

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/26/6(Part I)/B
20 April 2010
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Twenty-sixth session
Beirut, 17-20 May 2010

Item 7 (a-ii) of the provisional agenda

MANAGEMENT ISSUES**STREAMLINING THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION**

Upgrade the Centre for Women in ESCWA to a division

Summary

Despite the growing recognition by the United Nations and ESCWA member countries of the essential role played by women in development and the general well-being of society, the human and financial resources of the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) have remained limited since its establishment in 2003. This report analyses the strengths of ECW and future opportunities in order to capitalize on efforts by member countries aimed at enhancing the socio-economic situation of women and expediting the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming endeavours.

Within that context, this report highlights the need to adopt the resolution of the fourth session of the Committee on Women to upgrade ECW into a division and to support it with additional human and financial resources, thereby ensuring that it fulfils its expected mandate and expands its role as mandated by several United Nations resolutions and the expressed wishes of member countries.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-5	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS	6-18	3
A. Analysis and policy recommendations	11	4
B. Institutional and capacity-building activities.....	12-13	5
C. Monitoring developments.....	14	6
D. Following up on international conferences.....	15-16	7
E. Gender mainstreaming the internal programmes of ESCWA	17-18	7
II. JUSTIFICATION	19-40	7
A. Status of women in the region and emerging trends.....	20-26	8
B. Increased responsibilities.....	27-32	9
C. Current structure.....	33-40	10
III. UPGRADING THE ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN TO A DIVISION	41-52	13

LIST OF ANNEXES

I. Resolution on the follow-up to implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab States After Fifteen Years: Beijing + 15		18
II. United Nations resolutions mandating the ESCWA Centre for Women.....		21
III. Proposed strategic framework 2012-2013		22

Introduction

1. Gender equality and the empowerment and advancement of women have been on the regional and international agenda since the mid-1970s. In the ESCWA region, efforts have intensified to ensure that women have equal access to education and health services, are better represented in the workforce in general and in decision-making positions in particular, and that gender concerns are being addressed in national socio-economic policies, strategies and programmes.
2. While a number of challenges remain, ESCWA member countries have been moving steadily towards the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality. The commitment of ESCWA member countries to the empowerment of women has been a key indicator on socio-economic progress, and the wide recognition of national women's machineries (NWMs) in most member countries has been a key milestone in ensuring that the advancement of women remains high on national and regional agendas.
3. Yet despite leadership commitment and the efforts exerted to date, numerous challenges remain and these hinder the effective translation into legislation, policies, strategies and programmes of measures taken to ensure the institutionalization of gender equality. Most importantly, NWMs face a number of challenges relating to their role and mandates in member countries. Some of these arise from the limited financial, human and technical resources available to the mechanisms, particularly in the following areas: reporting to international conferences and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995); the alignment of national legislation with international standards; combating violence against women; and ensuring equal access to political and economic decision-making positions.
4. The ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) was established in response to the emerging need of member countries to contribute to and consolidate regional efforts towards the advancement of women and gender. Since its creation, ECW has supported member countries in establishing NWMs, building capacity in the field of women's rights and gender mainstreaming, and ratifying and reporting on CEDAW. In addition, ECW has consistently provided services to member countries in response to new and emerging issues and needs at the national, regional and international levels. For example, ECW has supported member countries in the field of gender budgeting through work implemented with NWMs.
5. However, the limited financial and human resources available to ECW have hindered the effective delivery of its services to member countries. This document examines the experience of ECW to date, exploring its strengths and weaknesses, and proposes the allocation of greater resources to enable it to expand its role and increase its support to organizations working for the advancement of women and gender equality in member countries. Pursuant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/41 on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations, ECW has developed a comprehensive strategy on the ways in which gender should be mainstreamed within ESCWA and that covers substantive and support divisions as well as management. The strategy was recently adopted by ESCWA. As the key implementing entity with ESCWA, ECWA has developed a thorough training programme for gender mainstreaming aimed at ensuring the earliest possible implementation and at increasing the awareness and skills of staff in gender mainstreaming.

I. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

6. ECW was established in 2003 pursuant to the adoption by the Commission of resolution 240 (XXII), which called for the creation of a committee on women comprising member countries and for the establishment of ECW for Women. The resolution set out the role of ECW and its relation to member countries and the Committee on Women.
7. ECW has worked closely with member countries to support their efforts in advancing and empowering women, and mainstreaming gender in national plans, policies and programmes. Taking guidance from the

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and CEDAW, ECW focuses on three principal areas of empowerment, namely: economic (poverty alleviation), social (gender roles and partnership in the family) and political (sharing in decision-making and political participation).

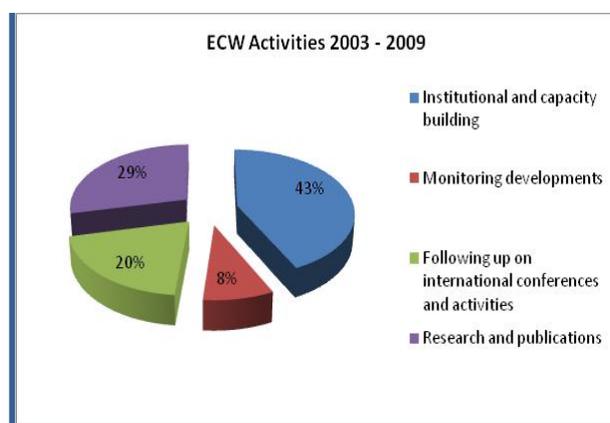
8. The activities of ECW have diversified since its establishment and now extend to four main areas of cooperation, namely: institution and capacity-building activities; monitoring developments; following up on international conventions; and organizing relevant conferences and undertaking research and publications.

9. The activities of ECW and its cooperation with stakeholders in the region have achieved the following:

- (a) Contributed to monitoring the socio-economic progress of women in member countries;
- (b) Facilitated the exchange of experience among member countries;
- (c) Increased awareness and understanding among member countries of issues relating to gender mainstreaming and best practice in the empowerment of women;
- (d) Enhanced the capacity of NWMs to establish and organize gender focal points;
- (e) Developed a gender mainstreaming strategy for ESCWA.

10. Most of the activities of ECW are in the field of institution-building of NWMs, with particular focus on issues related to the political participation of women, access to and use of media by women, violence against women and mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of NWMs (see figure I).

Figure I. Activities of the ESCWA Centre for Women, 2003-2009



A. ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

11. During the period 2003-2009, ECW supported the production of a number of studies of interest and relevance to member countries. The resulting publications have provided decision makers and other stakeholders with substantial information on issues relevant to future policy. However, while such studies, research, guidelines and other papers constitute a welcome contribution to the resources on women's issues in the region, there is incontrovertible evidence that many other important related fields of study remain unexplored and this requires further expansion in the areas of work currently covered by ECW.

TABLE 1. ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN PUBLICATIONS
2003-2009

Subject	Titles
Historical overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Status of Arab Women Report 2003 ➤ History of women movements in the Arab world
Conflict resolution and peace building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Means to strengthen the role of women in conflict resolution and peace building ➤ Protecting the rights of women in the ESCWA region through the proper use of UN resolutions and international protocols on war and armed conflict
Civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender, citizenship and the role of NGOs in selected Gulf countries ➤ Gender, citizenship and the role of NGOs in Egypt ➤ Guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of National machineries for Women in the ESCWA countries ➤ Regional shadow report of NGOs on the implementation of CEDAW in Arab countries ➤ Fact sheets on mainstreaming gender in development policies and programmes for the water and environment sectors
Economic rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Globalization and the gender-based division of labour ➤ Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources including microfinance ➤ Promoting the economic participation of Arab women: impact of the global financial crisis on the status of women in the Arab region
Empowerment through capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women and the information society: use of information and communication technologies to empower women (2004)

B. INSTITUTIONAL AND CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

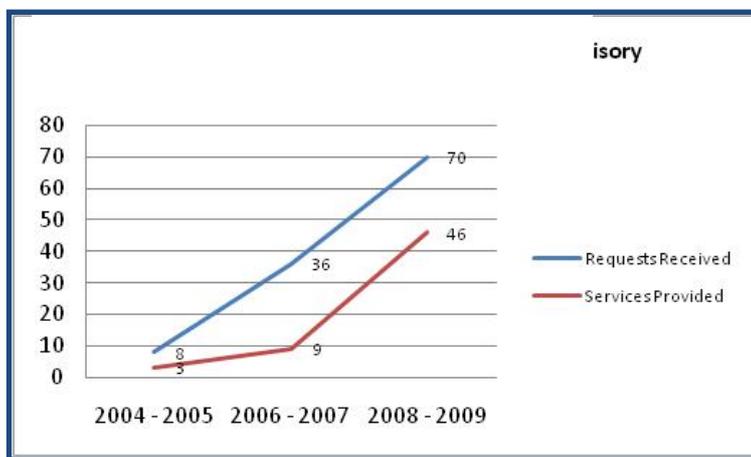
12. In its efforts to support national women's machineries in programmes for the advancement of women and gender equality, ECW has organized various training programmes targeting staff members of NWMs, parliamentarians, judges, gender focal points, civil society and government officials on subjects that are relevant to the implementation of CEDAW, gender mainstreaming, community development, advocacy and lobbying. Figure II details the types of institution- and capacity-building activities that have been organized by ECW.

Figure II. Types of Institutional and capacity building activities



13. Furthermore, direct services to member countries through regional advisors have contributed to consolidating the role of ECW with member countries, while ensuring the delivery of professional training expertise to member countries in response to their requests. Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the number of requests received from member countries for advisory services. Hence, during the biennium 2004-2005, ECW received a modest eight requests from member countries, which increased to 36 during the biennium 2006-2007, and reached 70 requests for the biennium 2008-2009. Advisory missions to member countries included training programmes tailored to respond to the particular needs of requesting member countries and covering such issues as CEDAW reporting, networking, advocacy and lobbying, and designing national action plans to combat violence against women. However, as indicated by figure II, ECW was not able to accommodate all the requests from member countries owing to limited human resources and financial capacities.

Figure III. Requests received by member countries and technical services provided, 2004-2009



C. MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS

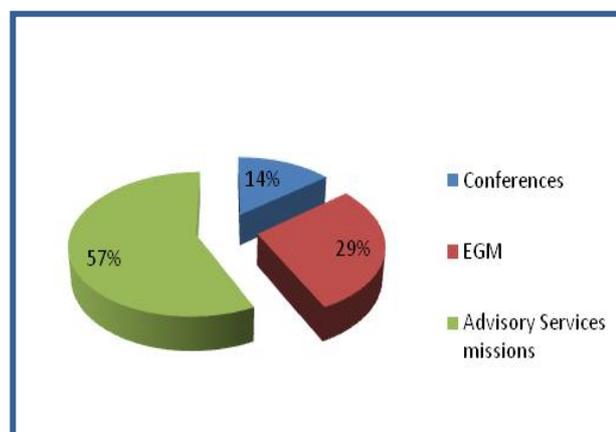
14. Under relevant Economic and Social Council resolutions, ECW continues to submit periodical reports on the social and economic situation of Palestinian women. Similarly, under ESCWA resolutions, ECW is requested to examine the situation of women in those ESCWA member countries that suffer from occupation, war and conflict; and to build their capacities in the field of conflict resolution and peace-building. To that extent, ECW periodically monitors the situation of women in conflict areas as well as in the broader Arab region, and provides quantitative as well as qualitative updates on progress made in this field.

D. FOLLOWING UP ON INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

15. Similar to other entities established within regional commissions, ECW has been mandated with the responsibility of following up on global and regional conferences and the participation of member countries therein, and of coordinating endeavours of member countries and regional organizations with regard to implementation of the resolutions and recommendations adopted at such conferences.

16. ECW has been active in fulfilling its mandate through various mechanisms, including regional inter-ministerial meetings, conferences, workshops, publications and reports as well as media campaigns. Most notably, ECW has supported member countries in preparing the Beijing + 10 and Beijing + 15 reports and submitted the regional reports to relevant United Nations institutions.

Figure IV. Following up on international conventions and conferences



E. GENDER MAINSTREAMING THE INTERNAL PROGRAMMES OF ESCWA

17. In 2001, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on mainstreaming gender in the United Nations, in which it called upon the Secretary-General to report regularly on gender mainstreaming in all programmes of the United Nations and include this item under his reporting on follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In order to respond to this request, ESCWA introduced a first gender mainstreaming strategy in 2005, which was recently updated by ECW, adopted by the secretariat and disseminated to all ESCWA staff.

18. On 15 March 2010, ESCWA adopted a policy and activated a strategy on gender mainstreaming for the organization. The adoption of a gender mainstreaming strategy adds to the responsibilities and workload of ECW. In fact, the strategy recommends increasing the human and financial resources of ECW and indicates that providing the Centre with additional resources represents a precondition for the success and full implementation of its provisions. In this capacity, ECW provides support to other divisions at ESCWA in terms of gender-sensitive programming, and institutionalizing mechanisms and tools at the planning and implementation stages aimed at systematically adding a gender component to the work of ESCWA; and of developing a gender mainstreaming training programme aimed at sensitizing staff on issues relating to gender mainstreaming, thereby entailing further commitment, time and human resources from ECW.

II. JUSTIFICATION

19. This chapter examines the strengths and opportunities of ECW and provides the rationale for expanding the support provided for the Centre. Specifically, it shows the need to strengthen the role of ECW at the level of member countries and of ESCWA, and to increase its financial and human resources in order

to enhance its ability to respond to challenges facing member countries and to ensure an efficient implementation of regional programmes that serves the needs of stakeholders in the region.

A. STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE REGION AND EMERGING TRENDS

20. CEDAW has been ratified by all ESCWA members, with the exception of Palestine and the Sudan. Many member countries continue to demonstrate political will and commitment in creating an environment that is conducive to addressing gender issues and the advancement of women and have consequently developed relevant national strategies.

21. While women play a crucial role in sustainable development and hold central positions in society and in the economy, their contributions often go unrecognized. Many households below the poverty line in ESCWA member countries are dependent on the contributions of women. Despite these contributions, women face barriers which impede their effectiveness. Arab women face discrimination at various levels, including legal (through discriminative legislation); structural (in terms of institutions that are structurally women-unfriendly, such as market, public and private institutions); and behavioural (with regard to stereotypical roles of women in society). Consequently, there is a need for a holistic approach to address these challenges.

22. Moreover, these barriers range from traditional attitudes to unequal access to education, health, employment, information, resources and regular participation in the development process at all levels. In addition, emerging issues on the international agenda have impacted negatively on women, including erupting internal and external conflicts, migration issues, economic and food crises, climate change, violence against women and women in conflict areas, whose response requires further consolidation of efforts.

23. However, the situation of women is not the same across the ESCWA region. Specifically, the experiences and socio-economic status of women vary greatly in different countries, which provides ample opportunity for sharing information and exchange experiences among countries with similar cultural backgrounds.

24. Periodic reports from member countries have demonstrated that there is much work still required to ensure that women gain equal access to resources. Similarly, there is evidence from regional discussions and needs-assessment exercises that the human resource capacities of NWMs require further development in order to enhance their working strategies and face the socio-economic challenges of women in the region.

25. More importantly and since the review of Beijing + 10 in 2005, violence against women has become a priority at the international, regional and national levels. While some ESCWA member countries have embarked on new initiatives and taken new measures aimed at addressing this issue, various obstacles in that regard still persist. Within that context, member countries need to address the topic in a comprehensive approach whereby they commit to providing adequate information and data in order to understand the scale and magnitude of the problem, and undertake preventive measures aimed at addressing violence against women at an early stage, including by developing and enacting new legislation and/or amending existing legislation, protecting victims of violence and providing needed services for the rehabilitation of victims of violence, thereby ensuring their return to a safe environment.

26. Moreover, recent emerging internal and external conflicts in the region have increased the need to adhere to United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and other related resolutions in order to ensure the prevention, protection and participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building.

B. INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES

27. Over the past years, the responsibilities of ECW have steadily increased and are set to increase further in the future. This owes to the increasing number of member countries who are ratifying CEDAW, which translates into an emerging need among member countries for technical expertise to bridge the gap between legislation and the prevailing position of women. These newly introduced regional developments are therefore set to increase the expectations of and requests by member countries to ensure better coordination and sharing of experience and good practices.

28. Moreover, other emerging issues will require immediate responses from regional commissions, including the need to increase the knowledge on gender issues among policymakers and strengthen the capacity of government officials, civil society organizations as well as other stakeholders in the region on the means and strategies to incorporate a gender dimension. In addition, given the proximity of ECW as an integral part of the regional commission that is responsive and understanding of the region's cultural background, the Centre is well positioned to develop an Arab gender development index in cooperation with member countries aimed at measuring progress.

29. For example, the needs of member countries in relation to the provision of frameworks to prevent violence against women, protect women and provide services for victims of violence requires new avenues for work, including supporting multi-agency networks, raising the level of public understanding, increasing professional knowledge and understanding on violence against women, helping member countries to develop policies and guidelines for service users and providers, enhancing primary prevention work, amending existing legislation, establishing baselines, and improving data collection and understanding on violence against women.

30. Another important area of intervention that emerged from United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and other related resolutions is the need to work closely with member countries on developing national action plans aimed at ensuring the protection of women during armed conflict and their active participation in conflict resolution and peace-building, while preventing their marginalization by ensuring their involvement in decision-making processes.

31. Moreover, recent developments at the international scene, particularly the newly proposed United Nations entity for gender equality, would expand and enlarge the role played by regional commissions and the gender entities within these commissions.¹ Certainly this would involve upgrading ECW, which is already in the process of forming a consortium in cooperation with other United Nations regional entities working on gender issues and aimed at organizing the work in this area and ensuring synergies rather than duplication of efforts. This will particularly help in terms of coordinating efforts and consolidating the limited available financial resources, thereby ensuring greater efficiency in the delivery of coordinated programmes that build on the strengths, outreach and mandate of each of the United Nations agencies working in the region.

32. On 15 March 2010, ESCWA upgraded and adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy for the organization aimed at enhancing further the overall work of ESCWA in the field of gender mainstreaming and at ensuring the availability of adequate human and financial resources to mainstream gender analysis and concerns in the different divisions and programmes. As the designated entity to ensure an effective and timely implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, ECW will have to allocate more resources into developing training manuals and mainstreaming gender in ESCWA policies, structure, processes, programmes and activities as well as its culture.

¹ The proposed United Nations body would be based on the consolidation of four gender-specific United Nations entities, namely, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, Division for the Advancement of Women, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

C. CURRENT STRUCTURE

33. ECW is strongly mandated to develop programmes and contribute to efforts aimed at advancing women advancement, and to cooperate with national partners as well as regional specialized agencies and organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Arab Women Organization, the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research and other relevant parties.²

34. The recent resolution of the fourth session for the Committee on Women reemphasized the need to enhance the capacity of ECW by clearly requesting the secretariat to support ECW “with additional human and financial resources, in order to upgrade it to the level of a division, alongside other divisions of ESCWA, with the aim of doubling efforts to assist member countries with empowerment of women”.³

35. In addition, the resolution reiterated the need to expand the role of ECW to “strengthen the capacity of national mechanisms for mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies, plans and programmes, through capacity-building, training, technical assistance and consultation, preparation of studies, and provision of possibilities for inter-communication, and exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences; strengthen capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through capacity-building of national mechanisms, members of parliament, judicial institutions, civil society and the media, help States to withdraw their reservations on the Convention, and continue to raise awareness of decision makers of the Convention; and cooperate with the Arab Women Organization to implement a regional strategic plan for advancement of women, and promote the need for reviewing and amending laws to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”.⁴

36. ECW has been working as the secretariat for the ESCWA Committee on Women as well as on programmes and activities to fulfil its mandate in supporting member countries in areas of women advancement and empowerment. In particular, ECW has been active in providing services for member countries in the form of capacity-building activities for NWMs, particularly in areas of gender mainstreaming, CEDAW reporting, gender statistics, gender analysis, and means and strategies to combat domestic violence. Specifically, the current core functions of ECW are as follows:

(a) To provide assistance to member countries in mainstreaming a gender perspective into national development policies, programmes and projects;

(b) To provide technical assistance for institution- and capacity-building of NWMs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs);

(c) To monitor developments and analysing the situation of women in the ESCWA region, and disseminate relevant information;

(d) To monitor and follow up on the adherence to and implementation of international conferences and conventions by member countries, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, CEDAW; and monitor and analyse trends and developments in member countries with regard to progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

(e) To undertake pioneering and thematic research on ways of improving the status of Arab women and formulating operational projects for the empowerment of women;

² For relevant resolutions by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, ESCWA and the ESCWA Committee on Women, see annex II.

³ The complete text of the resolution is available in annex I.

⁴ See annex I.

(f) To serve as a forum and regional coordinator among Arab countries for women and gender issues.

37. These core functions are translated every biennium within the strategic framework into a set of expected accomplishments and specific outcomes. However, given the Centre's strong relationship with member countries and proximity in the region, ECW is also cooperating with other donors, United Nations entities and regional organizations in implementing other relevant and needed programmes and projects. While most of these activities are not included in the annual work programme of ECW, they do add to its workload, thereby straining the existing available human resources. For example, ECW has recently signed two memoranda of understanding with national stakeholders and civil society organizations from member countries in order to promote and support efforts exerted to advance the status of women. Furthermore, ECW cooperated with the Division for the Advancement of Women to organize a training workshop aimed at strengthening legislative frameworks in order to address all forms of violence against women.

38. Currently, the structure of ECW follows the structure of a "section" rather than a "division" and includes six professional posts, namely, a chief at the P5 level, two staff members at the P4 level, two staff members at the P3 level and one staff member at the P2 level (see figure V). ECW is supported by four general service posts, namely, two staff assistants at GS-5 and GS-4, one research assistant at GS-6 and one administrative assistant at GS-6. Table 2 presents the key functions of the professional staff for the biennium 2010-2011.

Figure V. Current organizational chart: Advancement of Women

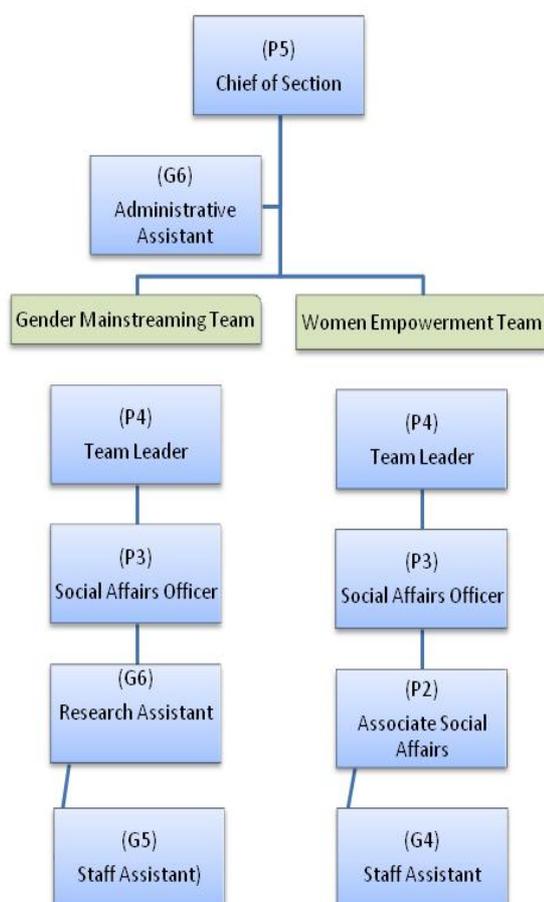


TABLE 2. KEY FUNCTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF AT THE ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN, 2010-2011

Professional staff	Theme	Role
Two professionals (P4 and P3)	Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize four expert group meetings • Organize one intergovernmental meeting • Follow up on research and produce two publications • Organize two training courses • Coordinate one field project • Propose, design and carry out substantive research projects analysing key trends and changes in gender relations at global, regional and national levels • Assess implications and develop proposals with respect to social development and social welfare policies and interventions • Respond to requests from Headquarters and report on issues relating to Security Council resolution 1325 • Prepare statements on the situation of women and gender mainstreaming in the region as required • Implement internal gender mainstreaming strategy • Design, in cooperation with human resources, a training programme on gender mainstreaming • Supervise and communicate with consultants recruited on short-term assignments for ECW
Three professionals (P4, P3 and P2)	Empowerment of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize four expert group meetings • Prepare three parliamentary documents • Follow up on research and produce two publications • Organize two training courses • Coordinate one field project • Propose, design and carry out substantive research projects analysing key trends and changes in relation to commitments by member countries to CEDAW, MDGs and Beijing Platform of Action • Assess implications and develop proposals with respect to social development and social welfare policies and interventions • Prepare statements on the situation of women and gender mainstreaming in the region as required • Supervise and communicate with consultants recruited on short-term assignments for ECW
One professional	Regional advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advisory services to member countries based on their requests • Provide assistance to the chief of section • Hold capacity-building workshops • Participate in fact-finding missions on gender issues or participate in ESCWA's integrated mission

39. Currently, the guiding mandate of ECW is stipulated by Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, CEDAW, international conferences on women, particularly the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and various United Nations resolutions (see annex II).

40. Certainly, the increased responsibilities of ECW have also strained its limited available financial resources. For example, the budget of ECW, which was \$110,000 for each of the past two biennia 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 and was raised to approximately \$160,000 for 2010-2011, constitutes one of the lowest budgets for any subprogramme in ESCWA. Furthermore, resources made available for ECW are very limited, compared to similar entities in other regional commissions.

III. UPGRADING THE ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN TO A DIVISION

41. The efficient and timely implementation of ECW work is set to require additional staff members given the increasing number of member countries that are ratifying and lifting reservations on CEDAW, and the increasing number of requests from member countries to support them in fulfilling their international commitments as well as providing better linkages between international, regional and national developments in the fields of gender equity and women advancement.

42. Furthermore, additional staff members will allow ECW to expand into new areas of work and provide in-depth focus on such important and emerging issues as the impact of market trends and financial policies on women's economic participation; implementation and work plans for Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009); and violence against women in its various forms, including domestic violence, violence in institutions and sex trafficking, as outlined in the strategic framework proposal (see annex III). Moreover, ECW will expand to include new modes of operation, including as stipulated by the Committee on Women to examine the feasibility of establishing an observatory aimed at monitoring progress in the advancement of women across the Arab region and at implementing future recommendations by the Committee in that regard.

43. Certainly, the recent adoption of the gender mainstreaming strategy by ESCWA will also require further human resources at ECW in order to support the various divisions in implementing gender-sensitive programmes and activities with member countries. This is particularly true given the unique position of ESCWA in implementing multifaceted programmes in sustainable development (including, for example, water, electricity and climate change); economic and social development; statistics development; information and communication development; and emerging and conflict-related areas. While the main target audience for these activities are the divisions within ESCWA, the wider society will also benefit from gender-sensitive programmes and activities implemented by these divisions.

44. Finally, additional human resources will allow ECW to expand its services to include, along with NWMs, other crucial stakeholders in member countries, such as NGOs, and government bodies and ministries, particularly of labour, social development and planning.

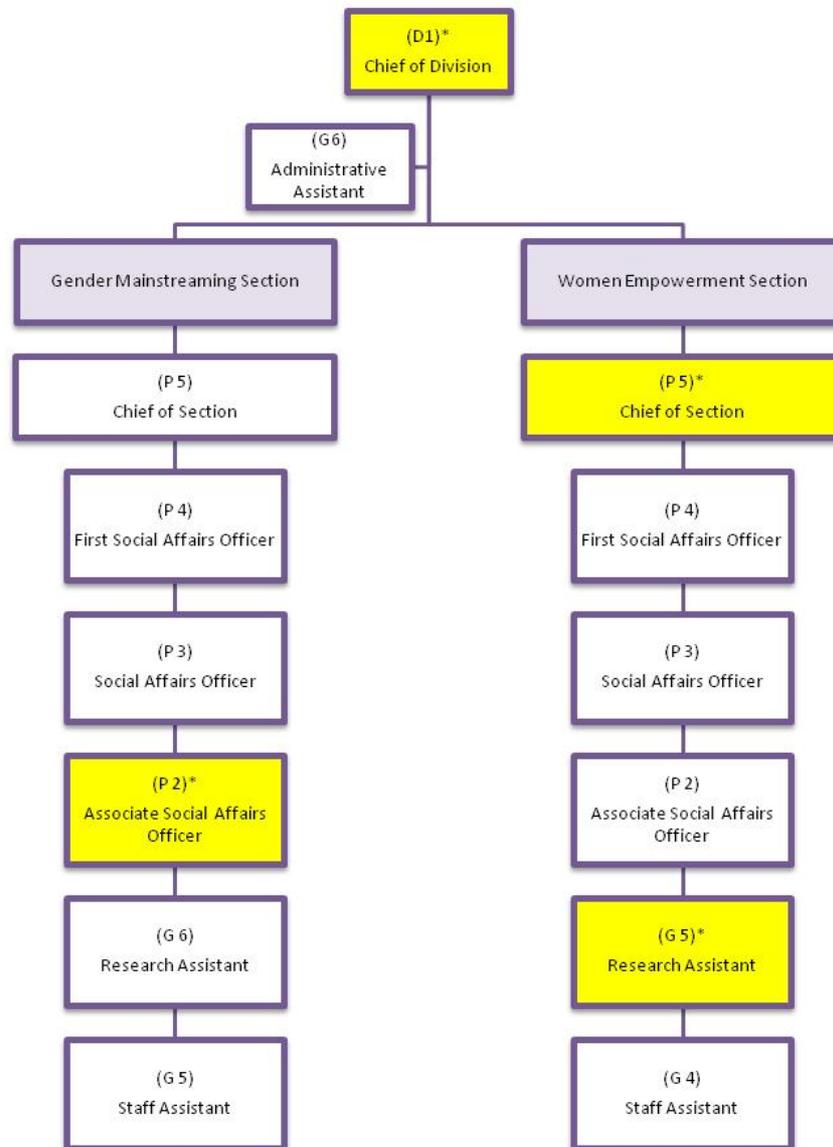
45. In order to respond to internal and external mandates and to requests from member countries, ECW needs to be restructured to fit into the "division" category rather than the "section" category. This transformation will also allow ECW to capture existing opportunities at international, regional and national levels in order to enhance its services provided to member countries, thereby fulfilling its mandate efficiently without undermining its quality.

46. Consequently, in addition to other, more substantive services, the upgrade process would allow ECW to provide a better, regular service to member countries, which include the following: organizing inter-ministerial meetings; providing member countries with quality research, studies and analyses of current issues related to women empowerment in the region; organizing expert group meetings on various subjects; and maintaining an up-to-date and user-friendly website. Within the framework of a division, two sections could be established as follows: a "women empowerment section", and a "Gender mainstreaming section."

47. Past experiences in other regional commissions, particularly the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), demonstrate that the presence of a strong and supported entity within a regional commission that benefits from a robust mandate and adequate financial and human resources has a

positive influence on the situation of women and contributes towards the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming efforts at the institutional level, in addition to enhancing the role of the regional commission among its member countries in relation to women empowerment.

Figure VI. Proposed organizational chart: Division for the Advancement of Women



* proposed new posts

48. To that extent and in line with the internal procedures of ESCWA, the proposed structure for the new division would entail increasing the number of professional staff to eight, from six, with adequate support from staff at the general services, and would be directed by a chief of division at the D1 level. In addition to supporting the role of ECW in serving the Committee on Women for member countries, the two additional professional staff would be responsible for expert group meetings, comprehensive analytical studies and other activities and outputs within their specific fields of work.

49. Within that framework and as described above, the two sections within the division would have responsibilities as set forth below.

(a) *Women empowerment section*

50. The women empowerment section would be responsible for programmes that target women empowerment in various fields, particularly women's economic and political participation in member countries. Under this section, activities would focus on supporting internationally agreed development goals, conventions and resolutions and on providing relevant information and policy papers to member countries. Areas of work are as follows:

- (a) Promoting and supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (b) Promoting CEDAW and the Optional Protocol, and supporting member countries in responding to the Committee's concluding observations;
- (c) Promoting the achievement of MDGs from a gender perspective;
- (d) Supporting member countries in implementing Security Council resolution 1325 and other relevant resolutions;
- (e) Proposing, designing and carrying out substantive research projects, analysing key trends and changes in gender relations at global, regional and national levels;
- (f) Assessing implications and developing proposals with respect to social development and social welfare policies and interventions, taking into consideration implications on gender relations in the region.

(b) *Gender mainstreaming section*

51. The gender mainstreaming section would be responsible for supporting member countries in their efforts to mainstream gender in their national plans and policy papers, national programmes and structures, and mainstreaming gender internally within the various operations of ESCWA. Specifically, the activities of this section would include, among others, the following:

- (a) Supporting gender mainstreaming in member countries, as follows:
 - (i) Following up on international and regional mechanisms on gender mainstreaming;
 - (ii) Supporting NWMs in their efforts aimed at gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting;
 - (iii) Supporting member countries in developing sex disaggregated data on women participation in different fields;
 - (iv) Developing indicators to measure progress;
 - (v) Proposing, designing and carrying out substantive research projects, analysing key trends and changes in gender relations at global, regional and national levels;
 - (vi) Responding to requests from Headquarters and reporting on issues relating to UNSR 1325 and violence against women.
- (b) Gender mainstreaming of ESCWA, as follows:
 - (i) Monitoring, evaluating and helping to enforce the gender mainstreaming strategy/policy;
 - (ii) Designing a training programme on gender mainstreaming, in cooperation with human resources;
 - (iii) Supporting ESCWA divisions and sections in ensuring that their programmes take gender concerns into consideration and target changing gender stereotypes;
 - (iv) Developing indicators to measure progress.

52. Table 3 identifies the roles of the additional staff in the upgraded division.

TABLE 3. KEY FUNCTIONS OF THE ADDITIONAL STAFF IN THE UPGRADED DIVISION

Additional posts	Theme	Focus area	Outputs
Chief of division (D1)		Management	
One professional (P5)	Women empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness raising ▪ Coordinating mechanisms ▪ Enhanced capacity of NWMs ▪ Better monitoring and reporting to CEDAW ▪ Better responsiveness to international conferences and resolutions ▪ Development of action plans ▪ Gender-based violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support member countries in developing national action plans • Provide advisory and technical services to NWMs on societal mobilization • Documentation and dissemination of best practices • User-friendly guidelines on monitoring and reporting on CEDAW • User-friendly guidelines and manuals on developing legislation that are in line with international commitment • Development of national media awareness campaigns • Train media personnel on gender sensitizing media messages • Study tours to other countries with successful experiences • Study visits for staff at NWM to others in the region to learn best practices • Needs assessment missions • Staff provide advisory services in developing strategies and policies that aim for the advancement of women • Hold mutual training programmes for NWMs and other stakeholders (NGOs and government bodies) to strengthen cooperation mechanisms • Create and maintain an observatory to monitor the status and advancement in the situation of women • Create cooperation opportunities and enhance work relation with other United Nations entities • Document best practices in multi-sectoral partnership to combat GBV

Additional posts	Theme	Focus area	Outputs
One professional (P2)	Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement gender mainstreaming strategy within the organization ▪ Mainstream a gender perspective into the organization's strategic framework, work programmes, publications and outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing training modules as part of human resource training programmes for ESCWA staff • Online training module on gender mainstreaming available for ESCWA staff • Implementing training workshops on various areas of work of ESCWA • Providing technical advice for ESCWA staff on gender-sensitive programmes, publications and outputs

Annex I

RESOLUTION ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION IN THE ARAB STATES AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS: BEIJING + 15

The Committee on Women in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling General Assembly Resolutions 60/140 of 16 December 2005, 61/145 of 19 December 2006 and 62/136 of 18 December 2007,

Recalling also the Economic and Social Council Resolution 2005/48 of 27 July 2005, on the Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits,

Cognizant of the reports on the status of Arab women and the appraisal of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: + 15 in Arab countries, particularly the Consolidated Arab Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the League of Arab States,

Noting with appreciation the progress made by the region towards the implementation of obligations under Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, particularly in health and education, as demonstrated in their responses to the questionnaire addressed by the Secretariat of the United Nations to Governments in this regard,

Expressing satisfaction with the achievements made in recent years in the empowerment of women in the Arab region, which included new legislations to the benefit of women and the ratification of nineteen States of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the withdrawal of some states of their reservations on some provisions of the Convention,

Expressing grave concern with regard to the deteriorating security situation and continuing wars and armed conflicts, which adversely affect the status of women in general and empowerment and sustainable human development in particular,

Expressing grave concern also at the continuing low participation of women in the economic and political fields and the continuing challenges hindering empowerment of women, such as the prevalence of illiteracy, high dropout rates of girls from school, poverty, unemployment, violence against women, and discrimination against women in legislations, in addition to some negative cultural traditions and social customs,

Recognizing the need to intensify efforts to promote empowerment of women and gender equality at the level of Governments, civil society, and United Nations organizations,

1. *Adopts* the Consolidated Arab Report on the Progress Achieved in Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: + 15 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the League of Arab States, submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York at its fifty-fourth session in March 2010,

2. *Calls on* member countries to:

(a) Emphasise the importance of political will in supporting and promoting gender equality, equity and justice, mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, strategies and development programmes, and considering advancement of women to be a priority at both national and regional levels;

(b) Increase financial and human resources allocated to policies, programmes and national mechanisms for women, and link the budgets for these to the overall budget;

(c) Promote administrative reform and good governance in both public and private sectors, ensuring employment and job promotion of women;

(d) Coordinate among foreign financing entities to ensure a fair distribution of financing and resolve the various problems facing women of all strata;

(e) Build capacity of the national mechanisms for mainstreaming gender in national policies and engage men and train them in mainstreaming gender in development policies, as well as in women's rights in general;

(f) Network with parliament and enhance participation of women associations and the civil society in addressing problems facing women;

(g) Provide an enabling environment for the application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, raise awareness to women's legal rights, and invite member countries to consider the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(h) Continue to review and reform national legislations that discriminate against women, work towards enforcing existing laws, and train people working in legislative and law-enforcement bodies related to women's legal rights;

(i) Establish an information-and-data base disaggregated by gender, analyse and process indicators to identify gender gaps in various sectors, with the aim of making specific policies and strategies for advancing women;

(j) Examine the possibility of establishment of observatories and early-warning systems at the national level to track and analyse social phenomena relating to the status of women, so that societal problems may be remedied before they escalate;

(k) Enhance participation of women in post-conflict development, conflict resolution and peace building, and exercise due care towards psychological treatment, rehabilitation and inclusion of women victims of violence in Iraq, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen, through adoption of local action plans to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000);

(l) Encourage women to enter applied sciences and link their education to market needs, and update curricula and revise textbooks to remove images and ideas that discriminate against women and perpetuate a negative stereotypical image of women;

(m) Enact legislations to raise marriage age, tackle problems that cause girls to drop out of school in order to alleviate female illiteracy and poverty, develop literacy programmes, and enhance qualification and vocational training of women, particularly in rural areas;

(n) Raise the proportion of individuals using computers through promoting programmes aimed at teaching girls to use computers and the internet and develop their computer skills;

(o) Increase the rate of participation of women in the public sector and in administrative and official positions, qualify and train women to assume leadership positions, and enhance their performance;

(p) Increase rate of participation of women in decision-making positions by various means, including through quotas, training women to run for elections, and working towards increasing the number of women ministers;

(q) Provide and develop microfinance and soft loans for women to enable them to support themselves and their families, insure financial risks in order to encourage women to start small projects, provide markets for them, and build their project-management capacities;

(r) Develop health-awareness programmes and health and social insurance schemes for poor women, strengthen and develop social safety nets, and expand provision of protection and rehabilitation services for battered women.

3. *Requests* from ESCWA secretariat the following:

(a) Support the Centre for Women with additional human and financial resources, in order to upgrade it to the level of a division, alongside other divisions of ESCWA, with the aim of doubling efforts to assist member countries with empowerment of women;

(b) Strengthen the capacity of national mechanisms for mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies, plans and programmes, through capacity-building, training, technical assistance and consultation, preparation of studies, and provision of possibilities for inter-communication, and exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences;

(c) Strengthen capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through capacity-building of national mechanisms, members of parliament, judicial institutions, civil society and the media, help States to withdraw their reservations on the Convention, and continue to raise awareness of decision makers of the Convention;

(d) Cooperate with the Arab Women Organization to implement a regional strategic plan for advancement of women, and promote the need for reviewing and amending laws to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(e) Support application of ESCWA guidelines, developed in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on protection of rights of women living in conflict areas;

(f) Study feasibility of developing an index of gender and development specific to the Arab region, to identify and analyse the nature of the gender gap, with the aim of making specific policies and strategies for advancement of women;

(g) Study feasibility of establishing an observatory and a regional early-warning system, based on a recent information-and-data base disaggregated by gender, to track and analyse social phenomena relating to the status of women, so that societal problems may be remedied before they escalate.

Annex II

UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS MANDATING THE ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN

United Nations General Assembly resolutions

- A/RES/64/141 Follow-up to Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
- A/RES/64/137 Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women
- A/RES/64/138 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- A/RES/64/140 Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas
- A/RES/64/217 Women in Development
- A/RES/60/265 Follow-up to the development outcome of the 2005 World Summit, including the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals
- A/RES/55/2 United Nations Millennium declaration
- A/RES/60/139 Violence against women migrant workers
- A/RES/61/144 Trafficking in women and girls

United Nations Economic and Social Council resolutions

- E/2009/14 Situation of and assistance to Palestinian Women
- E/2008/34 Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

United Nations Security Council resolutions

- S/RES/1325 Women and Peace and Security
- S/RES/1889 Women and Peace and Security

ESCWA resolutions

ESCWA 23rd Commission Session 264 (XXIII) Implementation of the Beirut Declaration on Arab Women Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace; and ESCWA 24th Commission session 278 (XXIV) Increasing the role of women in decision-making with respect to conflict prevention and peace building.

ESCWA Committee on Women

Third session of the Committee on Women (Abu Dhabi, 14-15 March 2007, E/ESCWA/ECW/2007/ IG.1/7) Role of ESCWA Centre for Women in relation to other regional organizations and member countries.

Annex III**PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2012-2013**

Subprogramme. Advancement of Women 2012-2013		
Objective		
To reduce gender imbalances, encourage exchange of lessons learnt among member countries and contribute to increased respect of the rights of women in line with international conventions and conferences		
Expected accomplishments	Intermediate accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enhanced knowledge and capacity of National Women Machineries (NWM) to implement and monitor CEDAW and other international commitments.	(a) (i) Better understanding and knowledge about international conferences and resolutions relating to development and women advancement is established at national levels	(a) (i) Improved participation of national organizations in promoting international conferences and adhering to national commitments stipulated in international conferences
	(a) (ii) The CEDAW Convention is more rooted and acknowledged at national level	(a) (ii) Improved national monitoring mechanisms and reporting quality of periodical CEDAW reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee
(b) Enhance the capacity of NWM to be effective agents in promoting a positive role for women in the socio-economic and political development of their societies	(b) (i) Coordinating mechanisms established by NWM to increase the participation and commitment of other stakeholders such as different governmental agencies and non-governmental agents in implementing the stated goals adopted by countries and relating to international commitments	(b) (i) Developed national action plans that identify the role and responsibilities of each agency are established and have clear deliverables, timeline and monitoring plans
	(b) (ii) NWM have better understanding, efficient processes and technical capacities, which enable them to better fulfil their mandates	(b) (ii) Increased number of initiatives (strategies, policies and programmes) designed by NWM with ESCWA assistance to advance women are adopted and implemented in their respective countries
(c) Strengthened capacity of member states to mainstream gender in national policies, plans, statistics and programmes	(c) (i) Selected pilot ministries' knowledge and understanding of gender concepts and gender mainstreaming processes are strengthened	(c) (i-a) Increased number of initiatives undertaken by Governments with support from ESCWA to mainstream gender in selected pilot ministries and their respective policy papers, structure, programmes and disseminated information
		(c) (i-b) Increased number of gender disaggregated data and information developed by member countries with support from ESCWA

Subprogramme. Advancement of Women 2012-2013		
	(c) (ii) Gender issues are an integral part of ESCWA's internal working processes and programmes	(c) (ii-a) Gender issues are mainstreamed in ESCWA's policies, structures, culture, programmes and projects (c) (ii-b) Training on gender analysis and mainstreaming is part of ESCWA's human resource training plan for new staff and an online course is established for staff
(d) Strengthened capacity of member countries in fighting gender-based violence	(d) (i) Member countries awareness and understanding of gender-based violence are strengthened	(d) (i) Increased number of initiatives by member countries to raise awareness for gender-based violence in the society
	(d) (ii) Member countries integrate means to fight gender-based violence in their plans, programmes and strategies	(d) (ii) Increased number of plans, programmes and strategies that include measures to fight gender-based violence
External factors		
<p>The subprogramme is expected to achieve its expected accomplishments on the assumption that (a) member countries remain committed to implementing the internationally agreed conventions and development goals; (b) there is political will to enhance the role of national mechanisms and to strengthen dialogue with civil society; and (c) the political situation is stable enough to permit the developments.</p>		
Problems to be addressed		
<p>As the recent Beijing+15 reports from member countries have shown, there have been many improvements in the past five years in relation to the status of women in the socio-economic and political development. This is very true in the areas of education, access to health and legal reform. Nonetheless, the representation of women in the economic sphere and in decision-making positions remains one of the lowest in the world. The problem is exasperated given the limited available and reliable sex-disaggregated data and information. At the same time, the need to develop region-specific gender indicators has also surfaced among member countries to ensure the availability of a comprehensive and effective measurement of the region's development in the field of gender equity.</p> <p>Most member countries in the ESCWA region have ratified CEDAW and have been periodically reporting on progress made in implementation in the fields of legislation and actual access to rights. Moreover, some countries are actively lifting some of the reservations that were made on the Convention. Nevertheless, there is a need to widely disseminate the Convention among countries that have already ratified it and to promote it among others that are still considering its ratification. Furthermore, as has been shown by reports made to the CEDAW Committee as well as the concluding comments and recommendations made by the Committee, efforts are still needed to ensure that member countries are fulfilling their international obligations and commitments and producing quality periodical reports.</p> <p>Similarly, most countries have engaged over the past years in gender mainstreaming activities at the national level and in line ministries. In fact, many member countries have developed initiatives for national mainstreaming strategies. Nevertheless, work in this area remains limited to familiar terrain and has not been generalized to all fields and contexts and hence has a weak impact on existing structures.</p>		

Subprogramme. Advancement of Women 2012-2013

An emerging issue of increasing importance for member countries is how to address gender-based violence. So far, in most countries of the region, domestic violence is regarded as a “private matter” by legislation as well as by jurisdiction and the executive. Recently, there have been initiatives by the civil society in a number of countries in the region to address the issue and raise awareness of the society at large as well as policymakers of the dimension and importance of gender-based violence. This means there is a clear and increasing need for Governments in the region to respond and take action to fight gender-based violence and provide the necessary policy framework.

Although in most member countries a national women machinery (NWM) has been established with a strong mandate, the limited financial and trained human resources available have hindered the active engagement of NWMs at the policy or programmatic levels. Furthermore, the limited exchange of experience among existing NWMs has resulted in repeating past efforts without analysing the lessons learned from them.

Finally, the ability to engage the civil society to take an active role in policy dialogue has been one of the key hindering factors affecting the positive involvement of all stakeholders in promoting the equal status and equity agenda.

Strategy

The responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies with the Division for the Advancement of Women.

The expected accomplishments will be achieved by servicing and providing assistance to member countries through needs assessments, documentation and dissemination of knowledge, provision of advocacy tools and research methodology, share knowledge experience, ensuring that socio-economic development issues related to advancement and empowerment of women are adequately addressed in the intergovernmental debate, assisting member countries in the development and implementation of national policies and international conventions, and providing training and capacity-building activities on gender issues.
