

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REPORT  
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009****Summary**

In line with the results-based management promoted by the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to focus on the assessment of results achieved through the implementation of its programme of work for 2008-2009.

This report sets out the highlights of achievements and lessons learned at the programme level and details the results achieved and lessons learned for each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.

The attention of the Commission is drawn to the fact that, in preparing the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013, which will be considered under provisional agenda item 8 of the twenty-sixth session, the secretariat carried out an in-depth review of the mandates from its member countries, the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and of the lessons learned from the implementation of the programme of work for 2008-2009.

The Commission is invited to review this report, and provide comments and guidance on the overall performance of the ESCWA programme of work and that of the individual subprogrammes.

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## Introduction

1. In line with the results-based management promoted by the United Nations system and the approach taken in the preparation of the programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to focus on the assessment of the results achieved through the implementation of its programme of work for 2008-2009.
2. This report sets out the achievements and lessons learned at the programme level, and identifies the results and lessons learned as they relate to each of the seven substantive subprogrammes. It also includes an assessment of the performance of the executive direction and management component, including the work of the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division (PPTCD) and the Administrative Services Division (ASD) of ESCWA, as well as that of the United Nations Information Services/Centre. The report is intended to serve as an instrument for ESCWA member countries to assess the results and relevance of the overall work of the Commission, as well as the performance of individual subprogrammes.
3. The results have been self-evaluated by the managers responsible for each subprogramme and synthesized by PPTCD in its role as the central office responsible for coordinating programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. Performance has been verified using reports of intergovernmental sessions and expert groups; country papers and mission reports submitted to ESCWA; responses by participants to evaluation questionnaires for meetings, training workshops and seminars; feedback from stakeholders; media coverage; the number of hits on and downloads from ESCWA websites; and requests by member countries for technical assistance and advisory services.
4. The self-evaluation methodology adopted followed global methodologies for monitoring and evaluating programme performance for the biennium, and comprised: (a) the establishment of baselines for indicators of achievement at the start of the biennium; (b) regular data collection for indicators of achievement to measure progress against those baselines; (c) regular monitoring by ESCWA management of progress towards achieving results; (d) identification, from monitoring and evaluation, of lessons learned and areas requiring improvement for future programme planning; (e) formulation of the highlights of results for each subprogramme; and (f) identification of lessons learned, especially in terms of challenges, obstacles and unmet goals.
5. The Commission is invited to review the report and provide comments and guidance on overall ESCWA programme performance and individual subprogrammes.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009

6. This report is based on the programme of work for 2008-2009 as approved by the General Assembly, and the amendments approved by the twenty-fifth session of the Commission (Sana'a, 26-29 May 2008), which reflect the new mandates of the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and those of ESCWA member countries.
7. During 2008-2009, ESCWA continued to strengthen the complementarity between its normative and analytical work and its technical assistance activities. It strengthened strategic partnerships with regional and national players, in particular with United Nations agencies and the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies. Through the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), for which ESCWA is the secretariat and lead agency, three inter-agency working groups were established, on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change and food security. Furthermore, ESCWA continued to coordinate with the other United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in order to achieve greater coherence and synergy of economic and social development work between United Nations entities.

8. Work focused on four regional priority areas, namely managing water and energy, social policies, managing globalization and managing technology; and on three cross-cutting issues, namely statistical capacity-building, the advancement of women and assistance to countries emerging from conflict.

9. In the field of water and energy management, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) activities included its contribution to Lebanon, Qatar and Yemen, incorporating measures to improve the sustainable management of energy resources; and, in partnership with German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the League of Arab States, its contribution to Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, incorporating measures to improve water supply and sanitation in their national water policies. ESCWA also worked in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public sector institutions to produce two initiatives, one intended to enhance the cultivation of the sumac herb and to build a permanent solar water heater manufacturing training centre. In partnership with the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), ESCWA assisted in enhancing negotiation and dispute resolution skills of Iraqi officials for the joint management of shared water resources; launched a regional initiative for water resources protection; and provided a capacity-building workshop on water management for officials and experts from Lebanon, focusing on the utility of the Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) software tool.

10. In 2008, ESCWA developed a website on trade and environment in the Arab region, and reviewed progress in the implementation of the Regional Programme for Trade and Environment in the Arab Region. ESCWA activities also led to the adoption of three initiatives: one aiming to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector, with particular focus on the cultivation of *zaatar* (thyme); one aiming to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the manufacturing sector, with particular focus on garment manufacturing; and a management initiative involving microcredit services. ESCWA supported member countries for the promotion of sustainable land management and rural development, and enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

11. In the management of social policy, advocacy efforts and policy advice on integrated social and population policies during the 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 bienniums yielded positive results, as five countries either adopted measures to support the integration of social policy or actively pursued technical assistance from ESCWA in that field. The advocacy and capacity development efforts of the Commission supported member countries in the formulation of national youth policies and in the preparation of national reports as part of the follow-up to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Furthering its efforts to foster regional dialogue, ESCWA organized the Arab Forum on Social Policy (Beirut, 28-29 October 2009), which focused on the criticality of integrated social policy and protection for regional development.

12. As part of its commitment to assisting member countries to manage globalization, in advance of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008), ESCWA organized a consultative preparatory meeting (Doha, 29-30 April 2008) and the Regional High-level Consultative Forum on the Impacts of the International Financial Crisis on ESCWA Member Countries: The Way Forward (Damascus, 5-7 May 2009). ESCWA also assisted the Syrian Arab Republic in developing a database on foreign direct investment (FDI) statistics, and in drafting new legislation to promote trade liberalization. Other capacity-building efforts enhanced the negotiation skills of 90 Government officials in Egypt and Oman in the field of bilateral investment agreements and double taxation avoidance.

13. In the transport sector, ESCWA efforts led to a further four member countries ratifying one or more of the ESCWA agreements on transport and four more countries establishing or re-establishing national transport and trade facilitation committees. Joint cooperation between ESCWA and the League of Arab States provided the basis for a unified convention on multimodal transport in the Arab countries, approved by the twenty-first session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport (Port Said, Egypt, 29 October 2008). Through cooperation between ESCWA, the League of Arab States and Arab regional railway bodies,

the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit (Kuwait, 19-20 January 2009) agreed to set up the Arab railway network, based on the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq.

14. With a view to the optimal management of technology, the Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region (ISPER) was launched, offering a dynamic, bilingual (English/Arabic) regional e-service database. The Expert Group Meeting on Developing the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Sector in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 11-12 March 2009) highlighted challenges facing the development of a self-reliant and sustainable ICT sector in the region and proposed solutions to overcome such obstacles. The Conference on Regional Follow-up to the Outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (Damascus, 16-18 June 2009) provided focus on the implementation status of WSIS outcomes, the working group on Arab ICT Strategy and the creation of the regional Arab network of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID). ESCWA also conducted capacity-building activities to promote public/private partnerships within the context of the Regional Plan of Action for Building an Information Society.

15. In the field of statistical capacity-building, the first cross-cutting issue, ESCWA assisted member countries to achieve 67 per cent implementation of the fundamental principles of official statistics, a five per cent improvement on 2008. ESCWA also established a virtual library on national statistical systems, facilitated information exchange on best practice, disseminated guidelines and supported capacity-building of national statistical offices. In collaboration with the International Energy Agency and the MEDSTAT programme (the regional statistical co-operation programme between the European Union and 10 Mediterranean partner countries), ESCWA facilitated the application of international methodologies and definitions to collect data and prepare energy balances for policymakers. ESCWA also assisted member countries in the review of the Energy Statistics Manual and advocated for integrated economic and environmental accounting for monitoring sustainable development in the region. In its role as secretariat to the Regional Taskforce on Population and Housing Censuses, ESCWA hosted the fifth meeting of the taskforce (Beirut, 23-24 March 2009). Five member countries successfully completed the 2010 round of population and housing censuses: Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. Six member countries provided ESCWA with at least 60 per cent of the information needed for monitoring the MDGs, including gender-disaggregated data.

16. With respect to the second cross-cutting issue, the advancement of women, advocacy and technical assistance efforts by ESCWA contributed to the inclusion of a gender perspective in the national plan of Saudi Arabia in 2008 and the establishment of mechanisms for women by all 14 member countries, an increase of six over the previous biennium. An additional two member countries have adopted a gender mainstreaming approach in their national policies, taking the total to ten. ESCWA also contributed to the timely submission of reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic, an important tool for the monitoring of progress on issues related to women. Thirteen ESCWA member countries have now ratified the CEDAW convention and a number have recently lifted their reservations to articles 9(2) and 15(4) of the Convention.

17. In its commitment to the third cross-cutting issue, providing assistance to countries emerging from conflict, ESCWA identified and assessed such regional conflict-driven dynamics as displacement and communal tensions within the context of their local and regional ramifications. It also catalyzed support among member countries for the creation of an intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis. As a result of ESCWA efforts to increase both pre-emptive and responsive capacity of member countries, eleven countries joined the task force for the formulation of an intergovernmental committee.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

### *Strengthening coordination with member countries*

18. It is essential that ESCWA invest in broad-based consultations with national stakeholders, securing high-level political commitment for all its activities. It must also develop monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for field projects. The full support and active participation of member countries in the planning process would contribute to the achievement of optimal results.

19. The ability to forge and foster partnerships, including those with local NGOs, is central to ensuring the sustainability of pilot initiatives, and sharing experience and lessons learned for wider dissemination at the regional level.

### *Increasing awareness and knowledge through the media*

20. Greater use should be made of newspapers, national and regional television, and the Internet in order to increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of United Nations-related issues. The communication strategy of the Commission must be both proactive and tightly targeted, employing new information technology tools to the best possible advantage. One of the major challenges facing ESCWA is the need to communicate effectively through relevant, accessible publications that are of interest and use to decision makers in member countries.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT

21. The Executive Direction and Management work plan comprises work carried out by the Office of the Executive Secretary, PPTCD and ASD at ESCWA, in addition to that of the United Nations Information Services/Centre. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of the six expected accomplishments.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> The ESCWA work programme is effectively managed and supported by human and financial resources
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### *Results achieved*

22. In the 2008-2009 biennium, ESCWA increased its total number of outputs by 62 per cent (from 309 outputs in 2006-2007 to 502 in 2008-2009), achieving an implementation rate of 82 per cent of outputs completed, only 7 per cent short of the revised target for the biennium and 5 per cent short of the performance rate in 2006-2007. This performance is even more impressive in the light of the security situation in 2008 and a 16.3 per cent average vacancy rate during 2008-2009.

### *Lessons learned*

23. In 2008, ESCWA developed its first evaluation policy. A number of problems with achievement indicators and performance measurement have yet to be resolved and this, coupled with the high rate of staff replacement due to mobility and retirement, requires increased training on the use of the logical framework and results-based management.

<b>Expected accomplishment 2:</b> Timely recruitment and placement of staff
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### *Results achieved*

24. To bring greater transparency to the recruitment process and ensure the high qualification of staff recruited, ESCWA has introduced a new recruitment process that includes written tests for all vacancies; candidates are now only convoked for interviews if they meet or exceed the minimum pass scores in the

written test. Furthermore, interview panels now comprise both nominated programme case officers and Administration nominees. In an effort to attract a wider pool of candidates, the requirement for proficiency in Arabic has been discontinued for most vacancies. A timeline has also been introduced, under which all parties are allotted a specific number of days to complete a given action.

*Lessons learned*

25. ESCWA needs to widen its outreach programme to attract a higher number of qualified candidates to its vacancies.

**Expected accomplishment 3: Improved geographical representation and gender balance of staff**

*Results achieved*

26. ESCWA exceeded the Human Resources Action Plan (HRAP) target of 20 per cent of recruitment of staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, and improved upon its 2007 baseline figure for women recruited at the professional level. Greater efforts have also been exerted to ensure more female appointments at the professional level. Nevertheless, a recurring factor contributing to the slow improvement in the percentage of female appointments is that on many occasions, selected female candidates have turned down the offer in the final stages of the recruitment process. In 2008 and 2009, a large number of female NCE staff members transferred out of ESCWA and this, coupled with the retirement of several professional female staff members and a number of agreed termination cases, contributed to a reduction in the number of female professional staff.

*Lessons learned*

27. ESCWA intends to target female candidates through professional associations, member countries and NGOs, and to continue its efforts to recruit candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

**Expected accomplishment 4: Identification of emerging issues that require attention by member countries**

*Results achieved*

28. ESCWA used the forum provided by the twenty-fifth session of the Commission to focus the attention of member countries on the emerging issues of climate change, food crisis and inclusive development. This resulted in the adoption of a number of resolutions that addressed these issues. As part of its mission to share information with its member countries, ESCWA has also been active in providing briefings on the outcome of a number of important United Nations meetings through official visits by the Executive Secretary. ESCWA held a preparatory regional meeting on financing for development (Doha, 29-30 April 2008) and, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Syrian State Planning Commission, organized the Regional High-level Consultative Forum on the Impacts of the International Financial Crisis on ESCWA Member Countries: the Way Forward (Damascus, 5-7 May 2009).

29. Pursuant to the decision of the Commission at its twenty-fourth session, the Technical Committee was established, with the aim of enhancing interaction and fostering closer consultation between member countries and the secretariat on issues of substantive development. Membership of the Technical Committee comprises senior officials designated by member country Governments and its sessions have been held every six months since January 2008, providing advice and assistance to the secretariat on the priority issues brought to its attention. The third meeting of the Technical Committee was held in Beirut on 21-22 July 2009. It addressed a number of issues of prime concern to member countries and examined matters of regional and global interest, including the financial crisis, food security and climate change. The meeting also focused on strengthening relations between the secretariat and ESCWA member countries including follow-up to the implementation of resolutions adopted by sessions of the Commission, enhancing

communication between the secretariat and member countries and follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the second meeting of the Technical Committee.

*Lessons learned*

30. ESCWA member countries have expressed their satisfaction with the secretariat for briefing them on emerging issues. The current global financial crisis, the concomitant economic slowdown and the consequent dramatic drop in oil prices all necessitate urgent action to adopt measures to spur growth and development in the region.

<b>Expected accomplishment 5:</b> Enhanced coordination in the management of economic and social activities by the United Nations and other regional actors
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*Results achieved*

31. Three inter-agency working groups have been established, on the MDGs, climate change and food security respectively, and they agreed to collaborate on a number of joint outputs in 2009. In cooperation with DESA and the World Health Organization, ESCWA held the Western Asia regional ministerial meeting on Addressing Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries: Major Challenges to Sustainable Development in the Twenty-first Century (Doha, 10-11 May 2009). The United Nations regional commissions are also collaborating in a number of areas. The Global Energy Efficiency 21 (GEE21) project was officially launched in Poznań, Poland last December, within the framework of which the regional commissions are preparing their first joint study on energy efficiency. In another sphere, four of the five regional commissions met and worked together at a seminar entitled Improving Global Road Safety: Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Reduction Targets (Minsk, Russia, 12-14 May 2009).

*Lessons learned*

32. Greater involvement of other United Nations entities was achieved through providing them with the opportunity to play a larger role in chairing sessions of the thirteenth RCM meeting (Beirut, 3-4 November 2009), and through active and intensive discussions and deliberations. The presence of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations was particularly effective in enhancing and encouraging coordination and cooperation between the United Nations offices in the Arab region. It should be noted that ongoing follow-up for the implementation of the RCM outcome will be required.

<b>Expected accomplishment 6:</b> Increased public awareness of the work of ESCWA in pursuing regional priorities and emerging issues
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*Results achieved*

33. During 2008, ESCWA made some 400 appearances in the audio, visual and print media, largely as a result of political instability in Lebanon, the ensuing security restrictions and the outcome of a revision of the Commission's media strategy that thought it prudent to adopt a policy of lower visibility in precarious times. However, the work of the Commission was still featured by international media outlets, including CNN Arabic and the BBC, both of which covered the publication of an ESCWA report on ageing in July 2008. Since the start of 2009, ESCWA's media presence has increased, due to a more relaxed atmosphere and reduced restrictions in Lebanon.

*Lessons learned*

34. There is a need to sharpen the focus of media activities and select priority areas for more intensive public awareness and advocacy measures.

## **SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

35. The Sustainable Development and Productivity Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the sustainable management and use of natural resources in the region, and to promote regional cooperation and harmonization in sustainable management of water, energy and the production sectors. The results achieved under each of the four expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Enhanced capacity of member countries to formulate, adopt and implement policies and measures to improve the sustainable management of natural resources, with particular emphasis on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

### *Results achieved*

36. ESCWA activities in this field contributed to three member countries adopting measures for improving the sustainable management of energy resources. In Yemen, measures were adopted on using cleaner fuels; in Yemen and Qatar, on improving energy efficiency in demand side management; and in Lebanon, on the use of solar energy technologies. In partnership with GTZ and the League of Arab States, ESCWA worked to assist Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen in the adoption of measures to improve water supply and sanitation in their national water policies, and provided policy options to expedite the achievement of indicators 7.8 and 7.9 of MDG goal 7 in line with the United Nations International Year of Sanitation in 2008. The number of policies and measures adopted by member countries towards the achievement of the targets of MDG goals 1 and 7 increased by seven.

### *Lessons learned*

37. A short, focused questionnaire to be completed by assigned focal points in ministries would improve the quality of information provided by member countries. Information on the activities of the subprogramme was disseminated more effectively by making full use of the ESCWA website.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Enhanced capacity of member countries to apply best practice for improving sustainable rural development and increasing competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises through the use of environmentally-sound technology

### *Results achieved*

38. The submission of substantive regional reports on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) for sessions CSD-16 and CSD-17, as endorsed by the Arab intergovernmental machinery (a consultative mechanism in conjunction with the League of Arab States), contributed to raising awareness and building capacity on the implementation of sustainable land management policies and measures for improved rural development. This was further advanced through two meetings, one on sustainable land management as a best practice to enhance rural development in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 25-27 March 2009) and one on adopting the sustainable livelihoods approach for promoting rural development in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 21-22 December 2009). Partnerships with NGOs and institutions resulted in the adoption of initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized agricultural and manufacturing enterprises, using environmentally-sound technology. These were a greenhouse and training facility promoting best practice for environmentally-sound cultivation of sumac and a permanent solar water heater manufacturing training centre.

*Lessons learned*

39. Active participation and support of member countries in the planning process would contribute to the achievement of better results. The design of both realistic contingency plans for times of crisis and demand-driven services would also lead to improved results.

<b>Expected accomplishment 3:</b> Improved cooperation among member countries on energy and water issues, including the prevention of water and environment-related disputes
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*Results achieved*

40. In pursuance of this accomplishment, ESCWA worked on three projects in partnership with BGR. The first aimed to enhance the negotiation and dispute resolution skills of Iraqi officials for the joint management of shared water resources. The second launched a regional initiative for water resources protection, establishing legal and institutional preconditions, updating information on the protection of water resources in the region and identifying the legal and institutional enforcement capacities on common water issues that are a prerequisite to enhancing regional cooperation. The third joint activity was a three-day, computer-based training workshop on water management for Lebanese officials and experts, focusing on the utility of the Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) software tool, supporting WEAP scenario simulations and informing decision-making at the basin level. ESCWA also worked in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Environment Programme and other partners to achieve the establishment of a permanent Round Table on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region.

*Lessons learned*

41. ESCWA must continue to promote the benefits of cooperation in the management of shared water resources, identify basins which offer potential for cooperation and facilitate the sustaining and revision of agreements. Given the requests from member countries for more training workshops, it is clear that training in negotiation skills and dispute resolution was beneficial.

<b>Expected accomplishment 4:</b> Increased use by member countries of tools and techniques to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the production sectors
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*Results achieved*

42. In 2008, ESCWA established a website on trade and environment in the Arab region and reviewed progress achieved in the implementation of the Regional Programme for Trade and Environment Capacity-building in the Arab Region. ESCWA activities also led to the adoption of a number of initiatives involving the use of modern tools and techniques to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, focusing on *zaatar* cultivation and garment manufacturing. A management initiative for microcredit services was also developed. The initiatives adopted involved the use of drip irrigation in the cultivation of the *zaatar* crop; the development of local technology for the processing of *zaatar*; computer-aided technology for garment manufacturing; and capacity-building for the provision of business counselling to micro agro-enterprises and small agro-enterprises in south Lebanon.

*Lessons learned*

43. The ability to forge and foster partnerships, including those with local NGOs, is central to ensuring the sustainability of pilot initiatives, and sharing experience and lessons learned for further dissemination at the regional level.

## SUBPROGRAMME 2. INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICIES

44. The Social Development Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to strengthen coherent and integrated national social policies that are region-specific and culturally sensitive, and to encourage community development action with a view to reducing social inequity and enhancing social stability in the region. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Strengthened capacity of member countries to promote and formulate integrated social development policies that are region-specific and culturally sensitive to achieve social equity, poverty reduction and a sustainable population

### *Results achieved*

45. Commitment to adopting the integrated social policy approach promulgated by ESCWA broadened in 2009, with five member countries either adopting measures that supported the formulation of integrated social policy or actively pursuing technical assistance from ESCWA in that field, compared with three in 2007. Furthermore, advocacy and capacity development in the area of youth-targeted policies and programmes was received positively by 13 member countries. Work by ESCWA on networking and participation between Governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) led to the adoption by five new Government entities and seven CSOs of the participatory social development approach and the participatory action research concept, increasing the number of Government entities and CSOs which have adopted that approach and that concept to 24, thereby meeting the target set for this biennium.

### *Lessons learned*

46. ESCWA needs to invest in broad-based consultations with national stakeholders, securing high-level political commitment, optimizing analysis and diagnostics, and establishing appropriate monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for field projects. The dissemination strategy must be proactive and clearly targeted, relying on new information technology tools. Maintaining close cooperation with counterparts increases geographical impact and avoids duplication. Incorporating the insights and identified needs of those receiving assistance from ESCWA, and obtaining and acting on continuous feedback from them not only contributes to the quality of the activities undertaken, but also lends them legitimacy.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Increased capacity of member countries to develop and operationalize intersectoral social development plans, programmes and projects that focus on youth, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, and the rural and urban poor

### *Results achieved*

47. ESCWA implemented a regional project in which focal points from 13 member countries were trained on the collection of youth policy-related information and the translation of the findings into national reports. Saudi Arabia carried out 10 national training workshops within the framework of the ESCWA capacity-building training programme on participatory social development, ESCWA also conducted three national consultations with policymakers in Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen on the policy gaps and obstacles facing the inclusion of a number of social groups. Similar efforts promoted the mapping of factors contributing to the inequity facing persons with disabilities in Jordan. In sum, projects implemented in collaboration with member countries focusing on different social groups in 2008-2009 increased from four to eight, exceeding the target by two.

### SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

48. The Economic Development and Globalization Division was responsible for the implementation of this subprogramme, which aims to strengthen macroeconomic policymaking for short-term economic growth and sustainable economic development in member countries, negotiation of trade and investment agreements, and facilitation of trade. The results achieved under each of the five expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Increased knowledge among stakeholders in the region of the issues that should be taken into account in designing and implementing suitable macroeconomic policies and strategies for sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation in line with the Millennium Development Goals

#### *Results achieved*

49. Two parliamentary documentations presented at the twenty-fifth ESCWA session\* facilitated substantive discussion on the actions necessary for the achievement of the MDGs. ESCWA contributed to the 2009 and 2010 issues of the DESA publication *World Economic Situation and Prospects*, both of which received intense media attention for their analysis of the global financial crisis and its impact. The *Regional Economic Forecast (December 2008)* and *Regional Economic Forecast (November 2009)* focused on assessing the impact of the global financial crisis and food inflation. In the light of increasing fluctuations in regional capital flows, the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2007-2008* called for policy measures in the field of rights-based development strategies.

#### *Lessons learned*

50. The challenge is to build an effective model as a combination of knowledge-building, delivery of research output, meetings and advocacy activities for national, regional and international stakeholders. One of the major challenges is for ESCWA to communicate effectively with member countries through its publications. Efforts to improve substantive activities and their modality are being carried out through the introduction of a working paper series planned in 2010-2011 and by ensuring that future editions of the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA region* are more readable by and acceptable to decision-makers in member countries.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Enhanced capacity of member countries to negotiate and implement subregional, regional and multilateral trade and investment agreements designed to promote interregional and intraregional trade and investment flows

#### *Results achieved*

51. In January 2009, the Syrian Arab Republic issued new legislation to promote trade liberalization; the Commission also assisted the country in developing a database on FDI statistics. Four national training workshops conducted by ESCWA, two in Egypt and two in Oman, contributed to upgrading the negotiation skills of 90 Government officials on bilateral investment agreements and double taxation avoidance. With support from ESCWA, the target of three member countries accepting and/or adopting trade negotiation proposals and facilitation schemes/measures was achieved, as was that of four member countries negotiating and implementing trade agreements designed to promote interregional and intraregional trade flows and that of 11 member countries integrating the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development into their economic strategies and policies.

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\* Strengthening regional cooperation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (E/ESCWA/25/4(Part II)/A) and Achievements and progress made in attaining the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab countries: challenges and policies (E/ESCWA/25/4(Part II)/B).

*Lessons learned*

52. Greater effort is required to increase interaction with and participation of the focal points in Government organizations.

**Expected accomplishment 3:** Strengthened capacity of member countries to formulate and implement policies and programmes for improving transport infrastructure and logistics within the framework of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM)

*Results achieved*

53. ESCWA continued support and follow-up with member countries on the implementation of the ESCWA transport agreements. The number of member countries that have adopted the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq increased to 12, those acceding to the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq to 9 and those acceding to the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq to 10. The percentage of the road network meeting the requirements of the international roads agreement rose from 50 per cent at the end of 2007 to 55 per cent in December 2008. The policy measures adopted by member countries in relation to the implementation of ITSAM have increased to 40 (31 Treaties and nine National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committees [NTTFC] by the end of 2009, compared with 31 (24 treaties and seven committees) in 2007.

*Lessons learned*

54. In addition to undertaking a limited number of missions during the biennium, the Committee on Transport provided an effective means of direct communication with member countries. To speed up implementation of ITSAM, greater extrabudgetary resources need to be made available for the conducting of follow-up missions and workshops.

**Expected accomplishment 4:** Greater participation in the multilateral trading system

*Results achieved*

55. ESCWA assessed trade policy trends, trade facilitation and liberalization measures and accession processes in member countries, and provided related policy advice and advocacy. The target of supporting the development of regulations and policies in conformity with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and regulations was met. ESCWA assessed trade policy options in member countries, the implications for trade and economic performance, and future prospects for improving trade performance in the region. In addition, the Commission provided a forum in which the Arab business community could be briefed on the latest developments concerning WTO negotiations, and discuss their implications and other issues of concern in the light of the global economic crisis. The forum is the third in a series initiated six years ago and its success is reflected in continued demand.

*Lessons learned*

56. Though efforts have been made to increase interaction with and participation of focal points in Government organizations, greater effort is still needed in this regard.

**Expected accomplishment 5:** Increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries

*Results achieved*

57. The Committee on Transport plays a vital role in enhancing harmonization and facilitating agreements on subregional/regional cooperation. Key developments in this regard include the convention on international multimodal transport of goods in the Arab Mashreq, prepared jointly by ESCWA and the League of Arab States; the adoption by the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit (Kuwait, 19-20 January 2009) of the Arab railway network, based on the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, through the use of the same classification and numbering of railway routes as used in the convention. Other work in this field included the positive steps taken by Iraq during 2008 to establish an NTTFC and the cooperation between ESCWA, the League of Arab States, a number of member countries and Tunisia in the preparation of the terms of reference of the Arab Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee (August 2009).

*Lessons learned*

58. Continued cooperation with the League of Arab States is vital. When no consensus or agreement is reached at the first attempt, the parties should persist and revise drafts until a consensus is achieved. The extensive review and revision of the draft agreement on multimodal transport by the Committee on Transport is an example of the success that can be achieved in this way.

**SUBPROGRAMME 4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

59. The Information and Communication Technology Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to narrow the digital divide to build an inclusive development-oriented information society and knowledge-based economy. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> Increased implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society, particularly in relation to the information and communications technology sector
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*Results achieved*

60. ESCWA monitored progress by member countries towards the information society and provided indicators for its measurement. The Expert Group Meeting on Developing the ICT Sector in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 11-12 March 2009) highlighted the obstacles facing the development of a self-reliant and sustainable ICT sector in the region and proposed solutions to overcome such obstacles in order to build a flourishing regional ICT. The principal outcomes of the Conference on Regional Follow-up to the Outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (Damascus, 16-18 June 2009) were the Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) and the Arab ICT Strategy; a roadmap for the implementation and follow-up of future WSIS-related activities; and the creation of the GAID Regional Arab Network.

*Lessons learned*

61. Efforts should be exerted towards obtaining greater response from member countries on their current status in implementing the RPoA. This could be done through a focused short questionnaire to be completed by ministries and organizations responsible for implementation in member countries.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Enhanced capacity of member countries to provide e-services in Arabic, targeting socio-economic development

*Results achieved*

62. Within the Development of an Arabic Domain Names System project, the Internet-Draft was refined and posted on the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) website under the title *Linguistic Guidelines for the Use of Arabic Language in Internet Domains*. ESCWA also defined a template for cyberlegislation which will assist member countries in the assessment and development of cyberlegislation at the national level. In partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, ESCWA implemented a project on ICT for education in Iraq which will establish several learning centres throughout the country and is expected to increase ICT literacy of teachers and other staff. A study on building trust in e-services stressed the importance of cybersecurity to ensure the protection of data and privacy.

*Lessons learned*

63. Regional collaboration and partnerships should be enhanced and fund-raising efforts aimed at harnessing e-services in Arabic to target socio-economic development need to be encouraged. To achieve more effective results, mechanisms for the exchange of information and the sharing of knowledge with regional and international players must be established and promoted.

#### **SUBPROGRAMME 5. STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING**

64. The Statistics Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the production and use of harmonized and comparable economic, social and sectoral statistics, including gender-disaggregated data, thereby allowing for informed and evidence-based decision-making. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Strengthened capacity of member countries to improve the national institutional framework for official statistics

65. In 2008, ESCWA member countries made a five per cent improvement in their level of implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, attaining an implementation rate of 67 per cent. This was primarily attributable to the work of the Commission, including advocacy for the application of the principles, the establishment of a virtual library on national statistical systems, the sharing of information on best practice, dissemination of guidelines, provision of technical support for building the capacity of national statistical offices, and through the forum of the Statistical Committee. The subprogramme enhanced the capacity of officials to adapt to international standards in economic and social statistics, with particular reference to updating national accounts statistical systems in line with the latest international recommendations of the revised 2008 System of National Accounts. In the field of energy statistics, ESCWA, in collaboration with the International Energy Agency (IEA) and MEDSTAT, worked to improve understanding of international methodologies and definitions for the collection of data. ESCWA also ensured that member countries were fully involved in the review of the Energy Statistics Manual, a joint compilation by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, IEA and Eurostat, which is being translated into Arabic. ESCWA advocated for the adoption of integrated economic and environmental accounting, which is essential for monitoring sustainable economic development, and its capacity-building efforts resulted in pilot water accounts in three member countries.

*Lessons learned*

66. Although most member countries made some improvement during the biennium, they continue to lag behind in the implementation of most of the principles. Special attention is required for three countries whose rate of implementation is particularly low (Lebanon, at 44 per cent, Bahrain, at 51 per cent and

Kuwait, at 53 per cent). Concrete efforts are essential to improve the quality, international comparability, timeliness and availability of all statistics, but particularly gender-disaggregated and MDG-related statistics.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Strengthened capacity of member countries to participate effectively in the 2010 round of population censuses, household surveys and other surveys as a statistical requisite for the attainment of the MDGs by 2015

67. Six ESCWA member countries have successfully completed the 2010 round of population and housing censuses: Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates in 2005, Egypt (2006), Palestine (2007) and the Sudan (2008). Six countries provided ESCWA with at least 60 per cent of the information required for monitoring the MDGs, including gender-disaggregated data. In its role as secretariat to the Regional Taskforce on Population and Housing Censuses, ESCWA hosted the fifth meeting of the taskforce (Beirut, 23-24 March 2009), which focused on the use of media in censuses, planning a census in a governorate, metadata and good practice, and reviewed the Arabic translation of the Population and Principles of Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2. The virtual library has been updated to serve as a knowledge-base for sharing information and providing users with practical tools in five thematic areas: population and housing censuses, MDGs, gender, health and national statistical systems.

#### *Lessons learned*

68. A further six member countries will finalize the 2010 round of the population and housing censuses between 2010 and 2014. ESCWA will continue to provide technical assistance and support on the various phases of the census programme, from questionnaire design to analysis of the final results, as well as data dissemination. Areas requiring further improvement are gender statistics and the availability of MDG indicators, especially relating to health and poverty. Challenges include the availability of metadata and coherence between national and international sources.

### **SUBPROGRAMME 6. ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

69. The ESCWA Centre for Women was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to increase the focus on women and gender issues with a view to reducing the gender imbalance and empowering women. The results achieved under the expected accomplishment of this subprogramme are set out below.

**Expected accomplishment:** Strengthened capacity of national mechanisms and civil society institutions for the empowerment and advancement of women to address the gender imbalance and mainstream a gender perspective, with special emphasis on the participation of women in legislative and executive authorities

#### *Results achieved*

70. Advocacy by ESCWA contributed to the inclusion of a gender perspective in the 2008 national plan of Saudi Arabia. The Commission provided advisory services to member countries on how to mainstream gender issues in national policies and programmes, thus complementing its normative and analytical work. Activities aimed at national capacity-building included the provision of training on a broad spectrum of gender issues, including gender budgeting; gender mainstreaming; implementation of CEDAW; resolutions and their gender-sensitive implementation; gender in politics, lobbying and elections; and violence against women. ESCWA advisory services also contributed to the completion and timely submission of CEDAW reports, an important tool for the monitoring of progress on issues related to women, by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

*Lessons learned*

71. It is clear from the increase in requests from member countries for related advisory services that ESCWA efforts have started to yield results in mainstreaming gender and the implementation of both the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. More intensive and targeted technical assistance to support the advancement and empowerment of women in the region should be pursued by the subprogramme.

**SUBPROGRAMME 7. CONFLICT MITIGATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

72. The Section for Emerging and Conflict-related Issues was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to increase understanding by member countries of the impact of conflict and enhance their capacity to identify, assess, predict and respond to challenges posed by conflict with a view to reducing its impact on development. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Increased understanding by member countries of the impact of conflict on socio-economic development in the region

*Results achieved*

73. ESCWA promoted the concept of development under crisis and explored the potential for private sector resilience in countries affected by conflict. ESCWA activities contributed to raising awareness on the important role that the private sector can play in conflict mitigation in development, building on regional experience. The subprogramme laid the foundation for a regional response to mitigate the impact of conflict and other pressing global challenges, and this was translated into raising interest and support among member countries for the creation of an intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis. Of the 14 member countries, 11 joined the task force, a clear reflection of the positive impact which ESCWA has had in promoting understanding and increasing both pre-emptive and responsive capacity of member countries.

*Lesson learned*

74. Inviting Government officials as well as experts to attend meetings proved useful for identifying topics of particular interest, political sensitivities and potential interventions. This contributed to strengthening normative work by identifying focus topics for analytical studies. Harnessing a variety of media, including newspapers, national and regional television channels, and the Internet in celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was effective in increasing awareness and knowledge of the issue and highlighting related actions taken by the United Nations. Timely dissemination and provision of an Arabic translation would further improve outreach. Greater efforts should be directed towards the sharing of experience by a larger number of member countries and other developing countries in meetings. Partnerships and collaboration with sister United Nations agencies, regional and international think tanks, and prominent development institutions contributed to enhancing the relevance and quality of research and the design of innovative research models in tackling themes pertinent to the region. Political considerations and sensitive output such as the note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan require closer collaboration between ESCWA, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Department of Political Affairs.

<p><b>Expected accomplishment:</b> Enhanced capacity of member countries to identify, assess, predict and respond to the socio-economic and political issues and challenges posed by conflict and instability in the region</p>
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*Results achieved*

75. Specially-tailored techniques for management and emergency preparedness in Iraq were implemented through capacity-building training provided by ESCWA for 89 Iraqi officials, including 21 women. A training module and an E-caravan were used to train 730 residents of post-conflict areas of south Lebanon, including 392 women, with a view to improving their employment prospects. ESCWA also conducted 15 workshops involving 113 young people and in total, 51 workshops were implemented, benefiting a total of 484 participants, of whom 230 were women. By 30 June 2009, the subprogramme had received 15 requests for technical assistance from member countries, reflecting its success in terms of implementing capacity-building modules and programmes to enhance the capacity of member countries to assess and respond to the socio-economic and political challenges posed by conflict and instability in the region.

*Lessons learned*

76. Given the nature of the subprogramme activities, which primarily target conflict-affected countries, the problem of travel restrictions to on-site training sessions was circumvented by hosting training activities in neighbouring countries. Follow-up sessions to initial training are an important element in achieving better results. The selection of participants should be based on a set of criteria relevant to the activity of each individual project and should be carried out jointly by the implementing and benefiting entities on the basis of mutually agreed criteria. Training curricula and materials should be fully developed prior to the training session and submitted for review and comment to the benefiting entity. A questionnaire should be circulated among participants in advance of the activity in order to ascertain their expectations and level of expertise; this would facilitate the design of an optimal training programme. The study tour methodology has proved to be one of the most effective means of facilitating the transfer of knowledge and lessons learned from one environment to another. Proven success factors include the adaptability of the training and capacity-building models applied and their relevance to the local context, the reliance on regional expertise and success stories in developing and adapting training modules and curricula, and the selection of appropriate techniques and methodologies.

Annex**ESCWA INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS 2008-2009**

<b>Subprogramme</b>	<b>Title of meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>
Subprogramme 1	Eighth Session of the Committee on Water Resources	Beirut	17-19 December 2009
	Seventh Session of the Committee on Energy	Beirut	5-6 February 2009
Subprogramme 2	Seventh Session of the Committee on Social Development	Beirut	26-27 October 2009
Subprogramme 3	Sixth Session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region	Beirut	6-7 July 2009
	Ninth Session of the Committee on Transport	Beirut	26-28 February 2008
	Tenth Session of the Committee on Transport	Beirut	31 March-2 April 2009
Subprogramme 5	Eighth Session of the Statistical Committee	Beirut	14-16 October 2008
Subprogramme 6	Fourth Session of the Committee on Women	Beirut	21-23 October 2009

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