

Regional meeting to strengthen the Sub-Committee's capacity on gender equality
"Women's economic participation and welfare economies and policies"
UN-House, Beirut on 27-28 June 2022
Concept note

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), is organizing a regional meeting to strengthen the Subcommittee's capacity on gender equality in women's economic participation and welfare economies on 27 and 28 June 2022.

Background

The Arab region registers low in the Global Gender Gap Index due mainly to low rates of women's participation in the labour force. This is despite the region's tireless efforts to promote such participation with positive impacts on societies and economies. Unpaid care burdens, most of which are borne by women, remain among the most significant factors impeding women's economic participation in the Arab region.

Although there are disparities among the Arab States in terms of attention to and response to issues related to the development of the care economy, in general, this problem arises in the light of the gaps in the region's legal and policy frameworks for care, as well as the weakness and lack of universal availability of care services. The prevalence of certain beliefs and stereotypes also leads to a lack of access to services if available. This does not help alleviate women's unpaid care burden, which often leads them to reluctance to participate economically. The COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by lockdown and social distancing measures, and the consequent significant increase in women's unpaid care workload, has served as an alert to the importance of reforming legal and policy frameworks for care and caregiving economies. All to achieve Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, primarily the 5.4 purpose, which urges Member States to "recognize and value unpaid care work and domestic work through the provision of public services and infrastructure, the development of social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and family, as appropriate at the national level".

Since a subcommittee, composed of representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women in Member States, had been formed, to support efforts to implement sustainable development goal 5 on gender equality, based on the recommendations of the ESCWA Women's Commission at its seventh session, held in Muscat on 20 and 21 January 2016; ESCWA organized in partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality, between September and October 2021, a series of seminars within the Programme to strengthen the Subcommittee's capacity on gender equality in the area of "Developing and reforming welfare and social protection policies to empower women economically and enhance their participation in the labour market".

This programme came in response to a recommendation addressed to ESCWA during the ninth committee on women, held in Amman, Jordan, in November 2019, which states: "Continued substantive support to the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development Goals and to provide the various knowledge and tools needed to assist Member States in accelerating the implementation of the goals and objectives, in particular those relating to gender equality, and encouraging national machineries dealing primarily with women's affairs to participate in the Subcommittee's activities, in addition to other parties, including national statistical offices".

The programme aimed to build the capacity of national mechanisms for the advancement of women and relevant national bodies, in particular national statistical offices, ministries of labour and national social protection institutions, on the development and reform of welfare and social protection policies to empower women economically and enhance their participation in the labour market by enhancing the knowledge and skills of the care economy on the one hand and unpaid care work on the other, to include a definition of the 4th indicator of goal 5 and other associated indicators in the sustainable development agenda; and to discuss the importance of redistributing unpaid care work in order to enhance women's economic participation, especially in the context of prevailing and projected demographic dynamics and worsening social and economic crises, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; to present and discuss policy and legal frameworks on care work available in the Arab region; and to present in details the concept of the care economy: what it is, its components and its links to social protection policies, as well as its importance in promoting women's economic empowerment.

ESCWA, together with its partners, seeks to build on the outputs of this programme and discuss in depth the topic of women's economic empowerment and welfare economies and policies to keep abreast of Arab States' efforts to promote women's economic participation by providing them with the knowledge, skills and tools that contribute to (a) the realities of the welfare economy, and (b) ways to develop national policies to enhance and develop the welfare economy. Thus, partners organize a regional meeting aimed at strengthening the Sub-Committee's capacities on women's economic participation and the development of welfare economies and policies.

This meeting will focus on drawing lessons on how to integrate gender equality in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab region by focusing on care issues and policies. It will also provide some tools and examples from some Arab States on the approach to examining the reality of care at the national level and monitoring the necessary changes. It will also allow for hands-on sessions that contribute to enhancing participants' and participants' capacities to frame the necessary change at the level of legal and policy frameworks and in the delivery of various care services through training activities.

Partners

ESCWA is organizing this meeting in partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Participation

Participants in the meeting are Members of the Subcommittee on Gender Equality representing national machineries for the advancement of women, in addition to representatives of ministries of labour and national social protection institutions.

Language

Arabic is used during the meeting with interpretation from and to Arabic, French and English, as well as sign language when registering for this service.

Time and place

The meeting will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 27 and 28 June 2022 in accordance with the annexed agenda.

**Proposal for the agenda of the regional meeting to strengthen the Sub-Committee's capacity on
gender equality
"Women's economic participation and welfare economies and policies"
UN-House, Beirut
27-28 June 2022**

Day 1: Monday 27 June 2022		
60 min	Opening session	
9:00 – 9:30	Registration	
9:30 – 10:00	ESCWA Statement	
	LAS Statement	
	UN-Women Statement	
	Objective, Agenda, and introduction of participants	
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break	
Session 1: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic on integrating gender equality in response plans		
10:30 – 12:30		ESCWA and LAS presentations
Session 2: Understanding the reality of care at the national level and identifying the necessary changes		
12:30 – 01:00	Presentation of a proposed approach and some tools available to understand and analyze the reality of care at the level to identify priorities and changes	ESCWA
01:00 – 02:00	Lunch Break	
Session 3: Presenting the results of the reality analysis in some Arab States		
02:00 – 02:30	Women's economic empowerment and childcare in Lebanon	Lebanon
02:30 – 03:00	Women's economic empowerment and care of elderly in Morocco	Morocco
03:00 – 03:30	Women's economic empowerment and care of people with disability in Oman	Oman
Day 2: Tuesday 28 June 2022		
09:00 – 10:30	Session 1: Changes to legal and policy frameworks on care	
	Training session and presentation of some good practices on changing legal and policy frameworks on care	
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45 – 12:15	Session 2: Changes in the provision of care services	
	Training session and presentation of some good practices on changes in the provision of care services	
12:15 – 01:15	Session 3: Changes to social welfare frameworks	
	Training session and presentation of some good practices on changes in social welfare frameworks	
01:15 – 02:30	Lunch Break	
02:30 – 03:30	Session 4: Infrastructure changes	
	Training session and presentation of some good practices on infrastructure changes	
03:30 – 04:00	Concluding session and recommendations	