

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/C.2/2021/4
23 July 2021
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Social Development
Thirteenth session
Online, 22–23 September 2021

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Technical cooperation activities**Summary**

The present document provides an overview of technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) under subprogramme 2 on social development since the twelfth session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Beirut, Lebanon on 8–9 October 2019. The present document focuses on examples of activities that highlight the interlinkages between the three functions of ESCWA as a research institution that produces studies aimed at supporting reforms at the public policy level, a regional forum for consensus-building between member States on challenges they face and ways to overcome them and a house of expertise that provides technical guidance to policymakers.

The Committee on Social Development is invited to learn about the technical cooperation activities implemented and to express an opinion on ways to develop them and maximize their utility at the national level.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-4	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. Social justice	5-15	3
II. Poverty reduction	16-21	6
III. Improving employment opportunities	22-25	6
IV. Social protection systems	26-28	7
V. Economic empowerment of women and the care economy	29	8
VI. Inclusion of persons with disabilities	30-52	8
VII. Rights of older persons	53-58	11
VIII. Youth skills development	59-66	12
IX. Urban development	67-72	14

Introduction

1. The present document provides an overview of technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) under subprogramme 2 on social development since the twelfth session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Beirut, Lebanon on 8–9 October 2019. These activities have been implemented by the Executive Secretariat in response to requests from Member States for support in various areas of social development.
2. The technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA fall into the following three categories: advisory services to support countries on issues related to public policies, capacity-building workshops and field projects. ESCWA has intensified its efforts to transfer expertise to Arab States from inside and outside the region, and to translate its standard work and findings from its research into capacity-building and skills-enhancing programmes for representatives of different ministries.
3. To maximize the utilization of available resources and efforts, ESCWA continues to work to expand its partnerships with specialized United Nations organizations, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization and UN-Habitat, and works with regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, academic institutions such as Cairo University and the Lebanese American University; and civil society organizations such as Handicap International, the NYU Center on International Cooperation and the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative.
4. Since October 2019, ESCWA has supported the following areas: social justice, poverty reduction, improved employment opportunities, social protection systems, inclusion of persons with disabilities, rights of the elderly, youth skills development and urban development. The present document provides an overview of these activities.

1. Social justice

5. ESCWA has implemented a project promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region, which was launched in 2016 and lasted until the end of 2020. This project aimed at strengthening the capacity of Arab States to operationalize the principles of social justice and gender equality and integrate them in development strategies and programmes. Activities in the project included the design of the Social Justice Policy Gap Assessment Tool, which can help decision makers monitor the knowledge and skill gaps required in the processes of designing, implementing, financing or evaluating social and economic policies. For more information on PGAT, please see the document [E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/2020/TP.13](#). To learn about the steps in its design, please see the document [E/ESCWA/C.2/2021/8](#), presented to the Committee on Social Development under item 3 of the agenda of its current session.
6. At the national level, ESCWA worked with the Tunisian Ministry of Social Affairs to establish a national technical team that participated in a series of four virtual meetings and consultations (17 and 24 August and 4 and 14 September 2020) to improve the tool, adapt it and set priorities to be included in the preliminary stage of the test assessment in Tunisia, strengthening local ownership of the tool and paving the way for recommendations on its national adoption. As a result, the Tunisian Ministry of Social Affairs issued a decision to introduce the PGAT in all public policies overseen by the various ministries and to adopt the tool at the national level. The ministry also recommended that the prime minister issue a legal provision that would include the principles of social justice in all policies, major reforms and government documents, and recommended use of the tool in preparing the next five-year plan for 2021–2025 and in Tunisia Vision 2030.
7. ESCWA worked to adapt the PGAT and accompanying documentation to host them on an electronic platform and facilitate interactive and systematic collection of the required information and developed a social

justice indicator/barometer measuring the extent to which the policies under evaluation take into account the principles of social justice at all stages of their preparation and implementation.

8. ESCWA, in partnership with the Tunisian Ministry of Social Affairs, organized a high-level meeting on strengthening the capacity of Tunisian ministries to design, implement and evaluate equality-oriented public policies and programmes (Tunis, 16 October 2019). The aim of the meeting was to highlight the key role of equality in the development process, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, strengthen capacities to analyse and measure income, wealth, well-being and gender inequality and design, develop and implement public policies geared towards social and economic equality. The meeting concluded with agreement on a road map for the mainstreaming of equality at the national level in Tunisia.

9. ESCWA also organized a series of national training workshops in Tunisia as follows:

(a) A training workshop targeting directors general in the various relevant ministries on the principles and concepts of equality and the course of its mainstreaming, aimed at increasing political attention and practical commitment and activating participation in the mainstreaming of equality in national plans, policies and programmes (Tunis, 25 November 2019);

(b) A training workshop on the analysis and measurement of social and economic inequality aimed at strengthening the ability of Government officials to analyse and measure inequality as a first step towards formulating and implementing multidisciplinary and evidence-based public policies (Tunis, 26–28 November 2019);

(c) A virtual workshop on the concepts and principles of social justice and how to integrate them in public plans and policies, organized in conjunction with the beginning of the preparation process for the 2021–2025 National Five-Year Plan. The workshop aimed to strengthen the capacity of relevant institutions to integrate social justice concepts and principles into national development plans, policies and programmes, and to enhance knowledge about the interdependence of social justice and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in light of the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. ESCWA provided technical support to Tunisia to develop a simplified manual for trainers on building capacity in the design and implementation of equality-based policies, which trainers use to facilitate the transfer of concepts, knowledge, information and practical mechanisms necessary to mainstream equality during the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of equality-based policies.

11. In the Sudan, ESCWA in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development held a series of workshops on promoting social justice. To ensure that the ESCWA support programme was benefited from, the Ministry formed a working group of department directors from various ministries, representatives of national councils such as the National Council for Child Welfare and the National Population Council, academics and social work experts. The support programme included the following workshops:

(a) A virtual workshop on building the capacity of partnership in democratic governance, aimed at enhancing knowledge about keeping pace with the transition and how to forge a new social contract between citizens and the State based on democracy, citizenship and human rights, raising awareness of the concept and effectiveness of participation and contributing to the development of a road map for developing young leaders capable of contributing to the success of the transition to democracy (24–25 February 2021);

(b) A virtual workshop on "Integrating the principles of social justice into development plans and policies" contributed to deepening knowledge of the concept of social justice, discussing the role of the State and national partners in activating it, enhancing information on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its objectives and its close relationship to achieving social justice, strengthening government capacity to integrate social justice concepts into selected development policies such as social protection policies, food

security policies and investment and tax policies and identifying certain methods for participation and networking (8 and 9 March 2021);

(c) A virtual workshop on the design and implementation of equality-based public policies and programmes to increase the knowledge of policymakers, Government officials and civil society representatives on how to design and implement equality-oriented public policies, further develop competencies on integrating equality issues and principles into social, economic and environmental policies, provide regional and national case studies and facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge on the challenges of addressing inequality and methods, methodologies and mechanisms adopted in developing projects aimed at achieving equality. Some international initiatives and good practices have also been reviewed and considered for repetition and adaptation at the national level (7 and 8 April 2021).

12. ESCWA also supported the State of Palestine in integrating the concept of social justice into national and sectoral planning processes by enhancing the knowledge of planning officials in Palestinian ministries of social justice and its aspects, reviewing a number of sectoral strategies for 2021–2023 and assessing their consideration of social justice. An online workshop on "The concept of social justice and its integration into public policies, plans and programmes" was held, targeting government officials concerned with preparing, implementing, following up and evaluating social and economic development plans, policies and programmes as well as sectoral strategies such as those related to protection policies, social inclusion, food security, etc. (29 July 2021).

13. At the regional level, ESCWA in partnership with the NYU Center for International Cooperation organized [three panel discussions](#) with Government officials in Arab countries on the importance of developing and implementing policies and programmes aimed at achieving social justice, addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and fostering and integrating the principles of equality into national development strategies and programmes. The first discussion was held on 20 January 2021 under the title "[Social protection policies and support policies from a social justice perspective](#)". The workshop discussed social protection and support policies and their linkage with social justice. The discussion resulted in agreement by planning experts and policymakers from various Government institutions on the need to integrate social justice principles into the process of developing and implementing social protection policies and the need to include social protection policies within the framework of comprehensive and integrated social policies through a participatory approach.

14. The second panel discussion, held on 3 February 2021, focused on "[Food Security and Social Justice Policies: A Nexus Approach](#)". The discussion aimed to discuss the current state of food security and its connection with the promotion of social justice, particularly in light of the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion provided an opportunity for planning experts and policymakers from various ministries concerned with issues of social justice and food security to discuss methods and mechanisms that could be activated and reforms that could be undertaken to achieve food security policies that promoted social justice in the Arab region.

15. The third discussion was held on 1 March 2021, entitled "Wage policies and their role in achieving social justice". The discussion sought to present and discuss the status of wage and minimum wage policies in the Arab region and their connection with the promotion of social justice, as well as to highlight the relationship between changing production methods, technology replacing workers and increasing wage inequality. The discussion also reviewed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and wages in the Arab States. The discussion provided an opportunity for planning experts and policymakers from various ministries concerned with social issues, labour and wages to learn about experiences from other countries and reforms that could be undertaken to achieve equitable wage policies in the Arab region.

II. Poverty reduction

16. ESCWA has developed a guide on the relationship between the revised Multidimensional Poverty Index and social protection programmes for Morocco, which makes recommendations on the use of multidimensional poverty methodology in the development of social protection programmes and targeting mechanisms (unpublished, addressed to national authorities).

17. At the request of the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, ESCWA worked to measure multidimensional poverty in Egypt using national definitions and family surveys, in collaboration with the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative and UNICEF. Several consultative meetings were held with national focal points. A framework was agreed upon for calculating multidimensional poverty on the basis of national standards.

18. ESCWA, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Egypt and the UNICEF National Office in Cairo, prepared a study on "Predicting and estimating the negative repercussions of COVID-19", which simulates the change in income poverty in Egypt in 2015–2020, including expectations of inequality and the effects of the pandemic (unpublished, addressed to national authorities).

19. ESCWA provided projections on the course of multidimensional poverty after the COVID-19 pandemic for Iraq and the State of Palestine and prepared a study titled "A flexible modelling approach to nowcasting and forecasting Arab multidimensional poverty" ([E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2021/TP.1](#)), which considers the state of Iraq and data in the country and proposes a viable approach to predicting changes in the revised Multidimensional Poverty Index in a developing country suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic and its challenges. Iraqi health survey data for 2011 and 2018, and the definition of poverty officially adopted by the League of Arab States in December 2020, were used.

20. For the study of the State of Palestine ([E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2021/TP.7](#), titled "Nowcasting multidimensional poverty in the occupied Palestinian territory", provided projections of multidimensional poverty while addressing difficulties related to the lack of some data. Simulations showed a significant increase in deprivation dimensions at several levels, including safety and quality of employment. The study also predicted that multidimensional poverty would increase in 2021 to a level similar to that of 2014 following the Gaza war, and that educational deprivation could become an important contributor to multidimensional poverty in the State of Palestine.

21. ESCWA held a virtual workshop for Saudi Arabia on 15 and 16 June 2021 to build capacity on "The Multidimensional Poverty Index and social protection" aimed at introducing the concepts of material and multidimensional poverty. Participants were briefed on how to build a multidimensional national poverty index, how to draft a multidimensional poverty framework and how to link poverty reduction policies to the results of this analysis. The sessions presented social protection strategies, their role in reducing poverty, how to assess policy choices through simulation and how to monitor and assess the impact of poverty reduction policies in the national context.

III. Improving employment opportunities

22. ESCWA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour of Lebanon, held a virtual capacity-building workshop on "Generating productive and inclusive employment for Lebanon" with the participation of national agencies involved in the development and implementation of employment policies, and in the presence of experts from the Ministries of Finance, Labour, Tourism, Economy and Trade (7–8 October 2020). The workshop aimed to highlight the role of financial policies in job creation and addressed priorities in this area in the private and public sectors of the country.

23. ESCWA, also in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour of Lebanon, also held a virtual digital technology and employment capacity-building workshop, in which representatives of various ministries

involved in the role of technology in job creation participated (14–16 October 2020). Participants discussed the role of investment in improving the quality of education and research and development, its role in strategic sectors and linking them to global value chains, the need to strengthen coordination between ministries concerned with employment and facilitating the procedures for starting businesses and the importance of providing facilities for the operation of small and medium-sized enterprises to ensure their sustainability and create more jobs in them to restore growth and improve productivity and flexibility.

24. ESCWA also launched the #نتعلم_لازم #We_have_to_learn initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Coursera, the leading online learning site, which aims to empower Lebanese and develop their capabilities by providing them with an outstanding learning experience. Through the initiative, 25,000 free training opportunities were provided with certificates for Lebanese people, who completed some 44,377 courses with 549,517 teaching hours. The majority of beneficiaries have enrolled in disciplines that can lead to productive employment, in particular in business administration, data science, technology and health. ESCWA reached out to beneficiaries of the initiative who had completed courses in its fields of work to give them opportunities as ESCWA interns for three months.

25. ESCWA held a webinar on 1 June 2021, called for by those who had applied to the initiative, to discuss the specialties of the courses they had enrolled in, examine the skills required in the Lebanese and Arab markets and highlight the mismatch between skills and available jobs. The webinar also highlighted the importance of targeting policies to improve and refine skills to suit the future labour market. ESCWA prepared a policy summary entitled "Lebanon has high levels of skills but they need to be aligned to market requirements" addressed to the Lebanese Ministry of Labour, which analyses the policies required to improve labour market-friendly capacities based on the results of the "#نتعلم_لازم" initiative and the ESCWA Labour Market Observatory.

IV. Social protection systems

26. Following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other regional committees, launched a project on "**Strengthening social protection for pandemic response**". This project is part of a framework of collaborating with all relevant actors to mobilize a coordinated global response to the social, economic and financial impact. The project aims to strengthen national capacities to design and implement social protection policies in order to rapidly recover from COVID-19, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, and to address the negative effects of future external shocks.

27. As part of the implementation of the project's activities, ESCWA provided technical support to Jordan and the Sudan in the development of social protection programmes. Technical support to Jordan included assisting the National Aid Fund in assessing social assistance programmes, focusing on aid priorities and target groups. ESCWA developed a conceptual framework to analyse data associated with these programmes, which was presented and discussed with the National Aid Fund at a virtual training workshop on 14 December 2020. From the training, participants learned how to analyse data and how the outputs and results of this analysis could guide evidence-based decision-making. On 28 April 2021, a second meeting was held between the two working groups to discuss the technical details of the analysis programme. ESCWA also submitted a proposal to the Fund for digitization of procedures in the programmes it is implementing, the Physical Rehabilitation Programme and the Immediate Cash Aid Programme, so that the Fund could provide aid in times of closure and crisis.

28. Technical support for the Sudan included assistance to the Ministry of Social Development in the preparation of a reference paper on how to develop a national social protection strategy, including detailed practical steps and the identification of relevant stakeholders at the national level. ESCWA also held a national workshop in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development on a nexus approach to disaster management and social protection on 26 and 27 June 2021 in Khartoum, focusing on the importance of coordinating

institutions and Government interests related to social protection and disaster risk management programmes, the need to develop warnings, early intervention, careful assessment of needs, strengthening prevention, protection and response programmes and linking social protection to disaster risk management. The importance of integrating the efforts of all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, into social protection programmes, particularly in the implementation of social security networks, was also stressed.

V. Economic empowerment of women and the care economy

29. ESCWA prepared a series of case studies on women's economic empowerment, the care economy and unpaid care in a number of countries, in preparation for strengthening their capacities and technically supporting them to adopt policies promoting women's economic participation. These countries included Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

VI. Inclusion of persons with disabilities

30. In joint work with the Department of Social Affairs of the League of Arab States and in cooperation with the Regional Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ESCWA held a regional training on national reporting on the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Amman on 28 and 29 October 2019. Through the training, senior officials acquired the basic information and skills needed to monitor implementation of the Convention at the national level for reporting to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

31. ESCWA organized an event on the sidelines of the 14th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entitled "Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in pandemics and crises" (14 June 2021). ESCWA held this side event in collaboration with the League of Arab States, the Ministry of Social Affairs of Kuwait and the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities. The meeting facilitated a dialogue between ministers and senior officials from Arab States on their countries' efforts to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. The meeting reaffirmed a political commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities in times of crisis and inclusion of their needs in any future contingency planning and response as a practical measure given the lessons learned from the gaps identified in the response to COVID-19.

32. ESCWA also collaborated with the UNESCO Regional Bureau in Beirut and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies to organize a regional webinar on 18 May 2020 on inclusive education for persons with disabilities given the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar was of interest to all Member States as it was the first to address the educational conditions of children with disabilities since the beginning of the pandemic. The webinar helped disseminate the results of the "[Survey of Government actions taken to protect persons with disabilities from the COVID-19 pandemic](#)", conducted by ESCWA on various interventions in numerous Arab countries, and contributed to the exchange of Arab and international experiences.

33. As part of work to include persons with disabilities and provide community rehabilitation, ESCWA held a regional training workshop in Cairo from 14 to 30 October 2019, in collaboration with the Citi Disability Training and Studies Centre and in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Egypt, with material support from the British Women's Council on inclusive and community development (community rehabilitation). Representatives of Government officials, organizations of persons with disabilities and specialized NGOs from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic participated in the workshop. The workshop resulted in the development of a number of projects and action plans to support persons with disabilities.

34. ESCWA has worked at the national level with many countries to provide technical and advisory support. States experiencing conflicts or wars have received the most support. ESCWA, in partnership with the UNESCO Regional Bureau, supported the Ministry of Education of the Sudan in analysing the current state of integrated education in the Sudan to guide the development of an operational plan for the integrated education

strategy. This effort resulted in the formation of the National Committee for Integrated Education, chaired by the Director-General of Planning of the Federal Ministry of Education, and the National Committee was responsible for coordinating and managing the project.

35. ESCWA provided technical support to the Sudan on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in response mechanisms for the COVID-19 pandemic, in the form of a series of training workshops. The first workshop, held from 27 to 30 December 2020, targeted staff of the Ministry of Education. The training included the methods and means of distance education, harnessing and leveraging available technology while benefiting from successful experiences in this area, as well as challenges to distance education in the Sudan such as environmental, material and social challenges. The second workshop, held from 22 to 24 February 2021, targeted workers in the Federal and State Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as national federations of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations and the Zakat Diwan. The workshop aimed to train staff in raising awareness of the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic through trainer training courses, as well as to study ways to deliver services to the place of residence of persons with serious disabilities, taking into account precautionary considerations.

36. Also for the Sudan, ESCWA held a virtual training workshop on "Mainstreaming the principle of leave no one behind in strategic planning: Social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities and the elderly)" on 8 July 2021 with the aim of delving deeper into the concept of a human rights-based approach, the relevant requirements set out in United Nations conventions and how to include the elderly and persons with disabilities in all relevant national policies and strategies.

37. ESCWA also supported the Ministry of Social Affairs of Libya in supporting persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and establishing a national mechanism bringing all stakeholders together to coordinate the development of a national plan to meet the needs and expectations of persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the first national and international working group coordinated by ESCWA was formed, including United Nations organizations and agencies and the organization Humanity & Inclusion, as well as the relevant ministries and the National Centre for Diseases. That national mechanism has developed a comprehensive action plan for all health, social and educational areas. All stakeholders expressed their desire that the working group would continue after the pandemic as a permanent national coordinating mechanism in the area of disability.

38. ESCWA provided technical support to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour of the Syrian Arab Republic for a national workshop on "Technology for persons with disabilities: Policies and applications" (29 January 2020), with the aim of developing a national policy for the use of assistive technology and techniques to include persons with disabilities. During the workshop, ESCWA presented regional and international practices on technology access by persons with disabilities and how technological aids could be developed to include them.

39. ESCWA provided a package of technical support activities to Lebanon as part of the State's efforts to review and update systems for disability assessment and identification. ESCWA, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and in cooperation with the Organization for Social Promotion (Spanish) as a donor, prepared a study on the mechanisms and systems for assessing and determining the degree of disability, so that the new assessment and classification would be based on modern foundations and the principles of inclusion as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and would ensure that the most needy groups receive State support and access to social protection and support services for persons with disabilities.

40. ESCWA has also worked with the Ministry of Health of Lebanon to design a guide on the minimum early intervention services provided by primary health care centres for children with disabilities from birth to the age of five. The guide includes basic principles of prevention, early detection and functional assessment in order to prepare individual intervention plans for each child and his or her family and targets the management and staff of health care centres. ESCWA is currently working with the Ministry of Health to test the manual at health centres for six months with the aim of developing the final version next year.

41. ESCWA is supporting Lebanon in developing the first national strategy for inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas. ESCWA provides this support in partnership with UNFPA and in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and stakeholders, particularly organizations of persons with disabilities. As a first step in preparing the strategy, ESCWA and partners prepared a study "Analysing the current situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon to guide the development of a national strategy" (unpublished, addressed to the Ministry).

42. ESCWA provided technical support to the Public Authority of the Disabled in Kuwait to implement the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health to improve assessment, classification and monitoring mechanisms and to develop disability intervention plans. The support included three workshops on 4–7 November 2020, 2–5 December 2020 and 17–20 February 2021. The first workshop focused on presenting the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health as a conceptual framework, including basic principles, structure and application in different contexts. The second workshop focused on the shift from a medical assessment focusing on injury, illness or disability-related condition to a functional assessment that assesses the extent of functional difficulties a person faces with a given organ or system (e.g. motor, neurological, etc). The third workshop saw the beginning of the development of an assessment tool in Kuwait based on a simplified tool of the World Health Organization ([WHODAS 2.0](#)).

43. ESCWA organized a virtual workshop to assess and identify the training needs of staff of the Directorate General of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development in Amman (21 December 2020), in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development. The workshop targeted the working group in the Directorate through the "Training needs assessment and identification form", filled out by staff of the Directorate and rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities. Through an open discussion of the results of the form and the most prominent challenges facing Directorate staff, a number of gaps and challenges facing the team's work were identified, which must be overcome to achieve better results, keep pace with Vision 2030 and implement the social action strategy. On this basis, a vision was put forward for the development of various capacities, resources and programmes of the Directorate General of Persons with Disabilities, to be implemented in stages during the last quarter of 2021.

44. ESCWA conducted a training programme in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development in Oman on comprehensive behavioural language assessment of persons with disabilities experiencing language delays. The training programme was provided virtually in two stages: a theoretical portion from 25 to 28 April 2021, and a practical portion from 9 to 10 May 2021. The programme targeted 140 speech therapists and special education specialists and staff at the Rehabilitation Centres for Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Development to give them assessment and rehabilitation skills for persons with disabilities facing developmental difficulties, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder.

45. In Bahrain, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched a project to prepare a new national human rights plan in August 2020, after which it organized a series of consultations with national partners, stakeholders and international experts. In this context, ESCWA provided technical support in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bahrain through a national workshop titled "Rights of the groups most in need of care in the National Human Rights Plan", held online on 20 January 2021. ESCWA presented a working paper on the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the Sustainable Development Goals as essential to achieving sustainable human rights-based development.

46. ESCWA is also providing technical support to the United Nations Country Team in Bahrain to integrate a disability perspective into its development programmes, by developing a strategy to include a disability perspective within the United Nations Country Team. A working group has been formed for this purpose, using ESCWA expertise to provide technical support and organize capacity-building workshops. On 15 March 2021, ESCWA made a technical presentation on the regional and national status of persons with disabilities and discussed how to integrate a disability perspective into development programmes within the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. ESCWA is expected to continue to support the team in 2021.

47. To complement ESCWA's efforts to work together with United Nations disability support organizations, technical support was provided from 2 September to 5 October 2020 to a number of organizations through the United Nations Country Teams in Lebanon, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic to prepare projects on the rights of persons with disabilities for funding from the United Nations International Partnership Trust Fund.

48. ESCWA, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, is implementing a three-year regional project (June 2020 to June 2023) to strengthen the capacity of Government officials, private sector employers and civil society organizations in Arab countries to develop evidence-based policies and procedures that support the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market in Arab countries. Work has begun with the Governments of Jordan and Lebanon, and two national studies have been prepared under the title "Assessing the policy gap on the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market" (addressed to stakeholders in both countries). The two studies discuss national policies related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, focusing on examining the consistency of national laws in providing equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to enter the labour market, and identifying potential gaps in those policies.

49. Two virtual meetings were held at the national level to discuss the studies with stakeholders in Lebanon and Jordan, with the aim of obtaining their observations and including them in the final version of the studies. The first meeting was held on 8 October 2020 to discuss the Jordan report, and the second on 15 October 2020 to discuss the Lebanon report.

50. A survey of institutions in the public and private sectors in both countries on barriers and facilities related to the hiring and employment of persons with disabilities was also designed. The survey targeted institutions from different sectors and of different sizes (whether or not they had staff with disabilities). An organized random sample was identified based on specific data collected and studied to determine the number of institutions that make up the sample. In February 2021, a meeting was held with stakeholders in Lebanon to discuss the results of the survey and to obtain their observations on the results of the research, to be taken into account in order to prepare the final version of the survey results report.

51. It should be noted that ESCWA uses the outputs of research reports and institutional surveys to design training materials to build national capacity to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities into national labour markets and to provide equal employment opportunities. ESCWA is currently working to extend the project to all Arab States. Communications have begun with Member States to identify points of contact and to begin implementing various project activities, including the preparation of national studies. Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates have so far joined the project.

52. ESCWA collaborated with the UNESCO Regional Bureau to prepare a joint project, the first of its kind in the Arab region, on the integration of persons with disabilities into education. The project aims to develop a training package consisting of 14 training units on the integrated education of children with disabilities in Arabic. The training package consists of a number of training units for policymakers and decision makers in ministries of education, others targeted towards teachers and still others targeted at both groups. The training units were released in April 2021. An electronic platform was also set up (and will be launched later) to present materials for self-education, particularly distance learning, to further disseminate the benefits.

VII. Rights of older persons

53. Over the past two years, ESCWA has stepped up its efforts to include older persons and protect their rights. A regional workshop titled "The role of Arab parliaments in protecting the rights of older persons" was organized in partnership with the League of Arab States and the UNFPA Arab States Regional Office on 30 November 2020. The workshop aimed to raise awareness and share experiences among parliamentarians about their role in protecting the rights of older people in the Arab region. The workshop also provided an opportunity

to begin discussion on a draft law for older people in the Arab region that ESCWA, the League of Arab States and UNFPA are developing in partnership with the Tunisian Government.

54. ESCWA, in partnership with the League of Arab States and UNFPA, is developing the "Arab framework draft law to protect older persons and their rights". In this context, it is reviewing various drafts of the law to ensure that all the social, economic and political rights of older persons are respected. ESCWA also presented the initial draft of the law at the aforementioned workshop to ensure that the views of parliamentarians are incorporated into the draft law.

55. ESCWA has provided technical and advisory support to a number of countries, and in Lebanon has provided technical support to the Ministry of Social Affairs to develop the [first national strategy](#) for older persons (2020–2030), holding more than 30 interviews and six national meetings with various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector and nursing homes, as well as representatives of the elderly. Two meetings were also held with the Permanent National Commission for Elderly Affairs in Lebanon. These meetings aimed at gathering information and building consensus among those concerned regarding the top priorities and required reforms. The strategy was launched on 14 June 2021, under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and in the presence of all actors in this area.

56. ESCWA has also provided technical support to the Syrian Arab Republic for the development of the national strategy for older persons. Work began by holding a virtual workshop in partnership with the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs to build capacity on integrating older persons' issues into policymaking in the Syrian Arab Republic (28 October 2020). Representatives from various relevant ministries and other Government agencies participated in the workshop, as well as non-governmental and civil society organizations. The workshop aimed to raise awareness about the rights of older persons and build the capacity of policymakers to integrate older people's issues and priorities into policymaking. ESCWA has also worked with the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs to develop a form to survey the Syrian Government's efforts to provide services to older persons to collect and analyse information and draw an in-depth picture of the reality of older persons. Field research has also been launched in preparation for development of the strategy.

57. In Iraq, ESCWA is also working with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to develop the national strategy for older persons. In this context, a series of meetings were held with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as well as a virtual workshop involving representatives of the various ministries concerned (25 March 2021) to launch work on the preparation of the strategy and agree on the best roles and steps. ESCWA has also developed a form to survey the Iraqi Government's efforts to provide services to older persons to collect and analyse information and draw an in-depth picture of the reality of older persons. ESCWA and the Ministry are currently preparing field research in preparation for development of the strategy.

58. In the same vein, ESCWA held a virtual capacity-building workshop with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on integrating older persons' issues into the policymaking process in Iraq (1 June 2021), in which representatives of various relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies participated, with the aim of analysing and developing policies from the perspective of older persons.

VIII. Youth skills development

59. ESCWA held a virtual workshop for the Sudan on youth empowerment and enhanced participation in public affairs, aimed at enhancing knowledge on the various issues faced by young people and supporting the capacity of decision makers and youth organizations to formulate, implement and evaluate national youth policies by adopting a participatory methodology that enhances their role in public life and ensures their active and sustainable participation in decision-making and in discussing the challenges to their progress (21–22 April 2021). The workshop sought to learn from the reality of youth participation in the Arab region and the most prominent obstacles to their participation in public affairs; to highlight the importance of enhancing

young people's knowledge of decision-making mechanisms and to identify youth-related policies and legislation and indicators of youth participation; and to acquire the knowledge, skills and capabilities required to participate in and influence public policies and decision-making.

60. ESCWA is collaborating with the Social Development Center (Nama) to empower young people and social entrepreneurs in Qatar to implement three off-budget projects. The first project, titled "**Building the capacity of Qatari young men and women in the field of social development work**", was launched in February 2020 and aims to promote a culture of social development work in Qatar, increase the commitment of young men and women to building an informed citizenry and encourage them to increase their participation in society. The project is divided into four phases, and two have been completed. The first phase focused on assessing needs and identifying gaps in youth development work in Qatar through two questionnaires. The first targeted a sample of Qatari young men and women to investigate the reality of social work and understand the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to activate the role of young people in this field. The second was directed to a sample of social work institutions to gather information on the realities of social work and institutions in this area, to understand the nature of youth participation in social programmes and projects (quantity and quality) and to learn about the measures that governmental and non-governmental institutions must take to stimulate youth participation in social work. Virtual meetings of five focus groups were also organized with young people working in social work agencies, students of social and political sciences and representatives of social organizations that participated in the questionnaire.

61. ESCWA prepared an analytical study aimed at Qatari stakeholders on the gaps and theoretical and practical knowledge required for junior social work professionals in Qatar and prepared a list of leading regional and global institutions in the field of social work to benefit from their expertise and their various programmes such as youth programmes, social entrepreneurship, volunteering, skills development and youth exchange.

62. The second phase of the first project focused on building the capacity of young Qataris to acquire the skills needed to carry out social development work based on the highest standards. The "Guide to developing the capabilities of institutions and young people to activate youth participation and their role in social work" was developed, which provides an opportunity for young people working in social work agencies to test means and tools to activate their participation and enhance their role through an in-depth consideration of a selection of best practices and case studies and by providing tools and advice to create an environment conducive to young people's participation in social work and strengthen their role in such agencies.

63. The second project is focused on "**Building the capacity of Qatari young men and women in social entrepreneurship**" (2020–2021) and aims to build the capacity of young men and women in the 18–30 age group to design and implement social entrepreneurship projects and ensure their sustainability using technology and innovation. In this context, the project implemented a range of activities, including: a comprehensive survey to assess the needs, gaps and opportunities in social entrepreneurship in Qatar, identifying the fundamental gaps in the environment fostering social entrepreneurship based on the survey results, from the prevailing concept and community view of social entrepreneurship to the challenges young people face in launching a social entrepreneurial project and the skills needed for young people to engage in entrepreneurship to the range of relevant programmes and incentives available.

64. An in-depth report was prepared on fundamental practices and approaches in curricula and social entrepreneurship education in the world and the Arab region; another report was prepared on success stories and effective practices in social entrepreneurship policies and programmes from Qatar and the world (the reports are addressed to Qatari stakeholders). A conceptual framework on social entrepreneurship was developed, including various approaches to teaching social leadership such as university-based, formal and informal and possibilities for implementation with young people in Qatar.

65. The first version of the Social entrepreneurship training guide was developed to build the capacity of Qatari young men and women in the field of social entrepreneurship, including an integrated scheme from the

stages of the life cycle of an entrepreneurship project to the required competencies for social entrepreneurship, market entry strategies and sustainability. The guide also identifies potential challenges in social entrepreneurship and actions to address them.

66. The third project, "**Designing and developing a social incubator in Qatar**" (2020–2021), concerns institutionalizing and incubating social leadership programmes and ideas, with the aim of testing the viability of implementing development projects with a social dimension developed and supported by Qatari young people at various stages of their implementation in partnership with the Qatari private sector and other stakeholders. In this context, a range of activities have been carried out, including designing and conducting virtual interviews with key stakeholders working to support social entrepreneurs in Qatar and preparing the first version of the Social incubator action plan, based on a careful assessment of the needs of social entrepreneurs. The plan identified key activities that Nama could lead to support the growth and institutionalization of social entrepreneurship programmes and institutionalize this support. A plan is under way to launch a consultative process between Nama and all concerned with a view to agreeing on the proposed direction of the incubator and its programmes.

IX. Urban development

67. ESCWA, in collaboration with United Nations regional commissions and UN-Habitat, is implementing the regional component of a global project on "Inter-Regional Cooperation to Implement the New Urban Agenda", which is being implemented in nine cities around the world, including Amman (Jordan) and Rabat (Morocco) in the Arab region. The project aims to increase policy consistency among Member States and strengthen institutions in implementing and monitoring SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda.

68. As part of this project, ESCWA held a virtual meeting in Amman (15–16 February 2021) to launch it at the national and local levels and introduce stakeholders to its objectives, activities, expected outputs and the time frame for its implementation. The impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda was also highlighted, the challenges of urban development in Amman were identified and agreement was reached on how to adapt the project's outputs to national and local needs.

69. ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, is also implementing a project on "Building urban economic resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic", focusing on strengthening local capacity in 16 cities around the world. The project aims to provide good global practices to help the cities included in the project develop and implement the response and recovery plans in light of the COVID-19 epidemic and develop a better understanding of the key factors and drivers of urban resilience as well as solutions that contribute to the creation of more resilient cities and more resilient local governments better able to handle shocks such as COVID-19. ESCWA is implementing the project in the Arab region in Alexandria (Egypt), Beirut (Lebanon) and Kuwait City (Kuwait).

70. ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, developed a "[Global set of practices on domestic economic and financial recovery](#)" under the umbrella of building urban economic resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study included all cities covered by the project including the three Arab cities of Alexandria, Beirut and Kuwait City, as well as a regional analysis of the subject.

71. ESCWA also contributed to the development of a "[Diagnostic and planning tool to build urban economic resilience](#)". The tool defines the concept of urban economic resilience and its dimensions, indicators and measures. This tool aims to help cities to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their institutional and operating arrangements from the perspective of economic recovery and building resilience and to assess the economic structure and performance of cities to gain a clear understanding of each city's economic standing. The tool also aims to define a process for designing and implementing recovery plans and strategies to address

specific gaps, accelerate recovery and improve long-term resilience. ESCWA is piloting this tool in three Arab cities: Alexandria, Beirut and Kuwait City.

72. ESCWA organized national workshops in Alexandria (10 May 2021), Beirut (29 March 2021) and Kuwait (15 April 2021), each aimed at developing a diagnostic and planning tool and fitting it to the city's vision and recovery plan. The workshops also aimed to present the results of the city diagnosis, based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected. Local stakeholders and relevant government officials were involved in a comprehensive approach that highlighted the gender balance of vision and planning that will be used to identify local recovery and resilience goals and identify key focus areas for building economic resilience and financial recovery.
