

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

**TECHNICAL COOPERATION REPORT
2006**

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ABOUT UNITED NATIONS ESCWA



The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is the regional development arm of the United Nations for Western Asia. It reports directly to the Economic and Social Council, the principal organ of the United Nations responsible for coordinating economic and social activities. The other regional commissions are: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Despite rich natural resource endowment, the region faces serious challenges in providing equal access for all people to basic development needs and distributing wealth more equitably among them and between countries. Moreover, the development effort of the member countries is severely affected by the political instability in the region. ESCWA aims to improve the lives of people in the region by working to help achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Originally established in 1973 as the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), the Commission was changed in 1985 to the present name, in recognition of its added work responsibility to address the social development issues.

ESCWA is owned by 13 member countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen). ESCWA provides support to its member countries through policy advocacy and dialogue, research and norm setting, technical assistance, and regional coordination among the United Nations entities and support to the regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

ESCWA's annual budget is about US\$32.2 million, with technical assistance representing about US\$5.6 million a year. Our Headquarters is in Beirut, and we have more than 255 employees from more than thirty countries. The work of ESCWA is directed by the Commission, technical committees, the Advisory Committee of Ambassadors and Senior Management. More information is available at (<http://www.escwa.org.lb/>).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ACWUA	Arab Countries Water Utilities Association
AFPU	Agro-food Processing Units
BGR	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (Germany)
CAMRE	Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment
CCNA	Cisco Certified Network Associate
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEDAW	Covention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
EEL	Energy Efficiency Labeling
EMFTA	Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Agreement
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GOIC	Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ITSAM	Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq
ILO	International Labor Organization
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MEDA	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MTCC	Multi-purpose Technology Community Centers
NSOs	National Statistical Offices
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-IHP	UNESCO- International Hydrological Program
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlement Program
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
WFP	World Food Program of the United Nations
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WTO	World Trade Organization

Foreword

I am pleased to present to you our first technical cooperation report. This report is long overdue and aims to update all stakeholders in the progress of the ESCWA technical cooperation programme during 2006, despite the challenging unstable environment of the region.

The report highlights the main operational achievements of ESCWA during the past year including the newly formed integrated social policies framework, the efforts to support Iraqi academic institutions, and the formalization of the regional trade and environment initiative.

Technical cooperation activities complement and support ESCWA's normative and analytical work. This report is divided into seven chapters to relay the work undertaken in connection with the four regional priorities of ESCWA, (a) managing water and energy resources; (b) promoting integrated social policies; (c) stimulating economic development and integration; and (d) harnessing of Information and communication technology for development and the three cross-cutting issues: developing statistical capacities; effective participation and involvement of women; and assistance and support to conflict-stricken countries.

We hope that this report will also identify technical assistance needs for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, and will set the stage for designing technical cooperation projects and programmes that will enhance the capacity of the member countries to meet these goals by 2015.

In order to provide an inclusive picture, programmes and projects financed both from extra-budgetary resources and from funds allocated from the United Nation's regular budget for technical cooperation activities (Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation) are covered in this report.

As this is the first Technical Cooperation Report of ESCWA, we would be grateful for your feedback and suggestions on ways to improve the Report in the future.

I hope that you will find the information useful and of interest.



Mervat Tallawy
Under-Secretary-General
of the United Nations
Executive Secretary of ESCWA

The ESCWA Technical Cooperation Strategy

ESCWA developed a dynamic Technical Cooperation Strategy in order to address the constantly evolving current issues and potential challenges facing member countries. The strategy, adopted by the ESCWA Commission at its 23rd meeting in May 2005, outlines the guiding principles, focus and methods of cooperation with member countries. It provides guideposts for translating the Commission's economic and social development objectives for the region into practical capacity-building initiatives. It also retains enough flexibility to cater to emerging needs and requests of member countries.

What is "Technical Cooperation?"

The policy and analytical work of ESCWA supports the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and international agreements, including the Millennium Development Goals. ESCWA technical cooperation translates the cumulative knowledge and expertise into operational activities.

Technical cooperation aims at **capacity development** – at the individual, institutional and society levels. More than the transfer of skills and knowledge, it offers a wide range of services that ensure both national ownership and sustainability of results.

Focusing on the right issues

Technical cooperation services build on ESCWA strengths and comparative advantages:

- Regional perspective;
- Intergovernmental status;
- Multi-disciplinary skill set of staff; and
- Effectiveness as a champion for regional advocacy within a global perspective.

ESCWA technical cooperation is participatory, demand-driven and results-oriented. It focuses on countries most in need and those areas to which the Commission can bring real value.

Four regional priorities are the focus of ESCWA's work:

- (a) Managing water and energy resources;
- (b) Promoting integrated social policies;
- (c) Stimulating economic development and regional integration;
- (d) Accelerating the introduction and development of technology.

Special emphasis is given to three cross-cutting themes: (a) Enabling the effective participation and involvement of women and their advancement, especially in political arenas and economic activity; (b) Developing statistical capacity in the region; and, (c) Ensuring special consideration is given to people living in conflict-stricken countries and territories.

ESCWA technical cooperation focuses on the following areas of work:

- (a) Common issues at the regional, subregional and country levels;
- (b) Cross-boundary issues, affecting neighboring countries;
- (c) Sensitive emerging issues, requiring advocacy and negotiation skills;
- (d) Opportunities for interregional cooperation and South-South cooperation; and;
- (e) Emerging national issues, falling within ESCWA areas of work and expertise.

Doing things right

A successful technical cooperation strategy requires: (a) ownership by member countries; (b) a receptive and responsive decision-making process at all levels; and (c) the active participation of beneficiaries and partners, in its development and implementation.

The ESCWA technical cooperation program aims to be increasingly responsive to regional and sub-regional needs for capacity building programs. In order to achieve this flexibility, ESCWA needs to develop strategic partnerships and to mobilize resources.

Technical cooperation activities and services may be divided into the following categories:

- (a) Capacity-building of human resources and institutions;
- (b) Knowledge and experience sharing;
- (c) Policy support and implementation advisory services;
- (d) Advocacy and dialogue on emerging and sensitive issues;
- (e) Innovative and replicable field projects.

ESCWA cannot and does not operate alone. Strategic partnerships are essential to the effective delivery of technical cooperation with sustained results. Regional partnerships also secure support for new initiatives and operational activities.

These partnerships have helped ESCWA improve its resource planning and increase its resource utilization effectiveness and efficiency. The focus has shifted to meeting client needs and increasing the impact of technical cooperation activities.

Main partners are regional organizations, notably the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council¹, donors, the private sector, UN organizations and entities, and other intergovernmental and international organizations.

For more information on how to benefit from ESCWA Technical Cooperation services, visit: www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/pptcd.asp

Ensuring Top Quality in Technical Cooperation

Technical cooperation activities are regularly evaluated. Workshop questionnaires, field evaluations and interviews are among the methods used to control the quality of services ESCWA offers.

With respect to regional advisory services, 82 evaluation questionnaires were distributed to ESCWA member countries and to organizations that benefited from advisory services in 2005. The response rate was more than 70 percent, and over 85 per cent of the respondents rated the services as timely and of good or very good quality. Similarly, 90 percent of respondents found the recommendations of advisory services suitable, applicable and useful for future work. The majority of the respondents indicated that the advisory services contributed positively and directly to their work. Achievements of the advisory services noted by beneficiaries were: (a) Developing appropriate strategies and plans of action; (b) Improving existing procedures and organizational structures; (c) Initiating projects; and (d) Implementing and evaluating activities in a precise manner. All types of advisory services extended by ESCWA were found useful, with the first preferences for training workshops and technical support, followed by policy advice, and then project identification, preparation and implementation. Among respondents, 72 percent indicated that they maintained a good/very good working relationship with the regional advisers and ESCWA staff.

Areas of improvement

Good practice, lessons learned and suggestions that ESCWA should take note of and consider in its future programming were: (a) Establishment of a database of regional experts; (b) Closer follow-up to recommendations of advisory missions; (c) Longer duration and higher frequency of missions; (d) Involvement of more national experts in advisory missions; (e) Regular monitoring and evaluation of services rendered; (f) More training workshops for ministries and other government agencies; (g) Better dissemination of information on ESCWA programs and activities; (h) Organization of regional meetings for knowledge-sharing among member countries; (i) Development of exchange and cooperation programs among member countries; (j) Dissemination of achievements and lessons learned in a specific country among all member countries.

The MDGs and ESCWA

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight time-bound, measurable goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and improving living conditions for women and men alike by 2015. The MDGs are based on the principles and commitments of the Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit (New York, 2000) and of earlier conferences and summits. Arab countries reiterated their pledge on *Keeping the Promise* to achieve the MDGS in the Arab Declaration on the Pursuit of the Implementation of the MDGs (League of Arab States, 30 June 2005).

¹ A list of project partners and donors for the year 2006 can be found in the Annex.

A salient achievement was the project of monitoring and reporting on the progress in the Arab region towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and related capacity building. ESCWA played the lead role and coordinated the UN system-wide joint effort, which resulted in the preparation and dissemination of the first regional report on the MDGs covering all 22 Arab countries in 2005-06.² The report was prepared within the framework of the 2005 World Summit (New York, September 2005) to raise awareness and capacity building for monitoring and reporting on MDGs in the Arab region.

The report revealed mixed progress in the Arab – ESCWA - region towards achieving the MDGs, with sharp differences at the sub-regional level. Whereas the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council are in a relatively good position, Yemen, as well Iraq and Palestine may not be able to achieve most of the MDGs by 2015. The majority of the middle-income Mashreq and Maghreb countries vary in their potential to achieve the MDGs. Across the region, increased efforts are required particularly in meeting the goals on poverty reduction, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

There is a clear need for increased **regional solidarity and partnerships**, to enhance pro-poor macroeconomic policy frameworks aimed at reducing poverty at the national level. Also, the **provision of regional public goods** will be key for achieving sustainable human development in the ESCWA region. The provision of these goods requires regional security and peace, regional integration of trade and transport services, and integrated management of regional natural resources, including water and energy, and the environment. From a regional perspective, there exist important challenges but also extraordinary opportunities for change and transformation.

² The Arab MDG Report is available online at: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/information/publications/edit/upload/scu-05-3.pdf>.

CHAPTER ONE

1591 words

Regional Priority 1: Managing Water and Energy Resources

Water and energy are basic necessities of life. Yet, many people in the ESCWA region are without a safe water supply or sanitary facilities. About one-fifth of the Arab population also has no access to electricity. ESCWA is trying to help these people, often marginalized and vulnerable groups, gain access to such essential commodities in line with Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7.

MDG 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability emphasizes the urgency and need for protecting the environment when pursuing economic and social development activities. The goal is to reverse the loss of environmental resources and reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.

ESCWA's technical cooperation efforts support governments in developing strategies and actions to improve the sustainable management and use of natural resources.

Regional Challenge:

Water scarcity

Water scarcity in the ESCWA region is of major concern. Water supplies became deficient as early as the 1970s and today the region depends as much on water from outside the region - in the form of food imports - as on its own renewable water resources.

The threshold for meeting water requirements for agriculture, industry, energy and the environment is calculated at 1,700 cubic meters per person. The average annual conventional and non-conventional water resource availability in the ESCWA region in 2003 was about 1,029 cubic meters per person. Notably, more than half of the ESCWA member countries had less than 500 cubic meters available per person per year.

Predictions on future water scarcity are even more alarming when long-term population growth is taken into account. The people of the region will need to turn to non-conventional water resources to cover their basic needs. Non-conventional water resources are mainly derived from seawater desalination in the Gulf countries and agricultural drainage re-use in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt.

Renewable Water Scarcity in ESCWA region (*blue in a box*)

The extent of water scarcity can be shown by the Water Barrier Index (WBI), which estimates annual renewable water available per person and defines categories of varying levels of water stress. By 2015, the year to meet the Millennium Development Goals, only Iraq will be above "severe" levels of water scarcity.

TABLE. WATER STRESS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES (ESCWA, 2003)

Level of water stress (WBI)	ESCWA member country
No water scarcity (3,000-1,700 m ³ /capita)	Iraq
Water stress (1,700-1,000 m ³ /capita)	Syria
Severe water scarcity (1,000-500 m ³ /capita)	Lebanon, Egypt, Oman
Critical water scarcity (500-200 m ³ /capita)	Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Palestine
Acute scarcity (<200 m ³ /capita)	Bahrain, Jordan, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait

Regional Solutions:

Managing shared groundwater in the Mediterranean

With increasing water scarcity in Mediterranean countries, competition over internationally shared aquifers is likely to intensify. ESCWA is therefore helping develop tools for monitoring, assessing and managing shared groundwater resources in Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) countries -Albania, Croatia, Jordan, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In 2006, water policies, visions and forecasts for the region were reviewed and updated in two workshops that brought together 46 representatives of MEDA countries in total. As a result:

- A draft policy framework for inter-state cooperation on shared aquifers was formulated in April 2006;
- Preparations started for a project on Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management (ISARM) in partnership with UNESCO-IHP;
- A comprehensive database of shared aquifers in the Mediterranean region is being established.

This is a collaborative effort among regional and international organizations, namely the ESCWA, the German Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), FAO and UNESCO.

Access to clean water and sanitation

Water utilities face political, socio-economic, financial, and institutional barriers that limit their ability to provide reasonably priced clean water. These difficulties are compounded by a lack of coordination among water utilities across the ESCWA region. In September 2006, ESCWA joined efforts with the German Technical Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, GTZ) to launch the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA). The aim of the association is to improve water supply and sanitation services in the region and the focus is on:

- Meeting the needs of the poor across the region;
- Promoting public-private partnerships, especially in out-sourcing activities of medium-sized utilities;
- Addressing region-specific problems of water re-use in terms of technology, regulation and management.

Regional Challenge:

Unsustainable energy production and consumption

The poor are more severely affected by environmental degradation and lack of access to clean, affordable energy services. Despite having enormous energy resources, both depletable fossil fuels and renewable resources such as solar and wind, over one-fifth of the Arab population had no access to electricity in 2003. This aggregate figure masks the wide differences across the region. Access to electricity ranges from almost 100 percent in GCC countries, to less than 8 percent in several LDCs.

In the Arab region, some 64 million people (21 percent of the total population) had no access to electricity in the year 2003 and an additional 60 million were severely undersupplied, both affecting rural and urban poor. Renewable energy technologies are necessary to increase access to energy in an environmentally sustainable manner and to alleviate poverty through providing improved economic opportunities.

Regional Solutions:

Electricity for rural Yemen

In 2006, ESCWA conducted an assessment on potential renewable energy applications in the rural areas of selected ESCWA member countries. As a result, a pilot project for photovoltaic electrification was established at Ka'awa village in Yemen.

A series of awareness-raising and training workshops were organized, during which thirty-five trainees from different Yemeni rural electrification authorities increased their understanding of renewable energy applications. The workshops focused on technical requirements, promoted transfer of know-how and stressed on the beneficial effects of access to energy for rural women.

During the next phase of this project, photovoltaic panels will be installed in the village of Ka'awa, providing the locals with much needed access to a reliable source of energy.

Improving energy efficiency in Qatar

Electricity demand is surging across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Alarmed by the trend, Qatar was one of the first countries to ask ESCWA for assistance in improving efficiency in the electricity sector.

In 2006, ESCWA and the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (KAHRAMAA) established a cooperation program and outlined a preliminary action plan to guide this pilot effort in Qatar.

Eight energy efficiency audits/surveys in the main energy consuming sectors collected technical data to assess electricity supply and demand, as well as load profiles. In 2007, economic data will be compiled and assessed, focusing on the electricity tariff structures.

Following the example of Qatar, member countries are becoming more aware of the potential savings through energy efficiency improvements. Yemen, with ESCWA's help, prepared a framework for a national energy efficiency plan in the energy consuming sectors in.

Energy efficiency labeling

Energy Efficiency Labeling is a program used worldwide to target individual energy consumers, raising awareness on electricity consumption of home appliances, cutting household electricity bills and lowering national energy demand.

In 2006, a regional workshop on Energy Efficiency Labeling (EEL) was organized by ESCWA. Thirty-six middle-level managers of the energy sector from different member countries improved their knowledge on how to start up Energy Efficiency Labeling programs as a means to achieving better energy use. Participants also discussed their experiences on EEL country-specific programs in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. The meeting helped identify needs for regional action, including the establishment of a regional-wide EEL standard, regional access to energy efficiency test laboratories and, the use of media and school curricula for awareness-raising.

Promoting the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is an innovative way to benefit from the use of cleaner technology. An awareness raising and capacity-building regional workshop in December 2006 targeted forty middle-level managers active in the energy/environment sectors from different member countries. The workshop participants developed skills and knowledge necessary to establish the technical and institutional bodies that will prompt the use of CDM as a tool for achieving sustainable development in the region. During the workshop, Kyoto protocol requirements were reviewed and an analysis of national sustainable development priorities, policies and CDM project design was offered.

How does the CDM work?

The **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** is an arrangement under the Kyoto Protocol, allowing industrialised countries with a greenhouse gas reduction commitment to invest in emission reducing projects in developing countries. This option is presented as an alternative to what is generally considered more costly emission reductions in their own countries. As of February 2007, 513 projects had been registered by the CDM Executive Board as CDM projects. These projects reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 114 million ton CO₂ equivalent per year.

Regional challenge:

Environmental deterioration and mismanagement

People in the ESCWA region live in a continuously deteriorating environment. Population growth (160.1m in 2000 compared to 187m in 2005), along with current production and consumption patterns, aggravate the already alarming state of the physical environment. It is the poorer population groups living in the region who suffer most as a result.

Loss of natural resources is advancing rapidly and a vicious circle of poverty and environmental destruction is created that impedes local development. Effects at the global level are dramatic. This trend calls for much needed regional planning that places consideration for the environment at the forefront.

Regional solution:

Environmental legislation and strategies

Preservation of natural resources, environmental awareness-raising, networking with partners, enhancing institutional and human resource capacities and monitoring the implementation of UN sustainable development programs are among the measures that need to be prioritized in the agendas of member countries.

In 2006, ESCWA played a leading role in promoting a regional vision for sustainability, through:

- Recommendations for environmental protection within the context of a twenty-year strategic plan in Saudi Arabia. The process covered both the political and technical levels, with the aim to incorporate environmental dimensions in population strategic planning;
- A methodology for mainstreaming environmental considerations in development planning in Oman. Advisory support focused on the conservation of natural resources, guidelines for considering the environment in sector planning and the creation of a central environmental data and information system;
- Advisory services to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources in Syria, to formulate a sustainable development strategy for the petroleum sector. ESCWA also contributed to the establishment of the National Cleaner Production Center (NCPC) in Syria;
- A Draft Law for Environmental Protection prepared and presented to the Parliament in Yemen. The organizational structure and the internal executive regulatory framework of the Environmental Protection Authority were ratified.

CHAPTER TWO

Promoting social policies

Many people in the ESCWA region still face unequal access to universal basic social services.

The presence of a large youth population in the region and the special needs of other vulnerable groups, including people living with disabilities, migrants, older persons and persons with HIV/AIDS, emphasize the urgency for socially inclusive policymaking.

Many social development programs are charity-based, rather than rights-based. Social policies are often incoherent, seldom harmonized and formulated with little input from civil society, against the backdrop of increasing income disparities.

ESCWA is committed to promoting coherent and integrated social policies in member countries, and to empowering individuals to participate in social development.

This regional priority relates to several MDGs, particularly the eradication of poverty (MDG1) and the special needs of vulnerable groups (MDGs 2-6). Poverty alleviation contributes to improvements in health, education and to gender equality.

Regional Challenge:

Lack of integrated social policies

Social policy cannot be formulated in a vacuum. Inconsistencies between economic, financial and social policies are widely criticized at both global and regional levels. Social policy also needs to take into account the impact of globalization and be sensitive to regional and national specificities.

In order to correct this problem, ESCWA works with governments and civil society organizations at all levels of the social policy formulation process. ESCWA addresses social policy concerns, by enabling a common understanding of concepts, analytical tools and policies for development issues affecting priority groups

Regional Solution:

Towards an integrated social policies framework

In 2006, ESCWA assisted several member countries in assessing national social policy processes and in designing, implementing, and evaluating integrated social policies. ESCWA also supported national advocacy programs for the promotion of integrated social policies, involving a wide range of stakeholders, especially civil society organizations.

- In the Kingdom of Bahrain, the promotion of the integrated social policies approach resulted in the establishment of a Social Policy Unit at the Ministry of Social Development. An orientation training was organized for the staff of the unit together with staff from concerned ministries and departments. Follow-up on the progress of work of the Unit is ongoing;
- Advisory services were provided to the Oman Ministry of National Economy and the Kuwait Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Assessments of the social policy environment were conducted in both countries to identify opportunities for collaboration on the promotion and adoption of integrated social policies.

Promoting participatory development

At the local level, ESCWA worked to strengthen government partnership with civil society through the promotion of social policy dialogue. Action primarily centered on researching, identifying and developing models of social participatory development.

In this respect, ESCWA held two national workshops in Yemen bringing together representatives of ministries, civil society institutions and research centers. The workshops highlighted participatory community development methodologies and mechanisms. Trainees gained skills and knowledge in assessing community needs, and formulating and implementing development projects to cater to such needs, by involving all the sectors of a community in the assessment, formulation and implementation process.

Regional Challenge:

The special needs of vulnerable groups

Sixty-five percent of the region's population is under the age of 25. Arab youth face unemployment and under-employment and struggle to access basic rights, such as education and health. While searching for means and ways to develop and express their identity, Arab youth need not be passive beneficiaries of development, but should rather be encouraged to be vocal in matters that concern them, and to be active players in the development process.

Of the 600 million people with disabilities worldwide, 70 percent live in developing countries. The official statistics on the number of disabled persons in the Arab world (1 to 2 percent of the population) underestimate the issue at hand. Legislation, when present, is recent and often needs more efficient implementation. Services to the disabled, particularly disabled children, are absent, with the exception of some oil-rich countries.

Acknowledging this challenge, an Arab regional conference held in May 2003 proposed a "Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities", based on human rights approach to development. In December 2006, the GA adopted the international convention. At the regional level, the League of Arab States adopted and declared the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities (2004-2013) in May 2004.

Regional Solution:

Empowering the youth

ESCWA has established the Arab Youth Directory to empower Arab youth through cooperation and networking among youth NGOs. The Directory comprises of a youth NGO database, including an overview on youth policies, youth related structures and youth programs. (www.escwa.org.lb/ayd).

This tool enables youth NGOs in the region to coordinate activities, attract partners and donors and exchange information and best practices. It also facilitates networking and interaction between Arab and non-Arab youth. During 2006, the Arab Youth Directory witnessed a rising number of subscribing NGOs, including youth women's NGOs.

Enabling the blind to access information

Introducing the blind to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills enhances their employment opportunities and greatly improves their quality of life by facilitating their access to information and knowledge. The Regional Braille Documentation Center was established for this purpose, as a regional on-line electronic facility for blind Arab end users.

An additional initiative is the Net Forum for the Blind (NFB), jointly established by ESCWA and ITU. The network serves as a virtual forum for the dissemination of information on ICT for the visually impaired end-users. (<http://www.escwa.org.lb/nfb/index.asp>).

Regional Challenge:

Uncontrolled urbanization

ESCWA countries have experienced rapid urbanization and, in spite of regional and national differences, the trend is on the rise. It is estimated that the population of the ESCWA region increased by 81 percent between 1978 and 1998, reaching 158 million people. Most of the growth in the region is happening within cities, with urban population doubling between 1975 and 1995. Presently around 60 percent of the total population lives in cities, and this trend will be further reinforced in the future to reach around 66 percent by 2020.

The growth of cities in the region is often accompanied by a number of serious problems, notably the spread of urban poverty, the growth of squatter settlements, and environmental degradation, all of which negatively affect the quality of life at both the local and global levels.

Regional Solution:

Good urban governance and security of tenure

ESCWA collaborated with the UN Human Settlement Program (UN-HABITAT) and the Arab Towns Organization in promoting sustainable urban development and adequate shelter for all. Two UN-HABITAT global campaigns were introduced to the ESCWA region over a three-year period that was completed in 2006. The aim was to raise awareness and promote dialogue among governments, local authorities, civil society and the private sector on five region-sensitive components: urban governance, the right to housing and land tenure, citizenship and enhancing local governance, alleviating urban poverty, and community empowerment. Six countries (Jordan, Egypt, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Syria and Yemen) adopted the campaign and four other (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and UAE) committed to further cooperate with ESCWA towards future adoption.

The Cairo Declaration, adopted by the Arab Regional Conference on the Review and Appraisal of HABITAT II in April 2006, represented an unprecedented commitment by local authorities to align national development strategies with the campaign's commitment to reduce poverty, generate employment opportunities, and strengthen the bases of citizenship, community participation and good governance.

Local urban observatories

Twelve cities in the region initiated decrees for the establishment of Local Urban Observatories, to monitor environmental and social sustainability. Local Urban Observatories are governmental agencies, research centers or educational institutions, designated as the "workshops" where monitoring tools are developed and used for policy-making. A Local Urban Observatory for a city or town is the focal point for urban policy development and planning. It is also the place where collaboration among policy makers, technical experts and representatives of partners groups is fostered.

The Cairo Declaration

The representatives of Arab governments voted the Cairo Declaration on **Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Governance** on the 15th of December 2005. The Declaration reaffirms the commitment of all signatories to continuously develop Arab cities and human settlements in line with the principles of the Habitat Agenda, based on integrated policies that ensure the principles of partnership, support of local authorities, motivating civil society as well as the participation of the private sector and the media.

The Declaration also commended the efforts of ESCWA and UN-Habitat and their regional partners in launching the two Global Campaigns in the countries of West Asia region under the title of the Regional Campaigns for Land and House Tenure and Good Urban Governance.

CHAPTER THREE

Word count: 2473

Regional Priority 3: Stimulating Economic Development and Integration

Throughout the world, there is growing integration of economies, through the trade of goods and services, financial flows, and the movement of people and knowledge. The risks and opportunities of globalization need to be carefully managed, so that everyone can reap the benefits of this global trend.

To address this issue, ESCWA focuses on three main areas: trade, transport and financing for development. In particular, ESCWA works with member countries on:

- Developing trans-boundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital;
- Enhancing negotiations skills, necessary for accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other trade agreements;
- Improving the region's trade and investment climate;
- Providing advice on financing for development, including debt restructuring, rescheduling and forgiveness agreements;
- Better managing challenges posed and opportunities offered by globalisation.

This regional priority is directly linked to MDG 8 on developing a Global Partnership for Development, which calls for a commitment from both developed and developing countries to adopt policies that promote growth, socio-economic integration and cooperation to confront the challenges of globalization.

Regional Challenge:

Slow trade liberalization

Despite the close cultural ties and a common language, intra-Arab trade is still less than 10 percent of total Arab trade (2004). The Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA) was the result of years of pressure to liberalize regional trade.

At the global level, only 8 ESCWA member countries have joined the WTO (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia). Three countries are in the process of joining (Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen); and the Occupied Palestinian Territories still lack any official interaction with the WTO.

Many governments are yet to engage the private sector as a necessary partner in the development process. For example, small and medium-sized enterprises constitute 90 percent of businesses in the Arab countries and are often discouraged to trade internationally due to complication of procedures. Facilitation of the work of these businesses would have a great impact on the entire economy.

Regional Solution:

The acronyms of globalization: WTO & EMFTA

WTO

In 2006, ESCWA helped several member countries in their WTO accession and follow up negotiations:

- In Syria, a trade policy draft was prepared and national trade priorities were identified. Officials from the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade were trained at a WTO accession workshop, which was carried out in cooperation with UNCTAD and UNDP;
- In Yemen, officials from the Ministry of Industry and Trade enhanced their negotiations skills for WTO accession dialogues at a workshop organized by ESCWA;
- Sudan and Libya also welcomed the ESCWA policy advice on the opportunities and obstacles presented by WTO, particularly in relation to trade in services;
- GCC country representatives participated in an awareness-raising workshop on specific WTO commitments in the areas of goods and services, which was held in Saudi Arabia.

EMFTA

ESCWA consulted with stakeholders in the region and helped raise awareness of member countries about potential benefits and risks associated with the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA). EMFTA promotes regional integration through the facilitation of trans-boundary flows of finance, goods and persons. In 2006, ESCWA conducted sectoral assessments for four selected priority areas:

- ❑ Environment-related aspects of trade liberalization;
- ❑ Impacts of agricultural liberalization;
- ❑ Potential need for tax reform; and
- ❑ Implications for urban employment and industrial diversification.

These essays contributed to the Sustainability Impact Assessment of EMFTA, which is being financed by and conducted under the aegis of the European Commission.

Trade as an engine for growth

The International Forum on Trade Facilitation, held in Geneva in May 2002, reaffirmed the need for *global* measures and instruments for trade facilitation. As a result, in 2005 UN Regional Commissions jointly developed a project, aiming at strengthening the international competitiveness and the negotiating capacity of member countries by sharing knowledge and best practices on trade promotion.

In principle, this initiative promotes:

- Greater participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the global supply networks;
- Improved trade facilitation policies at the national and regional levels; and
- Increased knowledge sharing and use of ICT in supply chain management.

Greater participation of SMEs in global supply networks was promoted through a regional workshop on Trade Facilitation for SMEs, held in November 2006. An Arabic language CD-ROM on “Trade Facilitation Measures for the Supply Chain” was launched and disseminated in parallel with the workshop. The CD-ROM offers electronic educational content to decision makers in international trade facilitation and to SME owners.

In June 2006, officials from the region improved their negotiations skills on trade facilitation, at a capacity building seminar held in collaboration with the UNECE, World Bank, and the World Customs Organization. Increased participation of Arab countries in multilateral negotiations was promoted under the umbrella of WTO, and the use of ICT in customs and related trade procedures was encouraged.

Trade and the Environment:

Why integrate trade & the environment?

The importance of integrating trade, environment and sustainable development has become even more evident during the past decade, in view of the rapid pace of globalization, trade liberalization, and the adoption by governments and the private sector of more stringent environmental and health requirements.

There are two trade and environment issues of concern to developing countries. The first concerns trade flows out of developing countries (exports). Frequently, goods produced in developing countries do not adhere to the product standards and process and production methods (PPMs) imposed by developed countries.

The second concerns trade flows into developing countries (imports.) The imports of products in to developing countries are sometimes products that would not be accepted in developed countries, such as secondhand waste, hazardous materials or other low quality products that have negative impact on environmental sustainability.

The challenge lies in adopting a balanced approach to the global trading system so as to maximize economic opportunities for the region, while pursuing environmental and development goals.

The ESCWA Regional Program for Trade and Environment

The ESCWA regional program for trade and the environment started in 2003 and focuses on building the capacity of public and private stakeholders in three priority areas namely market access, competitiveness and dispute resolution.

The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment in the Arab Region (CAMRE) Technical Secretariat of the League of Arab States issued a resolution in Algiers in December 2006, requesting further analysis on trade and environment topics based on the work completed to date.

Additional focus areas of the program include production and consumption linkages, technology transfer, the need for more environmental goods and services, South-South trade liberalization, and harmonization / approximation of standards.

Assistance to support these efforts focuses on:

- (a) governance;
- (b) policy analysis;
- (c) enabling institutions;
- (d) negotiations;
- (e) information dissemination; and
- (f) private sector development.

The program is coordinated by a Joint Secretariat, consisting of the Technical Secretariat of the CAMRE of the League of Arab States (LAS), ESCWA, and the Regional Office for Western Asia of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP/ROWA).

In the Arab region, there are concerns about the export competitiveness of local industries, their capacity to comply with new requirements and to access new markets. There is also a need to protect local consumers and producers from increasing imports of low quality goods from various trading partners.

In this context, four national and two regional workshops took place in 2006 in the ESCWA region. National roundtables to encourage integrated decision-making on trade and environment were conducted in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, in addition to two regional seminars in Muscat and Cairo. An additional national capacity building workshop on Trade and Environment was held in Sana'a, Yemen and was complemented by the first meeting of the National Committee on Environment and Trade. The workshop addressed the management of fisheries and trade-related multilateral environmental agreements. As a result of these successful activities, ESCWA has been receiving an increasing amount of requests for follow-up training.

Regional Challenge:

High transport costs, financial and human

People in the ESCWA region pay 70 percent higher transport costs than in developed countries, as a result of administrative and legislative barriers. In general, developing countries lag behind the developed world significantly in the service, quality and cost of air and maritime transport. Procedures related to the clearance of goods at border crossings through customs are complicated and lack automation. Transport and trade can become more efficient through the use of electronic data interchange (EDI) and other ICT instruments.

Even more worrisome is the steady increase in the number of road traffic deaths in the region in the past decade. In 2002, the mortality rate from road traffic injuries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region was 26.4 deaths per 100,000, the second highest in the world after the African region. The issue of road safety is bound to receive much attention in the coming years, as ESCWA member countries become increasingly aware of the scale of the problem and the gravity of its consequences.

Regional Solutions:

Facilitating transport between regions

The UN Regional Commissions have joined efforts in developing interregional transport and facilitating interregional trade and tourism. The main goal is to identify and develop the most economically viable transport links that connect all five regions. Eight ESCWA member countries are benefiting from this coordinated effort, namely Jordan, the UAE, Syria, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

In previous years, alternative linkages between the ESCWA, ESCAP, ECA and ECE regions were identified. In 2006, all Regional Commission conducted feasibility studies and analyses of the socio-economic importance of each linkage.

In ESCWA alone, 353 officials were trained on identifying and reducing regulatory and procedural barriers to international transport, during six national workshops held in Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in late 2006.

Integrating the Arab transport system

In parallel with this global initiative, ESCWA is leading the development of an Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), comprising of road, rail and maritime transport. ITSAM consists of a regional transport information system, a methodological framework for policy analysis and formulation, and national transport and trade facilitation committees in member countries. The role of these committees is to improve trade and transport procedures and increase the use of electronic data interchange and other information and communication technology applications.

Within this framework, ESCWA assisted Jordan in drafting legislation on international multi-modal transport in 2006 (the first of its kind in the region), conducted an economic feasibility study for constructing a railways network in Yemen and responded to requests from several member countries for assistance in international goods transport facilitation.

Road safety

As a response to a dramatic rise in traffic accidents, the 'first UN Road Safety Week' will be held in April 2007. In preparation for this event, ESCWA helped member countries establish National Road Safety Councils and assisted them in formulating proposals for collaborative activities. National focal points benefited from a two-day training workshop in Cairo in December 2006. A toolkit for organizers of the Road Safety Week was made available to all participants.

In 2006, ESCWA also contributed to a study on the road safety status in Syria and in Yemen. The study will result to the formulation of strategies for the improvement of road safety.

Regional Challenge:

Financing for development: Foreign Direct Investment

The ESCWA region is one of the lowest recipients of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the world. The region also lags behind in mobilizing internal financial resources for development. Some of the countries have accumulated substantial foreign debt, thus undermining the future economic prosperity of their people.

In terms of FDI inflows, the region accounted for merely 1.5 percent of world FDI inflows and 0.5 percent of FDI received by developing countries in 2003. Yet, low FDI is not the only problem. Until recently, the lack of reliable and consistent data on FDI stocks and its distribution among economic sectors had been making the formulation and implementation of investment boosting policy a difficult task. No comprehensive surveys for accurate FDI figures had been conducted region-wide. Different sources, therefore, continued to provide their own rough estimates on inflows of FDI, without covering the direction of the flows and the sources of investment.

Regional Solution

Networking FDI expertise

In response to the pressing need for accurate, unified data based on international methodology, ESCWA completed in 2006 a four-year long effort to assist eight member countries on obtaining accurate data on FDI statistics. Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE benefited from this joint ESCWA-UNCTAD project. These countries are now able to independently produce and maintain accurate databases and are working towards formulating suitable policies that promote FDI inflows in an adequate climate for investment.

Towards this goal, 280 data collection officers were trained on FDI data compilation, dissemination and analysis, by implementing international methodological standards. In addition, twenty-nine participants from the State Planning Commission of Syria received follow-up training on international statistical methodologies and best practices in the area of FDI statistics. Member countries completed the compilation of FDI statistics and prepared country papers on investment policies. These papers will be discussed at an expert group meeting to be held in 2007 to review progress and the way forward.

An independent evaluation of this project indicated that all participating countries benefited from the trainings and the technical assistance provided by ESCWA. The lessons learned from implementation will be utilized in project design of further efforts. Government officials also expressed the need for follow-up training on FDI outflows.

Conference Diplomacy and Multilateral Negotiations

To assist countries in advancing their national interests and drawing maximum benefits from the exchange of information and cooperation which flow from regional and international conferences, ESCWA held a training workshop on "Conference Diplomacy and Multilateral Negotiations," in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), from 21 to 23 June 2006. This workshop aimed at explaining concepts of multilateral conferences, diplomacy and negotiations that take place in the context of the United Nations, and to familiarize countries with the underlying dynamics of conference processes. Participants included diplomats from the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the embassies of Bahrain, Oman, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Romania, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela, and the Fujairah Free Zone Authority in the United Arab Emirates.

To date 13,000 trainees have benefited from such workshops organized by UNITAR, which cover conflict and cooperation in international diplomacy, technical and practical foundations of multilateral conferences and negotiations, and rules of procedure. Other themes include cross-cultural communication, group decision-making, and the role and duty of secretariats and chairmen.

CHAPTER FOUR

Word count: 1122

Regional Priority 4: Information and Communication Technology for Regional Integration

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are an indispensable tool not only in project planning and managing but also in helping meet development goals.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) declared that the promotion of ICT improves the chances to achieve all MDGs, particularly those relating to poverty alleviation, the promotion of education, women's empowerment and public health.

ICT contributes directly to poverty alleviation by creating new jobs, establishing new distribution channels and by providing new competitive advantages in the region. The ability to access, gather, analyze and produce information empowers societies and strengthens political engagement for technological progress.

The establishment of an information society and knowledge-based economy is a priority in the ESCWA region. Comprehensive ICT-for-development policies and national strategies need to be developed and effectively integrated in national development programs.

Regional Challenge:

Low IT literacy

To varying degrees, ESCWA member countries are still trying to reap the benefits of ICT in raising the standard of living, increasing productivity and developing a knowledge economy.

Many ESCWA countries face challenges in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating their ICT strategies. Currently, ICT indicators for the region as a whole are lower than world average.

At the same time, the region has tremendous development potential for building the information society, based on its common language, cultural heritage and a large youth population.

Greater efforts need to be deployed in increasing literacy and education levels and tapping into human resources and talents, especially for women and the growing youth population. A strong political will is needed to enable the emergence of an inclusive information society in the Arab region, which promotes the right to knowledge.

Regional Solution:

Policy-making for an Information Society

ESCWA works in partnership with other regional commissions, DESA, UNDP and UNCTAD to promote national ICT policies, e-strategies and programs harnessing the potential of ICT in development.

In 2006, 26 officials from nine ESCWA member countries participated in a workshop on ICT policy making. Participants were trained on the formulation and implementation of national ICT strategies for development, as well as on measuring and evaluating the impact of ICT policies. A network of ICT policymakers was formed to share experiences and knowledge in the implementation of ICT strategies and to promote bilateral, regional and international cooperation, in particular South-South cooperation.

In Jordan, ESCWA assisted the national ICT focus group, established by the Minister of Information and Communication Technology, in the formulation of a research and development (R&D) strategy and in

the development of a strategic framework and an implementation model. The strategy is under consideration by the Jordanian Cabinet.

In application of the WSIS Tunis Agenda, ESCWA provided advice to member countries on e-government, e-readiness and the establishment of centralized data warehousing systems. Special attention was given to the promotion of the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), a database containing economic and social statistics from member countries. Capacity building workshops and hands-on training on ESIS database were held in UAE, at the Federal National Council, and in Qatar, at the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIC). A plan of action was agreed for the implementation of the ESIS database in GCC countries. Qatar serves as pilot country in the GCC region, an initiative supported by GOIC, Qatar Planning Council, and ICT Qatar.

Regional Challenge:

Wide digital divide

Western Asia suffers from a widening digital divide at three levels: nationally, between urban and rural areas, regionally, between GCC and other member countries, and internationally, between the region and other regions of the world.

The Arab region as a whole is home to five percent of the world's population and less than one percent (0.89%) of the world's Internet users. Low literacy rates, particularly among women, pose the biggest challenge to the region catching up with global developments. ESCWA works to promote poverty alleviation through better access to ICT and related knowledge sharing.

Regional Solution:

Bringing new technologies to impoverished communities

ESCWA, in cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO), formulated the regional agenda for Action on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in July 2002. Today, this initiative is being implemented through a number of programs and projects. The goal is to explore how new technologies can be harnessed for employment creation and poverty alleviation in Arab countries.

How can new technologies help alleviate poverty?

A number of vehicles exist to deliver new technology inputs to disadvantaged communities. Among those, ESCWA has picked out and invested in Multipurpose Technology Community Centers (MTCC) and Agro-Food Processing Units (AFPU).

The MTCCs provide services that develop users' ICT skills (basic computer training; International Computer Driving License (ICDL) training etc.) Establishing MTCCs requires financial support to purchase IT equipment, but also strong commitment from the local communities, that will run the center and ensure its financial sustainability, when the role of ESCWA is completed. The MTCCs employ local trainers and provide disadvantaged communities with access to information, language training materials, vocational trainings etc.

The AFPUs provide green technology, equipment and vocational training on modern agro-food production and processing (dairy processing; coffee processing; rural waste water system). The AFPUs contribute, at the community level, to processing and marketing of agro-food products according to high hygiene and quality standards.

Pilot facilities are currently operational in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

In 2006, ESCWA established three Multipurpose Technology Centers (MTCCs) and two Agro-food Processing Units (AFPUs) in selected villages in Syria and in Yemen. Eight operators were trained in cheese production in Syria and another fourteen participants attended an awareness-raising workshop on the opportunities presented by ICT in Yemen. In December 2006, fourteen members of partner NGOs and

managers of the MTCCs and AFPUs attended a 5-day training in Syria, on enterprise support schemes, marketing and communications.

ESCWA, Safadi Foundation and the Professional Computer Association of Lebanon established a partnership to support the development and implementation of specific activities of MTCCs in the Akkar region, Lebanon.

Networking expertise

A network connecting the pilot MTCC and AFPU facilities in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, hosted by ESCWA, shares and transfers experiences, lessons learned and good practices. The network promotes and facilitates cooperation with a range of actors in municipalities, research and development centers, universities and other academic institutions, NGOs, and selected private enterprises. Operators of MTCCs in Syria, Yemen and Lebanon received hands-on training on the use of the network. (www.escwa.org.lb/mtecpr/).

Sectoral ICT assessments

Sector-specific ICT services, functions and applications were provided in fields such as education, land and maritime transport. Among others, the state of ICT in the education sector in Saudi Arabia was reviewed and analyzed. The outcomes of this analysis will be presented in the second Human Development Report of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER FIVE

Words: 884

Cross Cutting Theme 1:

Developing Statistical Capacity

Reliable statistical information is key to the adoption of evidence-based policies. Accordingly, national statistical capacity needs to be strengthened and aligned with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

All Millennium Development Goals are linked to developing and achieving adequate statistical capacity in the countries of the region. Assessing progress towards the MDGs requires the use of standardized methodologies that provide comparable, accurate and reliable data. This data and information serves to raise awareness among stakeholders on relevant gaps and can be used to tailor policies to address these identified problems.

ESCWA works with member countries to promote the use of harmonized statistical concepts and to assist in compilation and dissemination of comparable and reliable data.

Regional Challenge:

Unreliable statistics

In responding to their national and international development agendas, many ESCWA countries face the challenge of producing and disseminating statistics that are accurate, reliable and timely.

In 2006, ESCWA conducted a Needs Assessment for capacity building of the National Statistical Offices (NSO) in the region in order to identify their managerial and technical needs. The assessment examined the systems and operational environment in NSOs, the outputs produced in relation to development goals, application of international standards and capacity building needs for the production of development indicators. Significant shortcomings and weaknesses were identified.³ The representatives of the NSOs, present at the the seventh session of the Statistical Committee in 2006 welcomed the ESCWA initiative and endorsed the outcomes of the assessment. A plan of action for implementation in 2007-09 was adopted.

Regional Solutions:

Monitoring progress in meeting the MDGs

Dedicated efforts were initiated in 2006 to increase availability and accessibility of data relating to the MDGs. The UN Development Group launched a project on “Statistical Literacy and Capacity Building for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals” to operationalize the MDGs. ESCWA is the project focal point for the Arab region and leads the implementation of the project in partnership with UNDP.

In 2006, training materials were produced in Arabic, including a manual on “Indicators for Policy Management,” a practical guide for policy-makers. The first regional training of trainers took place in Jordan, involving two country teams from Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Participants representing the League of Arab States (LAS), NSOs, ministries and civil society, were introduced to the

³ More information on the challenges faced in the region in producing and disseminating statistical information, as part of the results obtained from the regional needs assessment conducted for the capacity building of national statistical offices in the ESCWA region, can be accessed online. (<http://www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/scu/events/7-9nov06/Scu7e12.doc>).

DevInfo database (www.devinfo.org) and were trained on the interpretation and use of MDG statistics in policy-making. Additional trainings will be organized in the near future.

Population and housing censuses

Countries will need to conduct at least one population and housing census during the period 2005-2014, according to the 2010 UN World Program on Population and Housing Censuses. This census is the primary source of information about the size of each country's population, the geographical distribution and social, demographic and economic characteristics of its peoples.

In order to assist member countries, ESCWA established a task force for population and housing censuses. The aim of the task force is to assist authorities in conducting the censuses. Policy advice and technical support were provided to several member countries on census methodology and operations.

Data users from the region were trained at a seminar held in Cairo on the 2006 population and housing census. The seminar stressed the importance of censuses in providing the data necessary for policy formulation processes, and as important tools for monitoring progress towards achieving MDGs.

A handbook on international measures and recommendations for regulating census operations was released with the help and active involvement of ESCWA. The guide, called *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, advocates that the outcomes of censuses be disseminated as soon as possible, as they are a main source of information for planning and development.

Through sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learned, member countries are better informed about the 2010 World Program on Population and Housing Census requirements.

The International Comparison Program

The International Comparison programme (ICP) is a global statistical exercise designed to collect and disseminate Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) data. These data are internationally comparable and crucial to forming sustainable policies and monitoring economic progress of countries, as they measure real product. PPPs are calculated to arrive at not only the structural composition of economic activities, but also price, volume and value indices, thus reflecting real levels of performance and productivity of the economies.

ESCWA joined the ICP international team in the last round (1993-96) with the participation of eleven member countries, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The same countries participate in the present 2003 round (excluding the United Arab Emirates, including Iraq.)

In the past four years, ESCWA trained staff of participating countries on data collection, validation modules and price surveys.

In 2006, the 6th regional workshop of the program in Western Asia brought together ICP national coordinators and teams (price experts, national account experts, construction experts), in addition to representatives from the World Bank and ESCWA, to validate third quarter data of 2005. Workshop participants assessed progress made and discussed new methods and tools for data collection in the field of construction. Parallel workshops were held on construction data and on national accounts.

ESCWA consumption data for 2005 and first quarter of 2006 have now been compiled and finalized. Consumption data will be processed to compute national annual price averages and to produce preliminary consumption PPPs. The ICP team at ESCWA, in collaboration with the Global Office at the World Bank in Washington, advised participating member countries on how to standardize compilation methodologies.

CHAPTER SIX

Words: 1077

Cross Cutting Theme 2:

Participation and Advancement of Women

Throughout the world there is widespread discrimination against women and girls in the exercise of their social, political and economic rights. In many countries, a wide gap remains between formal entitlements and the everyday reality of women's lives. The needs of women must be fully reflected in national priorities so that all discrimination against women is eliminated.

Millennium Development Goal 3 on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women highlights the importance of the advancement of women as key to social and economic transformation and to achieving all MDGs. Empowerment and equality of women is also the main theme of the following agreements:

- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- Beijing +5 political declaration and outcome document on "further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," adopted by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in 2000;
- The World Summit Outcome Document, Article 59, that stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality.

ESCWA assists member countries in the formulation of policies that reduce gender imbalance and that empower women.

Regional Challenge:

Discrimination against women

The region suffers from low rates of women's participation in the economic, social and political arenas. Although the constitutions of most ESCWA countries recognize women's civil and political rights as equal to those of men, this has not been translated in reality.

The patriarchal structure and cultural norms of the region impede the advancement of women. The participation of women's civil society institutions in policy dialogue, as well as their ability to promote the implementation of international agreements, is rather modest.

Although literacy rates have risen in the region, the adult literacy rate of Arab women has not increased proportionally. Women's share of paid employment is smaller than that of men and conventional labor practices continue to persist.

The political participation of Arab women remains one of the lowest in the world; women's share of seats in national parliament stood at 8.2 percent in 2005, compared to 4 percent in 1997. Although some progress has been made, women's political empowerment rarely goes beyond symbolic appointment to include posts with policy-making responsibilities.

MDG indicators do not sufficiently reflect the situation of women in the ESCWA region. Sex and gender disaggregated data are vital in assessing the complexities of gender parity, but are available only in a few member countries. The state of women's access to property, productive assets and inheritance rights,

protection from violence, and full participation in decision-making processes is not readily apparent in the MDG indicators. In addition, gender perceptions, attitudes and social structures that perpetuate and institutionalize gender inequalities need also be understood and assessed.

Regional Solutions:

Gender-sensitive MDG reporting

The 2005 Report on MDGs in the Arab region was a milestone in MDG monitoring and reporting. It showed the extent to which gender issues were –or were not – reflected in MDG goals. Member countries were guided on how to produce gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data and were assisted in mainstreaming gender in statistical work.

In 2006, ESCWA further promoted gender-responsive MDG reporting, by developing concrete guidelines for gender mainstreaming in national MDG monitoring.

National gender statistics in Iraq

ESCWA is pioneering a project on the development of national gender statistics in Iraq. The project aims to improve national capacities in the production, analysis and dissemination of quality gender statistics, essential for women's empowerment.

The project supports the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation and the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in the national statistical system of Iraq. The goal is to gender-sensitize actors (statisticians and other employees), processes (data collection methods and techniques) as well as instruments (concepts, definitions and classifications.)

Twenty-four users and producers of statistics were trained in identifying gender issues, producing gender statistics and in disseminating data in a user-friendly way, at the first national workshop on Gender Statistics in Amman. In late 2006, a Gender Statistics Unit was established within the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology. Funded by the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, the project is implemented by ESCWA in cooperation with UNDP and UNIFEM.

Applying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

During 2006, representatives from seventeen Palestinian ministries were trained, in three training workshops, on how to draft the official CEDAW report. Several committees worked on different CEDAW articles and follow-up policy advice for composing the draft official CEDAW report was planned. Drafting of the CEDAW report was temporarily postponed after the elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the change in government.

Gender mainstreaming in Jordan, Syria, UAE and Yemen

In 2006, ESCWA worked to promote active participation of women in the political, economic and social fields.

- The skills of twenty-eight Yemeni trainees to serve as trainers and facilitators for workshops on gender analysis and mainstreaming were upgraded;
- In the UAE, eighteen participants, among whom three were men, received intensive training in gender analysis, gender-sensitive development indicators and related methodologies;
- Advice was provided on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the United Arab Emirates;

- The Jordan National Commission for Women was advised on translating the Strategy for Jordanian Women into practice, and assisted in training of trainers in gender analysis and mainstreaming;
- The Federation of Syrian Women, the largest non-governmental women's organization in Syria, was advised on defining a new vision and mission, and assisted in strategic planning and the formulation of a five-year strategic plan.

Strengthening women's NGOs

To enhance the development role of women NGOs and strengthen the economic and social roles of Saudi women, 244 women from 45 Saudi government institutions, NGOs, women welfare associations, and private welfare societies were equipped with the knowledge and skills of social welfare work in women NGOs.

A training of trainers programme, implemented within this initiative, focused on various income-generating skills in health education; nutrition and cooking; basic computer use; sewing; small food enterprises; and, traditional handicrafts. The project is implemented in cooperation with local welfare associations and the Ministry of Social Affairs of Saudi Arabia. Working closely with key local partners will ensure the sustainability of the results.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Word count: 1,151

Cross Cutting Theme 3: Special consideration for people living in conflict-stricken countries and territories

The ESCWA region has faced crises, political conflicts and socio-economic tensions. It is nowhere more apparent than in this region that wars and conflicts can set back sustainable development. The regional picture is one of uneven development, with the wealthy oil economies gaining prosperity and the conflict-affected economies suffering from the immediate and cumulative effects of war.

In response to these difficulties, ESCWA has been particularly attentive to the needs of conflict and post-conflict areas, notably Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon. ESCWA works to promote conflict prevention measures, to improve understanding of the socio-economic repercussions of crises and to reduce their destabilizing regional impact.

Regional Challenge:

Devastation from conflict

Post-conflict environments are typically marked by the overwhelming need for rehabilitation of key infrastructure, including roads, educational facilities and health care facilities. Beyond physical infrastructure, post-conflict environments also suffer from weak to non-existent institutional capacity, severely deteriorating public services such as education and health, along with heavy damage to private homes, farmlands and businesses. Long years of conflict often result in the deterioration of human resources through death, exit, and destruction of educational facilities. These challenges must be addressed in post-conflict development planning.

In Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, persisting security-related tensions continue to jeopardize any prospects for socio-economic stability and have already led to widespread poverty. Living standards are expected to remain below potential in both economies unless the political situation stabilizes with active international support. The economy of Lebanon, likewise, has been characterized by stagnant growth since the start of political instability in the wake of the assassination of former Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri in 2005. This plight was exacerbated in 2006 by the July war. Over a million residents of south Lebanon, nearly a quarter of the country's population, were displaced. Tremendous destruction was caused to infrastructure and the already fragile government was further weakened.

Regional Solutions:

Towards rebuilding Lebanon

Immediately after the July-August 2006 war in Lebanon, a series of brainstorming meetings and consultations, involving 15 Lebanese experts, resulted in a concept paper on Lebanon's Rebuilding Momentum. The paper discusses political, social and economic dimensions of the conflict and presents a series of policy recommendations and project proposals.

ESCWA has also provided a *regional* platform to support national rebuilding efforts, to share rebuilding experiences and success stories, and to match regional resources with local needs. Some proposed initiatives include setting up of a monitoring system to ensure an effective and efficient reconstruction process, and the establishment of a revolving micro-credit fund for agro-businesses in South Lebanon.

Employment creation

Small and medium enterprises thrive through collaborative approaches drawing upon economies of scale, knowledge sharing, and pooled human and capital resources. ESCWA established a pilot project to

support micro and small agro-industries in South Lebanon, one of the most impoverished areas in the country.

Following a participatory approach, a needs assessment led to the development of two pilot clusters in the *caza* of Bint Jbeil: one for the production of honey and another for the cultivation of *zaatar* (thyme). The implementation of the two pilots in the honey and zaatar sectors included a technical training component on food safety, production techniques, marketing, and project management, which benefited women and youth. Effort was made to locally purchase needed goods and locally provide services associated with land preparation, transport, construction and the installation of equipment and protective measures.

The pilot was very successful, even though the war of July-August 2006 badly affected project achievements in both sectors. ESCWA and ILO have renewed their contribution and other donors are joining to ensure resumption of the pilot and ensure a sound basis for sustainable operations.

The experience gained with this pilot project in South Lebanon could be transferred to benefit similar initiatives elsewhere in the country or region.

Building ‘smart’ communities

During reconstruction and rehabilitation, the process is often as important as the results. Broad community participation, at all levels, in the decision-making process ensures that the reconstruction process will have increased legitimacy.

The ‘Smart Community Project’ (SCP) was initiated to help community members actively participate in the rehabilitation and sustainable development of their communities. Drawing from experience gained through previous projects,⁴ two Multipurpose Technology Community Centers (MTCCs) were inaugurated in rural locations in North and South Iraq.

A total of 96 participants have enrolled in both centers and have already received computer literacy training. The centers offer language training and also serve as centers for vocational training and awareness campaigns.

The rehabilitation of two dairy-processing facilities is also currently under way. Particular focus is placed on establishing quality control systems and meeting food safety standards at the new facilities.

The SCP is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, Salahaddin University and Basrah University and in partnership with ILO, UN-HABITAT and the United Nations Industrial Development Program (UNIDO).

Networking academies in Iraq

In the field of education, ESCWA helped deliver ICT education, mainly Cisco-certified networking technology, to Iraqi youth, university and college students. The comprehensive and flexible e-learning environment, provided by the ‘Networking Iraqi Academies’ program, enables the beneficiaries to learn anytime, anywhere, at their own pace, and with more targeted assessments and accountability than traditional class settings.

The project started mid-2004 with training of Iraqi trainers and by 2006, four regional networking academies and 15 local academies out of the planned 44 academies were already established. Courses currently offered include IT Essentials, Orientation, and CCNA courses. Since the start of the training process, 600 university students in 45 classes were trained on various Cisco courses.

⁴ See Chapter 4.

In 2006, the skills of 18 instructors were enhanced during a training camp, specially organized by the project. This training of trainers focused on various Cisco topics, more specifically on IT Essentials and CCNA topics, wireless, security and PNIE. The eventual technical course will provide university engineers with initial training on how to install, configure, run, and maintain IT hardware already provided to the Iraqi academies through the project. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Iraq Trust Fund is funding this initiative.

Rehabilitation of management skills

In 2006, ESCWA organized seven training courses on management skills for 108 civil servants from the Iraqi Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works and the Ministry of Justice. The training courses improved the skills of the participants with regard to management issues, including strategic planning, project management and team building. Through guided field visits, the participants were also exposed to practices and experiences of relevant Lebanese institutions.

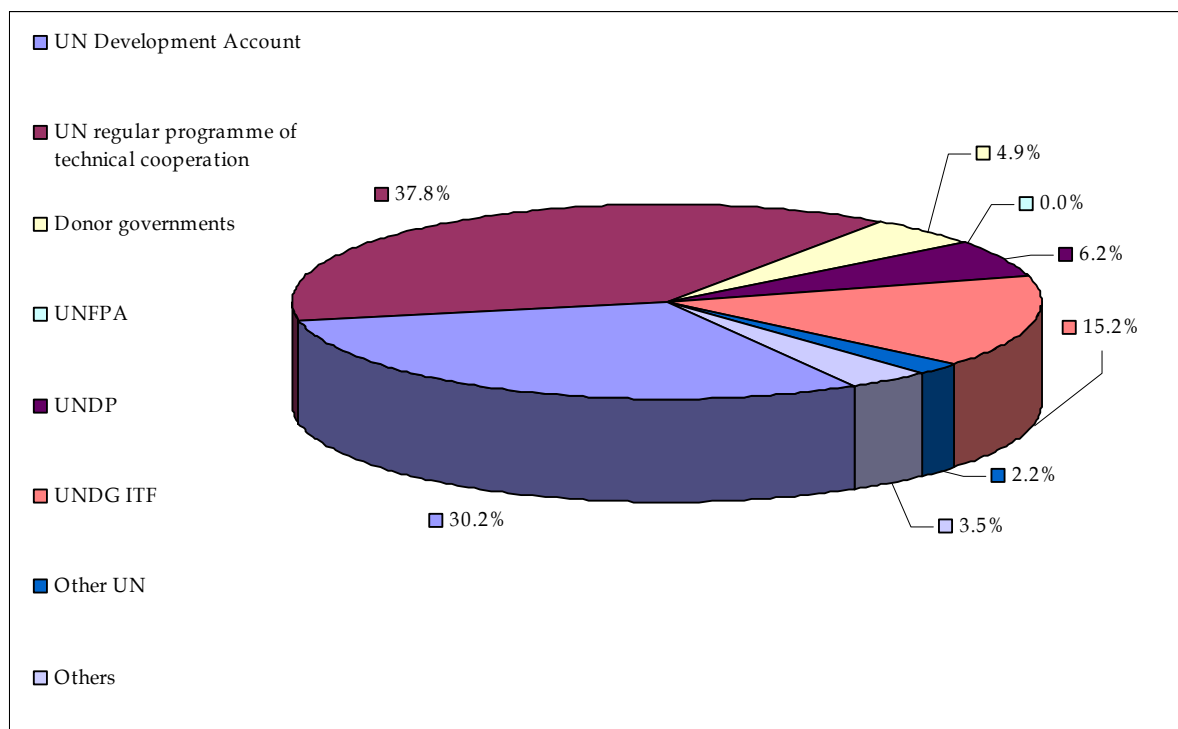
The training modules in 2006 came as a result of the very positive feedback provided by the Iraqi public institutions that participated in the training courses implemented in 2005. The modules in 2005 targeted the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, and the Municipalities of Basrah and Erbil.

FACTS AND FIGURES 2006

Financial contributions for technical cooperation

Total financial contributions in 2006 amounted to US\$5.6 million, 92 per cent of which were from the United Nations system, and 8 per cent were mobilized from other donors and member governments (compared to 96 per cent from the United Nations system and 4 per cent from donor governments and other donors in 2005).

Figure I. Financial contributions for TC in 2006, by source



Contributions from the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation in 2006 amounted to US\$2.1 million (38 per cent) for the provision of policy advocacy and dialogue, policy advice, training workshops and study tours, knowledge networking and generation, and field projects.

Contributions from the Development Account amounted to US\$1.7 million (30 per cent) for five projects executed by ESCWA.

Resources mobilized from other United Nations entities in 2006 amounted to US\$1.3 million (24 per cent) for fifteen projects executed by ESCWA. UN-Habitat financed one project; the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNDG – Iraq Trust Fund financed four each; UNDP financed five projects; and UNFPA financed one project. Contributions received from member governments and other donor organizations amounted to US\$473 thousands (8 per cent) in support of technical cooperation activities and smaller scale projects.

The commission is determined to continue bringing on board donor countries, in particular member countries, and regional funds to help finance transboundary and regional projects. To this effect, ESCWA is actively pursuing partnership development and is working on its resource mobilization strategy.

Provision of technical cooperation

Total expenditures on technical cooperation in 2006 were close to US\$7 million an increase of US\$1.8 million over 2005 expenditures. Figure 2 below illustrates the distribution of expenditures over the four regional priorities, namely managing water and energy resources, promoting integrated social policies, stimulating economic development and integration, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for regional development, as well as the cross-cutting issues of developing statistical capacity, participation and advancement of women, and special consideration for people living in conflict-stricken countries and territories.

US\$4.4 million or 63 per cent of total expenditures were on projects executed for the benefit of countries emerging from conflict and Yemen, ESCWA least developed country. US\$1.7 million or 25 per cent of total expenditures were on projects implemented in the four regional priority areas (energy and water 7 per cent; social policies 4 per cent; economic development and integration 8 per cent; and Science and Technology and ICT 6 per cent). US\$0.8 million or 12 per cent of total expenditures were on projects for developing statistical capacity (7 per cent), participation and advancement of women (1 per cent), and multidisciplinary issues (4 per cent).

Annex II provides for details of 2006 technical cooperation expenditures by source of fund and project.

Figure II. Distribution of 2006 expenditures, by priority area⁵ (\$000)

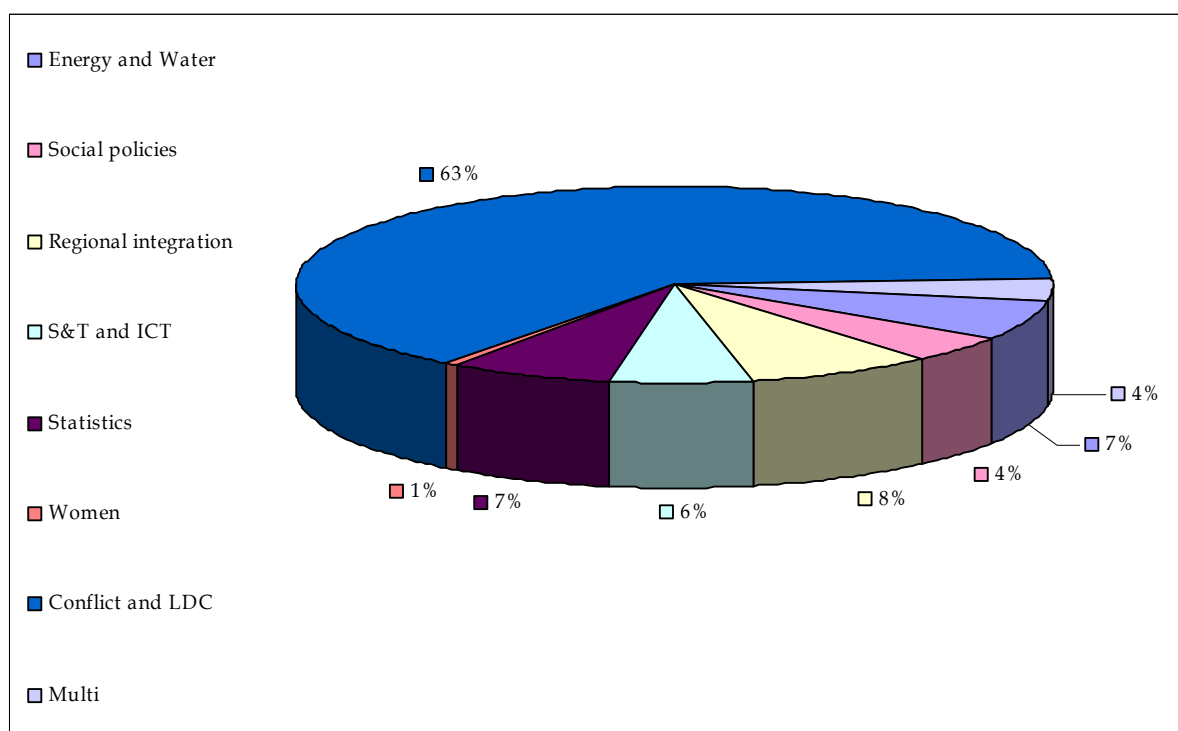


Figure 3 provides for a comparison between total contributions received and total expenditures incurred in 2006. It should be noted that contributions are, at times, received in advance for spending in future years.

⁵ Multidisciplinary projects are those that address more than one regional priority and/or cross cutting theme.

Figure III A. Financial contributions⁶ and expenditures for TC in 2006, by source (\$000)

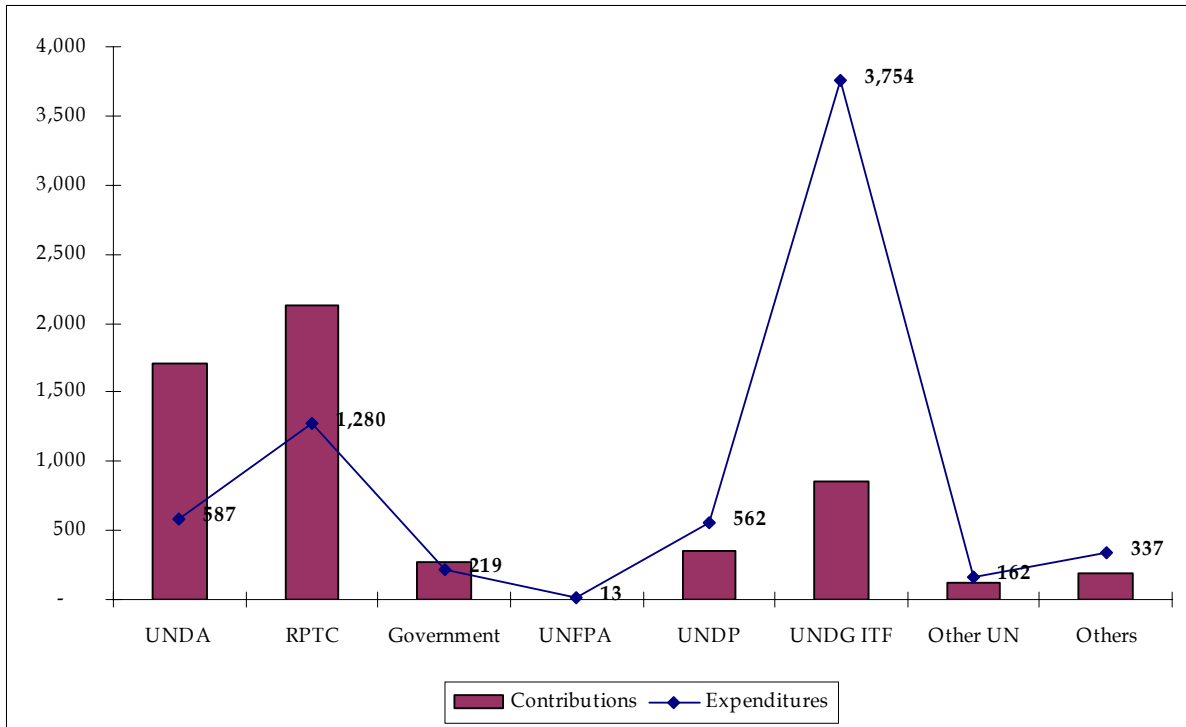
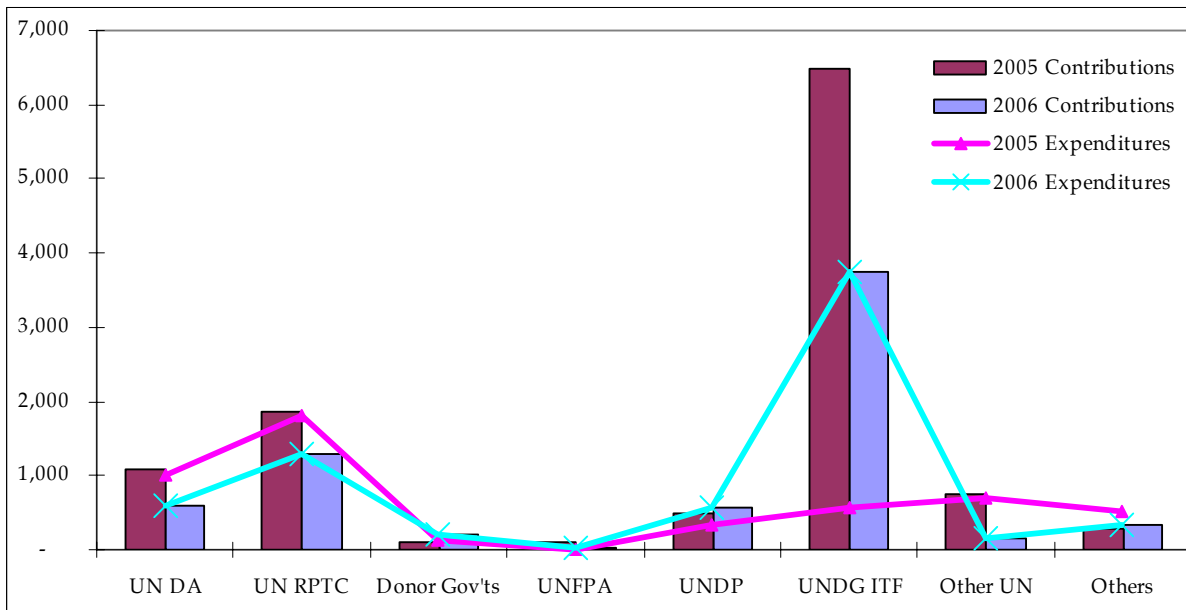


Figure III B. Financial contributions and expenditures for TC in 2005 and 2006, by source (\$000)



⁶ Contributions from the United Nations Development Group – Iraq Trust Fund are transferred in their entirety to the Commission upon signature of the project agreement for expending the funds over the lifetime of the project.

Ongoing, completed and pipeline projects in 2006

In application of ESCWA Technical Cooperation Strategy, which aims to reinforce technical cooperation services at the regional level and increase the coherence and harmonization of development efforts, ESCWA continued its efforts to rationalize its technical cooperation portfolio and move towards fewer, bigger scale and higher impact regional projects (see figure 4). To this effect, the number of ongoing projects was reduced from 64 in 2004 to 56 in 2005 and to 46 in 2006 (see figure 5).

Figure IV. Distribution of project portfolio, 2006

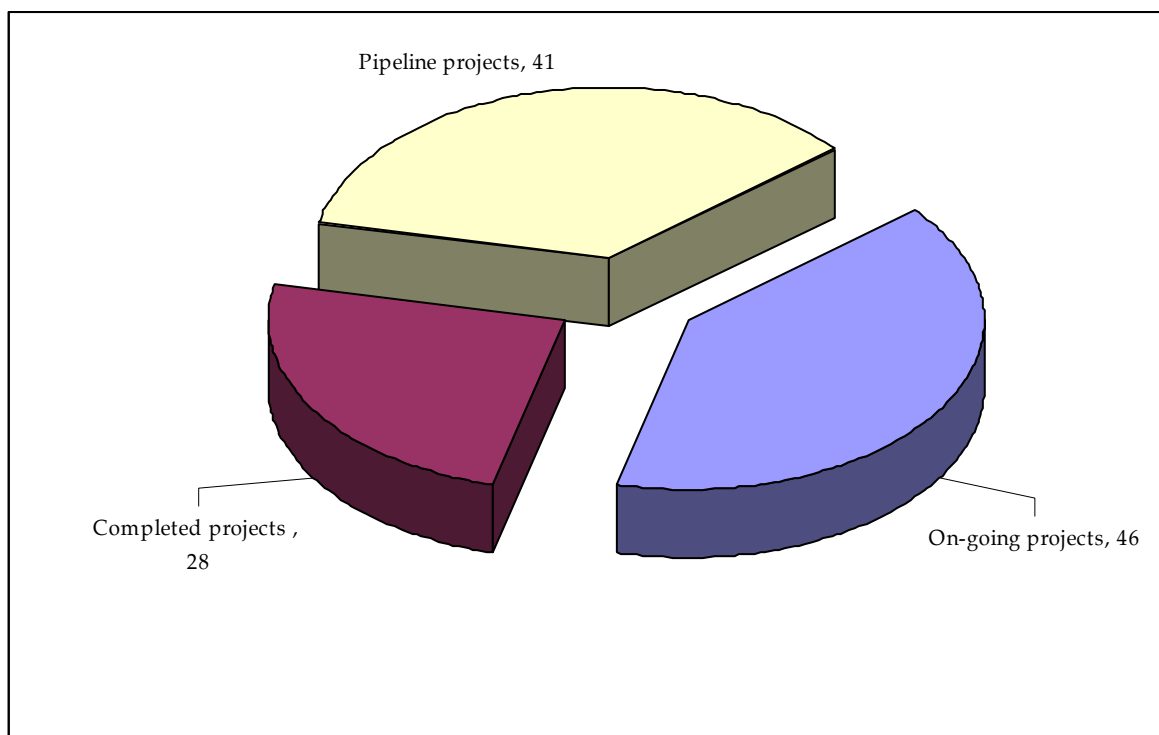


Figure V. Number of ongoing TC projects, 2004-2006

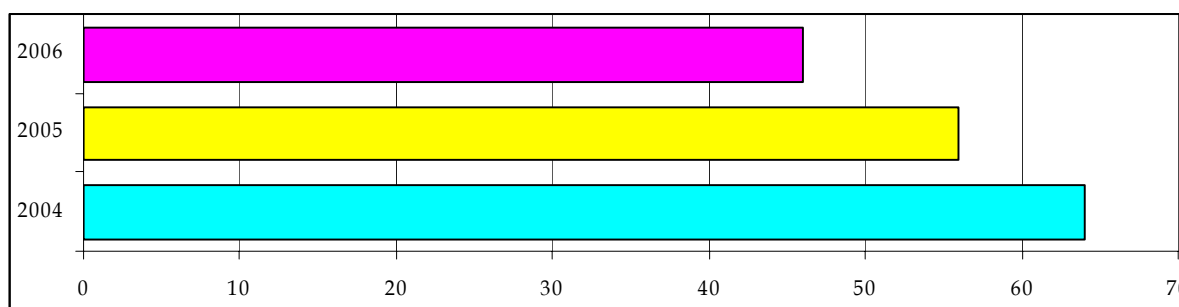


Figure 6 sorts the ongoing projects in 2006 by size, where small projects are characterized as having a total budget of less than US\$20,000, medium projects having a total budget of more than US\$20,000 but less than US\$100,000, and large projects having a total budget of US\$100,000 and more. In 2006, ESCWA was implementing 46 projects. The number of small projects was 9, or 20 per cent of the total, the number of medium projects was 13, or 28 per cent of the total, and the number of large projects was 24, or 52 per cent of the total. Large projects represented 95 per cent of the total budget of ongoing projects (**totaling US\$ 16.8 million**), while medium and small projects accounted for the remaining 5 per cent of the total, Figure 7.

Figure VI. Ongoing projects by size, 2006

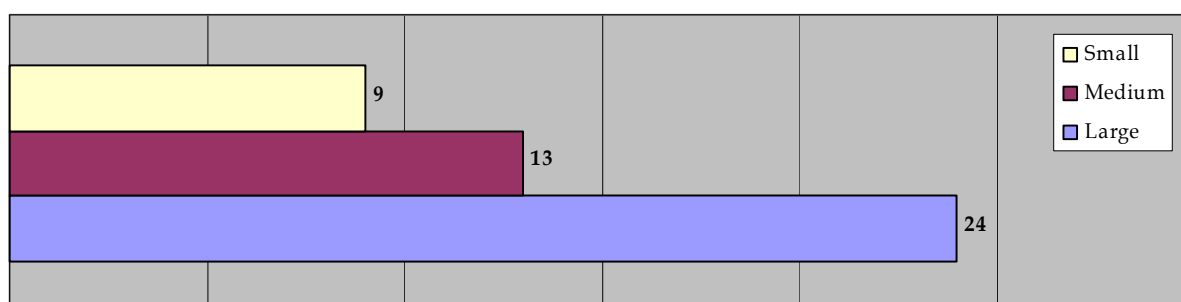
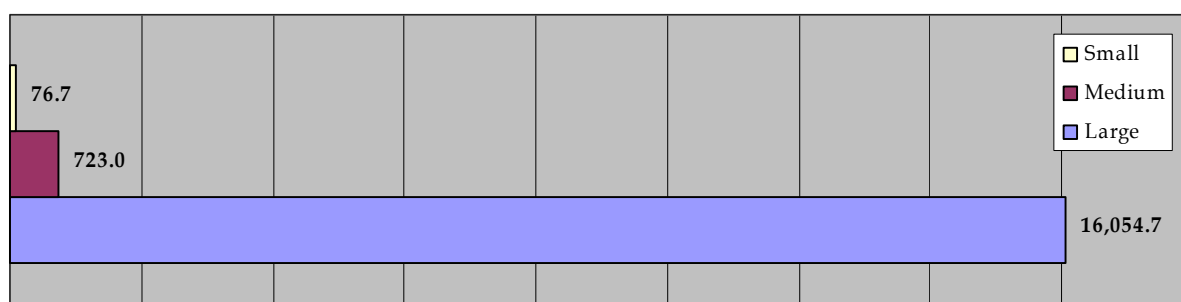


Figure VIII. Ongoing projects by budget, 2006 (\$000)



In 2006, 28 projects were operationally or financially completed: 7 small, 16 medium and 5 large projects. The total budget of these projects was close to US\$2 million. Currently, 41 projects are in the pipeline the details of which can be found on ESCWA Technical Cooperation Website (www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/pptcd.asp).

Annex II

TECHNICAL COOPERATION EXPENDITURES IN 2006

Expenditure (US\$)	
Abdul Latif Jameel Group	70 615
Activating social welfare work of women NGOs in Saudi Arabia	2 352
Enabling Saudi women to joint the labour market through the training of vocational trainers	68 263
AGFUND	27 744
Training of trainers and workers in local community development in Yemen	27 744
Arab chamber of commerce	3 065
ESCWA third forum on Arab business community and WTO agreements	3 065
ESCWA Trust Fund	110 434
UNESCWA reaches out to Arab Youth: Music Concert featuring Star Academy	35 000
The establishment of a UN Arabic language centre	17 400
Needs assessment for capacity building of the NSOs in the ESCWA region	11 314
Pre-feasibility study for establishing the ESCWA Technology Centre	25 500
Economic reform and structural transformation in the Republic of Yemen	21 220
Federation Internationale Automobile	314
Workshop on the implementation of good practices in road traffic safety	314
Government of Oman	25 516
Preparations for the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme in Western Asia	25 516
Government of Qatar	80 446
Cooperation programme on energy efficiency for the Qatari Electricity Sector	80 446
Habitat	49 054
Management skills training for the Iraqi Municipal and Government officials from Erbil and Basra	49 054
International Labour Organization	63 498
Printing Arabic edition of ILO module on Statistics of employment, unemployment and underemployment	830
Regional initiative on the use of new technologies for poverty alleviation	4 655
Employment creation and income generation through the development of micro and small agro-industries in South Lebanon	53 589
Promotional video on the ESCWA/ILO project in South Lebanon	4 424
Iraq Trust Fund	3 753 676
Development of national gender statistics in Iraq	77 135
Iraq Networking Academies	70 331
Iraq Networking Academies (Phase IIa)	1 852 195
Smart Community Project for Iraq	1 754 015
Joint contributions	269 573
2005 Report on progress towards the MDGs in the Arab region	14 751
International Comparison Programme (ICP) for Western Asia	159 851
Follow-up to the Arab International Forum on socio-economic rehabilitation of the occupied Palestinian territories	2 558
Improving statistics for international migration in the ESCWA region	7 589

Expenditure (US\$)	
Technical cooperation in the field of community development in Lebanon	31 909
Regional campaigns on secure tenure and good governance	3 120
Disseminating renewable energy services to rural villages in ESCWA member countries	2 000
Preparation of Arab countries for the 6th WTO ministerial conference	5 679
Strengthening expertise and networking on Foreign Direct Investment in Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar	30 285
Safadi Foundation	4 000
Peace and security in the Arab world	4 000
SESRTCIC	5 500
Regional trade and transport facilitation study	5 500
UNDP	561 903
Statistical literacy and capacity building for MDG monitoring project at the country level	85 792
Management training for the Iraqi Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation	506
Management skills training for the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works	361 513
Management skills training modules for the Iraqi Ministries of Justice and Human Rights	103 718
ESCWA assistance to UNDP Syria on WTO agreements and accession to WTO	10 374
UNFPA	13 139
Integrating demographic transition in development planning in the Arab region	13 139
University of Campania	2 720
Follow-up to the forum on capacity building through technology transfer and networking	2 720
University of Manchester	18 448
Sustainability impact assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area	18 448
GRAND TOTAL	5 047 815
Expenditure (US\$)	
ESCWA led Development Account projects	587 399
Strengthening the development of international merchandise trade statistics and the compilation of e-commerce in ESCWA member countries	13 306
Capacity building for sustainable utilization, management and protection of internationally shared groundwater in the Mediterranean region	98 716
Promoting new technologies for employment and poverty alleviation in the ESCWA member countries	143 688
Knowledge networks through information and communication technology access points for disadvantaged communities	61 417
Capacity building in developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages	270 272
GRAND TOTAL	587 399