extended.

(6) Acquired knowledge

Question 7: Will you be able to make use of the information acquired in the meeting in your work or present this information to other specialists within your country or community?

to some extent	No	Yes
7 (43.75%)	0	9 (56.25%)

Question 8: Do you recommend the participation of other specialists from your country or professional scope in similar workshops if organized in the future?

To some extent	No	Yes
15 (93.75%)	0	1 (6.25%)

(7) Participation in meetings

Question 9: Have you ever participated in activities on the same topic within other organizations?

No	Yes
5 (31.25%)	11 (68.75%)

If the answer is yes, what was the topic, the organization, where and when?

- Legislative and political environment of civil society; not available;
- Civil society evolution; academic institution;
- Economic and social contribution of civil society; Arab Network for Non-Governmental Organizations;
- Role of civil society in strengthening democracy; Seminar on “Democratic Dialogue and Role of Civil Society”, Sana’a;
- Civil society participation in democratic changes; “Future Forum” – Yemen;
- Partnership with civil society and role of civil society; United Nations Development Programme and the League of Arab States;
- Case studies on Arab civil society organizations; not available.

Question 10: Would you appreciate follow-up activities to the present Expert Group Meeting?

No	Yes
0	16 (100%)

If the answer is yes, please specify the kind of activity:

- Holding extensive meetings attended by representatives of Governments and civil society to strengthen participation;
- Holding meetings specialized in policymaking and exploring ways for civil society participation in policymaking;
- Preparing a similar study on further experiences and expertise of civil society organizations in other Arab countries;
- Organizing forums on civil society concept and composition, and on the legal and political environment fostering its role;
- Organizing a workshop to evaluate the role of civil society in development and the usefulness of technical support programmes and resources provided for civil society organizations;
- Preparing a study on the models adopted by the private sector to influence decision-making, in order to replicate their benefits in civil society.

Question 11: Do you have any suggestions on improving and developing similar meetings in the future?

- Allowing more time for discussion;
- Exploring ways to perpetuate the dialogue initiated by the meeting;
- Inviting representatives of Governments and the private sector;
- Submitting written interventions and remarks by experts prior to the meeting.

Question 12: Do you have any observations/comments/questions you would like to address to ESCWA regarding the meeting?

- Expressing gratitude to the working team;
- Finding a mechanism to hold meetings at short intervals.

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.1/L.1	مسودة تنظيم الأعمال مذكرة توضيحية معلومات للمشاركين مسودة دراسة بعنوان "تحليل مقارن لمشاركة المجتمع المدني في السياسات العامة في دول عربية مختارة"