

PROJECT DOCUMENT
11TH TRANCHE OF THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

Executive Summary

Project Code and Title:	Towards the Arab Horizon 2030: Enhancing Integrated National Development Planning in the Arab Region
Start Date	January 2018
End Date	December 2020
Budget	USD 505,000
UMOJA cost centre(s):	17008
UMOJA functional area(s):	22AC0003
Target Countries	The project targets and will involve ESCWA member countries
Executing Entity	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Co-operating Entities within the UN system	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UN Country Teams and UNDP
Other Partners	Ministries of Planning, Economy, Industry, and other Ministries involved in development planning. The League of Arab States, Academia, civil society organizations, civil associations, academic institutions, private sector companies

Brief Description:

In most Arab countries, there exists a body responsible for setting national plans but with very little strategy or policy options to achieve planned targets considering lack of integration across national priorities and broad national commitment to ensure implementation and sustainability of the plans. In order to reformulate the concept of development planning to increase its applicability and improve its chances of success, it is imperative to look more closely at the structuring of the planning process and the weak link between targets and their realization. Integrated, strategic and better-coordinated development planning, combined with strengthened economic governance, will contribute towards putting the countries in the region on a more inclusive development trajectory toward the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

This project, proposed by UN-ESCWA, is designed to address these challenges by first introducing the concept of integrative planning and presenting to member states why it is a more suitable framework in today's challenging development landscape. A vital part of this stage is to gather information on the process through which national plans are created, as well as to construct a database of existing national development plans to ensure co-learning by national planning institutions. The second stage aims to reorient planning institutions in some selected member States to adopt this new concept. An essential component of this stage is conducting training and capacity building workshops to demonstrate how integrative planning concepts can be used effectively to achieve national objectives, as well as to integrate the SDGs into the individual national plans.

As a signal of the centrality of this project and to solicit contributions from all divisions in UN-ESCWA, a Brown Bag Meeting was organized in June 2017 to share preliminary findings using an embryo database on National Planning in the region with ESCW. Various sections expressed strong interest in utilizing as well as contributing to the expansion of the work done so far.

The project sustainability is expected through (1) active networking activities, (2) an up-to-date database that will be designed and developed in the context of this project and will constitute an effective tool to engage with ministries and all stakeholders and interested parties, and (3) enhanced ESCWA's institutional capacity. The database, the information collected and institutional experience/memory acquired will become essential components of ESCWA's future work programme and allow providing extended and higher quality technical assistance and advisory services to member states with a vision to enhance their planning capacity towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030. We envisage that the activities of this project would extend beyond the life span of the project to establish a consultative process involving planning entities of Arab States hosted by ESCWA which can be funded by RB and XB funding a la ECLAC initiative.

Background

1.1 Context

This project focuses on improving the practice of planning in UN-ESCWA member states to achieve a more integrated, realistic, strategic and better-coordinated development planning process and practice. This entails transforming planning exercise in the region from an often abstract and obsolete exercise to a dynamic and modern process capable of not only achieving citizens' aspirations, but also putting countries onto a fast track toward the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Currently, in almost each of the Arab countries there exists an entity responsible for setting national plans but with very little strategy or policy options to achieve planned targets. It is imperative to look more closely to the weak link between these targets and their realization in order to reformulate the concept of planning to increase its applicability and improve national plan's chances of success. Careful examination of recent development plans reveals that their chances of success are weakened by two fundamental problems: inadequate institutions and incompatible economic structure which tend to reinforce each other. This project aims at changing this existing flora of planning to another one more responsive to citizens' aspirations and demands, more compatible with prevailing economic systems, more pliable to shocks and more attuned to the 2030 Agenda.

1.2 Mandates, comparative advantage and link to the Programme Budget

ESCWA's mandate is to support its member states to achieve their long-term development visions and strengthen the planning process to support more integrated, strategic and better-coordinated development planning, contribute to more sustainable and inclusive growth the region, and towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda. The expected accomplishment of this project are as follows:

- **Expected Accomplishment 1 (EA1)** Enhanced awareness and engagement of policymakers with the integrated development planning approach.
- **Expected Accomplishment 2 (EA2)** Strengthened capacity of policymakers in target countries to design integrated and implementable national development plans in their countries.

Toward this end, this project aims to bring in expertise and experience from various UN-institutions and from different regions in the world. ESCWA will organize field visits, will coordinate with ECLAC, which is working on a similar project, and will design and develop a database that will allow member states to update and upload their planning documents. As a result, ESCWA will be able to provide evidence-based advice to member states, enabling them to make more informed decisions using up-to-date information. As a regional commission, ESCWA is ideally positioned to collect, treat and disseminate information by utilizing its large network of in-house and regional experts and specialists, and connection to member states.

The project complements ESCWA's ongoing technical advisory services to member states and capacity building initiatives related to improving the nexus of national planning and economic governance. In addition, this project has obvious synergies with extra budgetary projects currently

being initiated or implemented by ESCWA on post-conflict socioeconomic frameworks in Syria, Libya and Yemen.

Given the cross cutting nature of the proposed project, it will contribute to the achievement of several of the expected accomplishments of different subprogrammes, set out in ESCWA's strategic framework. The project most directly supports the expected accomplishments of subprogrammes 3, Economic development and integration: "Increased application of principles of good economic governance to promote inclusive economic transformation and regional integration."

The project will also contribute to, and benefit from the work of UN Secretariat partners, including a number of DESA subprogrammes among which the Division of Public Administration and Development Management, Statistics Division, the Division for Social Policy and Development, and the Development Policy and Analysis Division.

As ECLAC has established a similar initiative and has been successfully implementing it as an integral part of their strategic framework, this project will also draw upon the good practices established by its Economic and Social Planning Division, and specifically, the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES).

Finally, the project will support relevant UN Country Teams' efforts to (1) implement the UNDG strategic priorities by contributing to identify and address national policies, programmes and capacity development gaps and challenges, and (2) to enhance the efficiency of inter-agency coordination and decision-making at the country level, to ensure the delivery of tangible results in support of the development agenda of the government.

1.3 Country demand and target countries

Initially, the project will focus on four member states in order to allow for more targeted support and deeper impact. The selection is dependent on several criteria that are related both to the country's political, institutional and economic characteristics, and the state of their national planning based on the preliminary information from our database. The set of criteria includes, but is not limited to:

- Country's size (GDP & population)
- Country's income level
- Country's availability of resources (labor & capital intensity)
- Political situation (existence of protracted conflict, wars etc.)

In addition, due consideration will be given to ESCWA's capacity to engage effectively with the countries given prevailing security situation and stability of national institutions and the availability of functional entities on the ground in member countries. Findings of exploratory field visits at the inception phase of the project, which will include a country specific needs assessment, will determine the interest level and evaluate the strength of existing collaboration.

The preliminary list of target countries is as follows, with each potential suitable alternative:

- Saudi Arabia (Kuwait)
- Egypt (Jordan)
- Sudan (Mauritania)
- Iraq (Libya)

Based on these general criteria, Saudi Arabia was selected as a representative of high income and resource abundant countries with above-average government effectiveness (World Governance Indicators). According to the preliminary analysis and our classification of good planning developed, the country is distinguished by a great number of characteristics related to good planning. In this case, the UAE would be a suitable alternative as an outstanding example of how a good planning in a resource-intensive country might look like.

Secondly, Egypt is a lower-middle income, resource poor labor abundant country with low government effectiveness (WGI). Nonetheless, Egypt displays many characteristics of good planning with several areas of improvement. Alternatively, Jordan would be a suitable replacement.

Thirdly, Iraq has been chosen as a representative of countries planning under the constraints of instability. Iraq distinguishes itself by a clear governmental structure that ESCWA can more easily cooperate with, in contrast to other countries suffering from instability, as well as a long history of planning. ESCWA has also received a request to provide advisory services to the Ministry of Planning as well as assist in integrating and implementing SDGs in their plans for the 2030 Agenda. As a replacement, Syria or Libya would be a suitable alternative depending on the prevailing security situation and conditions indicated above.

Finally, Sudan was chosen as a representative of LDC countries in the region. Although it lacks resources as well as administrative capacity, it is the only country from this group that is not affected by conflict and has an overall strategy in place in terms of national planning. Sudan has also requested ESCWA's support in integrating the SDGs in their national plans. Mauritania is a suitable alternative representative country for this case.

However, Mauritania might become the fifth candidate, as an example of a country with poor decentralized national planning in terms of structure and evaluation. Since Mauritania lacks any plan that covers the whole economy, either in long- or medium-term, such a case might be interesting in terms of possible significant impact through ESCWA's involvement.

1.4 Link to SDGs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs offer a unique opportunity to integrate the three development dimensions (social, economic and environmental), while ensuring full alignment with the principles of good governance, rule of law, human rights, social justice, equality, transparency and accountability. The implementation of Agenda 2030 is highly flexible, allowing countries to tailor the agenda to their national contexts and priorities. This offers an opportunity to enhance national development planning and contribute to improving the means of implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including touching on each of the 17 SDGs, in the Arab region.

The activities of the project are grounded in knowledge sharing and multi-stakeholder collaboration, fundamentally linking it to goal 17, specifically targets such as (17.9) to “enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation”. In addition, the objectives of this project directly address additional targets of goal 17, for example on fiscal reform, and policy and institutional coherence as well as other systemic issues.

Analysis

1.5 Situation analysis

Recently, the Arab region was subject to a formidable set of challenges. The zeal of political transformation has shaken the very fabric of the socioeconomic structure of most of the countries in the region. Even the ones which were shielded from the winds of change are battling against unfavorable economic conditions due to a sluggish global economy and depressed energy prices. Whether reformulating their socioeconomic structures, building their economies after years of conflict or changing their economic policies in face of significant drop in oil revenues, transitional Arab countries, Arab countries facing political and security challenges and Gulf countries finding themselves less resource rich should engage in intricate planning activities over the next few years. The pledge of all countries, including Arab countries, to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also necessitates a novel framework for planning. Countries need to incorporate these goals into their own national plans. This is not an artless endeavor since the 2030 Agenda is both transformative and integrated consisting of 17 ambitious and interlinked goals with 169 targets. The level of synergies and possible tradeoffs between some of these targets call for a sophisticated level of planning, which should be integrative in nature to maximize complementarities between targets. Extreme *dirigisme* or extreme *Laissez-faire* are both inadequate to guide Arab countries in their path towards SDGs. Planning in the region should also pay special attention to vulnerable

groups in the society including the poor, the youth, women and challenged individuals. These groups are often neglected in the national level development plans and are the ones who more likely to be adversely affected by stabilization and reform policies. This would ensure that the process is inclusive as much as possible and that no one is left behind and calls for a new concept of planning, which considers the scarcity of resources, the evolving role of the state, the centrality of effective and efficient institutions and the importance of expectations in determining outcomes.

It is true that all countries in the region engage in planning exercises. However, most of these planning exercises follow a pattern that does not endogenize the changes in the structure of their economies and new knowledge in policy making processes. As a result, many bureaucrats perform “ritual” planning exercises not understanding their significance, relevance and context. They simply follow steps and procedures that lost their theoretical and practical relevance over the years. The result in most cases is the creation of a national plan that is detached from reality, country’s conditions, peoples’ aspirations and on top of all is partially or completely unimplementable.

Consequently, there is a pressing need to first revamp the concept of planning to make it more suitable to the region’s new set of challenges and individual countries’ specific circumstances. This can be accomplished through two stages. The first stage involves enhancing the awareness of policymakers regionally and specifically in a number of targeted countries with the centrality of planning and the shortcomings of the current practice of planning. The second stage involves assisting and directing policymakers in targeted countries to adopt the concept of integrative planning when formulating their national plans.

1.6 Country level situation analysis

Country	Status of affairs	Realistic outcomes
Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an oil exporter, KSA needs to address depressed energy prices and its economic dependency on global energy trends (lack of economic diversification) Comprehensive, sectoral, centralized plans in place Hierarchy of planning is good, relative to the region, but still possible improvement exists (KSA has an NDP that is not linked to its vision) Many KPIs, with majority complete, however still a need to address/improve incomplete KPIs (i.e. missing baseline, or target, or timeframe) Planning does not mention international framework (SDG or MDG) Need to address specific issues, such as Gender (<3% of KPIs are gender specific), Green Economy, SMEs The country's planning practices are the most advanced in the region The country can be used as regional benchmark for Arab countries and was thus selected as focus country for this project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the front of exchanging information, learning from each other and developing the habit of working collaboratively, the poorest benefitting from the knowledge leveraged by the most advanced: <p>Firstly, at the regional and national level, the project will encourage networking and foster the dialogue on planning and its linkages with development and SDGs achievements throughout the region. Dialogue between Ministries of a same countries and across Arab countries will be enhanced. Long lasting networking benefits will be ensured by the follow-up done by ESCWA in the subsequent years of the project.</p> <p>Secondly, providing a regional platform for information dissemination among all the stakeholders including researchers, including from ESCWA and other UN entities, the project will encourage countries' performances to be analyzed, assessed and monitored which will further incite Arab countries to share information (for fair evaluation) and contribute to the maintenance of the database and its further development. This outcome will hence ensure the long-term viability of the network.</p>
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a country recently faced with political instability and transformation, as well as in the process of undergoing economic reform with the support of IMF funding; effective national planning is crucial Comprehensive, decentralized, sectoral plans in place Hierarchy of planning is good relative to the region, but still possible improvement exists (Egypt has a Macroeconomic strategy that is not linked to its NDP or Vision) Many KPIs, with majority complete, however need to address/improve incomplete KPIs (i.e. missing baseline, or target, or timeframe) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When it comes to influencing planning practices in the Arab region, the project does factor in existing differences in planning characteristics (in terms of planning processes or practices but also in terms of political and economic conditions) with a view to harness potential benefits and set realistic outcomes that may be: <p>Firstly, at the regional level, the targeted countries are at different experience stages with concern to national development planning, thus the project offers a learning transfer from more advanced to less advanced countries and vice versa.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some objectives are missing KPIs for measurement of progress and achievement, unable to ensure that they will be met • There is a need for improvement in linking KPIs to specific objectives in order to measure progress/achievement and in turn achieve vision for the country • Need to address specific issues such as Gender (<3% of KPIs are gender specific), Green Economy, SMEs 	<p>Secondly, at the national level, exchanging planning experience and expertise, through exchange of professional staff programmes from targeted countries with different resource endowments may allow staff from lower income and/or least developed countries to learn about and get trained to adopt a more resources efficient planning approach, including by learning from the mistakes of the more advanced countries.</p>
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a country facing political instability and security challenges they need to engage in intricate planning activities for the future • Iraq has sectoral planning, mentions the international framework (SDG or MDG) and has specific KPIs. However plans in progress do not address current issues (most recent plan initiated in 2013) • Hierarchy/structure of planning needs improvement. There is a lack of vision, as well as a disregard to the regional (Kurdistan) vision in the planning structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirdly, Arab countries have different development priorities under Agenda 2030 and other international agendas. Thus, the project's combination of the different approaches and priorities will result in a broad-based view for the region but also for individual countries. • On the front of the development of evidence-based tools for informed and effective policymaking: Firstly, the methodology for the production of a toolkit and a database of national plans and practices in the region will be validated by member states which is unavoidable if the proposed planning methodology were to be used by member states and the project expanded.
Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a LDC they need to engage in intricate planning activities to strive for development • Sudan's planning mentions the international framework (SDG or MDG) and has specific KPIs. • Hierarchy/structure of planning is good (i.e. basic planning structure with a Vision and an NDP) • However, Sudan lacks comprehensive planning, which might reflect their lack of resources and administrative capacity • There is a need to improve linking KPIs to specific objectives in order to measure progress/achievement and in turn achieve vision for the country • Sudan has the basic pieces that good national planning is comprised of, however the sum of its parts do not reflect the standards of good planning 	<p>Secondly, best practices and areas of improvement that are directly within the control of governments (starting with planning documents content and structuration) will be identified and discussed with member states. This will allow for the development of an Arab-centered and region-responsive development planning guide.</p> <p>Thirdly, the compilation of an Arab region focused tool kit as well as regional reference database, will enable international benchmarking (e.g. with the ECLAC region) and thus enable future improvement on national development planning related questions according to international best practices.</p> <p>Fourthly, the tools developed will be used by ESCWA to carry its regular activities.</p>

1.7 Stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment

The targeted bodies from the public sectors will mainly encompass the institution that is entrusted to formulate the national development plan (e.g. the Ministry of Planning); however, other ministries (government agencies) directly or indirectly engaged in the process of development planning such as Ministries of Economy, Industry, Trade, Education and Health would be involved in the project. Ministries' role and degree of involvement in development planning vary across member countries, and the degree of centralization of the process is highly heterogeneous in the region. Hence, efforts will be made to identify and involve all relevant Ministries (agencies).

The target countries that will participate in the workshops, study tours and the expert exchange programmes have been selected using objective criteria, as explained in 2.3. The high-level government planning officials that will benefit from the study tour and the ones that will participate in the expert exchange programmes will be selected by member countries.

The League of Arab States, UN-ESCWA's primary regional partner, and other external partners such as the CSOs and the private sector, will have a role in the multi-stakeholder regional capacity building and training workshops/seminars held in the second phase of the project. Their expertise and viewpoints will be sought to enhance the dialogue on integrated development planning. These partners may also be consulted in the process of designing training material, to ensure that the importance of incorporating the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders is at the center of our approach.

The current proposed project is a foundation and component of a larger effort towards achieving UN-ESCWA's medium-term goal of establishing an Arab Intergovernmental body for Planning by 2023.

Table 1- Stakeholder Analysis

Non-UN stakeholders	Type and level of involvement in the project	Capacity assets	Capacity gaps	Desired future outcomes	Incentives
League of Arab States	Partner	LAS can contribute to organize regional capacity building and training / workshop seminars held in the second phase of the project	LAS does not have the capacity to develop the kind of technical material required	LAS improve its internal capacity to support member states and the required technical material is provided to them	Build capacity within LAS to further disseminate the material and improve decision making in matters pertaining to LAS work programme
Ministries of Planning,	Beneficiaries and partners	These Ministries have the responsibility to compile and integrated plan (e.g. manage the legislative process to get plan approved, prioritization and coordination of	Lack of dialogue among Ministries of Planning in the region and thus of exchange of expertise. Within Arab countries' Ministry of Planning lack of expertise and technical	Discussing, amending and validating the drafted methodology for the production of ESCWA decision-making tools, Sharing the necessary material; Increased effectiveness and	Strengthening of Ministries of Planning capacity to leverage the knowledge of their counterparts within the region. Participation in exchange of experts programmes to develop and benefit from a network of

		inputs based on national development priorities and SDGs not based on sectoral views)	capacity to carry the necessary analysis of the development planning process and identifying feasible changes	inclusiveness of the development planning process within countries. Stronger networking capacities and development of a habit to contribute to the development of the database and capacity building material	experts from the region and from other regions participating to the project Upgrading and strengthening of Ministries' capacity to compile, structure, integrate plans and hence to monitor the development planning process and implement plans.
Ministries of Economy, Industry, Trade, Education and Health, Housing, and all Ministries directly or indirectly engaged in the process of development planning	Beneficiaries and partners	These Ministries are rather substantive sectoral contributors in the drafting phase and beneficiaries/users once the plan is approved	Lack of dialogue with their own Ministry of Planning which undermines planning effectiveness, and with their counterparts in the region which limits the exchange of expertise and circulation of ideas. Lack of expertise and technical capacity to carry the necessary analysis of the development planning process and identifying feasible changes	Improve the dialogue at the regional level but chiefly at the national level among the stakeholders. Enhanced networking capacities and ability to benefit from the experience of their counterpart. Greater effectiveness and inclusiveness of the development planning process within countries	Enhanced coordination and implementation of the plan within countries. Upgrading and strengthening of Ministers capacity to contribute to the planning process and better understanding of their role which will facilitate implementation Benefit from the knowledge of their counterparts, widen their horizons in terms of ideas, introduction of the SDGs into sectoral plans, capacity to monitor progress and make themselves credible as stakeholders
CSOs and the private sector	Partners	Are key stakeholders in an integrated development planning approach	Have valuable expertise and viewpoints but lack the capacity to formalize this knowledge, assess impacts and analyze trade-offs so as to positively contribute to enhancing the development planning process	Higher quality of the political dialogue on integrated development planning and consultation process in member countries through enhanced capacity to incorporate the perspectives of a wider range of stakeholders	Develop network and connection with government planning officials for greater inclusiveness. Enhancing institutional capacities for expressing and resolving social and political divisions so as to lower the odds of upheavals and political instability.

Project Strategy: Objective, expected accomplishments, indicators, main activities

1.8 Project strategy

In order to achieve the project’s objective in strengthening the planning process of UN-ESCWA member states to support more integrated, strategic and better-coordinated development planning, towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda, the first phase of the project involves getting information and data on national development plans in the region. This is accomplished through field visits to the target countries as well as the establishment of an online digital database of development plans. In addition, ESCWA staff will visit ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago to learn from their experiences with the Regional Planning Depository and development planning practices.

Information, knowledge and data that is gathered from the above field visits combined with ESCWA’s concept of integrative planning will be used to develop learning material to enhance awareness and engagement of policymakers with the integrated development planning approach (EA1).

The second phase of the project will attempt to improve the process of formulating national development plans in target countries. Capitalizing on the accomplishments of the first phase of the project where policymakers are “mentally” ready to adopt a more integrated development plans, the project in the second phase will strengthen the capacity of policymakers in target countries to design integrated and implementable national development plans in their countries (EA2). The tools that will enable the project in achieving the expected accomplishments include study tours, interregional exchange of experts, training workshops and technical assistance.

1.9 Logical framework

Table 2-Logical Framework

Intervention logic	Indicators	Means of verification
Objective: <i>‘To strengthen the planning process of ESCWA member States to support more integrated, strategic and better coordinated development planning, towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda’</i>		
EA1: Enhanced awareness and engagement of policymakers with the integrated development planning approach	IA 1.1 Representatives of the Ministries of Planning from all participating countries in the project and main national stakeholders, endorse the guide for good planning developed in cooperation with them during the timespan of the project.	Questionnaire surveys carried during relevant activities and documentation from relevant meetings
	IA 1.2 A web-based planning interface has been developed, rolled-out and populated by all participating countries in the region (at least comprehensively with the documents from the four pilot countries).	The use of the online tool will be tracked automatically to measure traffic and countries take initiative to maintain content up to date.

	<p>IA 1.3</p> <p>Within the four pilot countries and throughout the lifecycle of the project, planning tools, guidelines, materials etc. are upgraded and where additional needs are identified that may help member states improving the quality of their planning process, the countries formulate a request on how best to address these based on the material provided from ESCWA and its partners. In turn, this would serve to also validate the usefulness of the material and/or lead to continuous improvements. Countries would be surveyed on a regular basis on progress.</p>	<p>Questionnaire surveys carried during relevant activities. Requests from member states.</p>
<p>Main activity A 1.1</p> <p>Undertake field visits to gather information about national development planning systems and processes in the Arab region. The goal is to identify documentation gaps and develop a thorough understanding of the planning process in the Arab region, which is essential to evaluate the planning practices using the ‘Good practice’ guidelines and criteria developed.</p>		
<p>Main activity A 1.2</p> <p>Undertake field visit to ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago to learn from their experiences with the Regional Planning Depository and development planning practices in the region. This visit will allow for the aligning of our approaches, exchanging knowledge and improving efficiency while carrying out the activities of the project. It will also improve the richness of the analysis carried, ensure accuracy of cross-country comparisons in planning, and expand the lessons learnt available to member states.</p>		
<p>Main activity A 1.3</p> <p>Develop material on integrative national development planning, including a toolkit and manual with good practices, and options for governance and monitoring tools identified from within and outside the region. This activity entails designing and developing a database as a first step. This database will allow for a detailed mapping of the SDGs across development planning documents and identifying opportunities to promote and push the 2030 Agenda in member states’ planning activities.</p>		
<p>Main activity A 1.4</p> <p>Organize a regional workshop on the need to revisit the current framework for development planning and the benefits of, and methods for, adopting an integrated approach. The goal is to raise awareness on the shortcomings of development planning in the Arab region and their economic consequences, in particular the achievement of the SDGs. The workshop will be an opportunity to expose member states to alternative planning approaches and share the findings of the substantive work done.</p>		
<p>Main activity A 1.5</p> <p>Launch an online digital database of development plans in the Arab region for use by policymakers and other stakeholders. This activity will serve various purposes. On one hand, member states will have the possibility to upload and update their development planning documents on which further analysis will be carried. Stakeholders will benefit from the online platform for sharing information and resources. This platform will provide continuous support and communication opportunities. It will ensure the team has the documents deemed important for member states and tracking changes in development planning approaches in the region will become possible. Member states should be strongly encouraged to participate in this activity, due to the exposure they will get, knowing that all stakeholders will have access to this database. An embryo of this database was developed and shared internally within ESCWA, which attracted a lot of attention. As a result, it is reasonable to expect that</p>		

the database will attract researchers' attention and spur positive spillovers that last beyond the span of this project. The database shall also support queries such as 'stylized facts' about development planning in the region, which might be more useful to non-technical audiences, such as the media and civil society.

Main activity A 1.6

Organize national level workshops in four target countries to provide overview of integrated planning, and conduct training on the use of the toolkit, manual and database. The goal is to familiarize member states with the database and all the material produced and give them a feel of the ways it can be used to improve development planning quality in the region. This activity is meant to get feedbacks, raise awareness about technical cooperation opportunities, and encourage attendees to promote the use of these tools to their peers.

EA 2: Strengthened capacity of policymakers in target countries to design integrated and implementable national development plans in their countries	IA 2.1 At least the four pilot countries utilize actively the regional planning mechanism during the duration of the project and formally commit to continue knowledge sharing, capacity-building, and national and regional coordination amongst Planning Ministries and key stakeholders beyond the lifecycle of the project.	Website statistics, Questionnaire surveys carried during relevant activities and documentation from relevant meetings
	IA 2.2 At least 50 per cent of total project participants report positive improvement in their understanding of national planning processes at the end of the project	Questionnaire surveys carried during relevant activities
	IA 2.3 Usefulness/friendliness of the web platform to regional knowledge sharing, and capacity-building	Statistics gathered through the website, questionnaire surveys and/or online surveys

Main activity A 2.1

Organize three regional workshops for government planning officials to discuss the material produced, share progresses/updated approach, debate specific aspects of integrated national development planning topics and establish a platform for regular coordination, the goal being to ensure the greatest involvement possible of all member states and ensure the buy-ins. The material produced will be technical in nature. The workshop will also allow exploring, in greater detail, some specific aspects of special interest to member states for which additional material and appropriate tools will be developed. Regional meetings will give member states the opportunity to do some networking within and across countries, exchange views on planning and work together starting with the development of an Arab-centered and region-responsive development planning guide. Regional workshops also aim to bring together peers at the different levels of development planning to help identify how to address challenges of their specific country/group. Regional workshops are the kick-off to establish regular regionally held planning committee.

<p>Main activity A 2.2</p> <p>Organize a study tour for two high-level government planning officials from four target countries to visit institutions in two partner countries each (one inside and one outside the region). This activity focuses on capacity building at the country level by harnessing the experience and knowledge of staff's counterpart working in other countries. The activity will further enhance the networking skills of the staff. As this activity will also contribute to consolidate the network and ensure it will outlive the project. Practically, this activity will entail having candidates selected and identifying suitable countries allowing valuable sharing of experience and lessons learnt. This activity will also contribute to creating a network of development planning authorities in the region.</p>
<p>Main activity A 2.3</p> <p>Organize an interregional expert exchange programme, where government planning officials from four target countries visit institutions in partner countries. This activity is designed to develop an interregional network of development planning authorities and widening the scope of lessons learnt and knowledge exchange. Staff is here expected to spend more time in the host country to work collaboratively with local staff.</p>
<p>Main activity A 2.4</p> <p>Organize one multi-stakeholder regional capacity building and training seminar on effective national development planning for government planning officials and other relevant stakeholders. The goal is to increase inclusiveness in development planning. Exposing all relevant stakeholders to the difficulties, challenges and approaches of development planning will improve their ability to work together and understand each other's roles and tasks, and eventually positively influence the effectiveness of planning and the quality of the political dialogue. This activity will further facilitate the emergence of a network of development planning authorities.</p>

1.10 Risks and mitigation actions

Table 3- Risks and mitigation actions

Risks	Mitigation actions
<p>Reduced commitment from member states to development planning in the region due to (1) the current economic and political situation, (2) reduced perceived value of planning that may be considered as a wasteful effort that is not applicable in developed countries or (3) excess reliance on external private companies</p>	<p>Increase awareness interventions of the importance of domestically-grown development planning for enhancing resilience of the countries in the region to various external and internal shocks, ensuring effective use of available scarce fiscal resources and the need to increase ownership of planning practices to improve planning dynamism and adaptability to change in landscape</p>
<p>Unwillingness or impossibility for one or more of the 4/6 targeted country to participate in the planned activities</p>	<p>4 countries will be selected that will be the main recipients of the activities.</p> <p>Two alternatives will be invited to participate in case of withdrawal.</p> <p>The remaining countries will be categorized by order of priority to be contacted in case the two additional ones are not available</p>

Wide differences across the region in terms of financial, human and managerial capacity that may affect engagement with the material, exchange of experience, and cross country discussion of the topics	Design documents, in particular the guide and training material, and tailor the tools to limit the impact of these gaps and ensure all participants can effectively engage with the material and use the tools. Explore <i>flip</i> roles where more “advanced” countries in the area of planning play the coaching role for other countries.
Lack of statistics and relevant necessary information	Cooperate with ESCWA Statistics Division so as to gather all available information at the national level and coordinate regarding their capacity building activities Clarify the needs in terms of quantitative and qualitative information and reduce to the minimum the statistical information load necessary
Escalation of conflict in the region or evolution of existing conflicts in the region rendering difficult the organization of workshops or training seminars or study tours for high-level government officials, interregional expert exchange programme, and preventing ESCWA staff to travel into some countries	Ensure the database platform will allow sharing documents, experience and knowledge Design activities that can be delivered remotely to affected countries Prepare additional material to compensate for the impossibility to interact with affected member states
Unavailability of the selected high-level government planning officials that are meant to benefit from the study tour and be allowed to the programme of exchange meant to be selected by member countries	Allow member countries to select more than one candidate and identify the preferred one so a pool of alternative candidate will be available in case a replacement is needed

1.11 Sustainability

The project sustainability is expected through active networking activities with the stakeholders and partners that will be involved in the DA project. Furthermore, the database that will be designed and developed in the context of this project will constitute an effective tool to engage with Ministries which will have the ability to update and upload relevant documents into the system. The content of the unique database will be regularly updated, allowing all stakeholders and interested parties to refer to it when analyzing development planning in the region. Similar to the work done by ECLAC, it will allow cross-regional comparisons. The database will enhance the sustainability of this DA project and its benefits beyond in life span.

As a signal of the centrality of this project and its perceived sustainability, a Brown Bag Meeting was organized in June 2017 to share preliminary findings using an embryo database on National Planning in the region with ESCWA, in which various sections expressed strong interest in utilizing as well as contributing to the expansion of the work done so far, which should service ensuring the sustainability of the DA project.

This DA project will thus enhance ESCWA’s institutional capacity and allow building a long-needed database, which will greatly facilitate analyzing development planning in the region. The database, the information collected and institutional experience/memory acquired will become essential components of ESCWA’s future work programme and allow providing extended and higher quality technical assistance and advisory services to member states with a vision to enhance their planning capacity towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030.

Finally, ESCWA hopes that, as a result of this DA project, there will be a decision from member states to establish a permanent consultative process of Planning Entities of Arab States hosted by ESCWA. This will be funded by both RB and XB resources.

Monitoring and evaluation

Indicators measuring the degree of attainment of the two main expected accomplishments have been clearly highlighted in the in the Project Strategy and Logical Framework to ensure transparency and efficiency. The team will initiate and set up a systematic process of continuous assessment and oversight of the activities being planned, implemented and evaluate completed stages. This will be achieved through consistent collection of information to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes and their impact as well as allow for the evaluation of Achievement Indicators' progress.

Workshops and programmes conducted will involve user/participant surveys, to gather beneficiaries' feedback, which will be carried out to qualitatively and quantitatively assess substantive, material and organizational aspects as well as an overall evaluation. The gathered information will allow monitoring, evaluating and hence improving the quality of the material, tools and activities delivered.

The monitoring and evaluation scheme will contribute to annual/periodic progress reports, as well as be part of the final evaluation of the project, and ensure that an external evaluation is arranged (as budgeted), and that all project activities and financial transactions are completed by December 2020. The external evaluation, through a hired consultant, will also include their participation in at least one workshop.

Management and coordination agreements

ESCWA will act as the leading agency of this DA project. Collaboration with several UN Secretariat counterparts, such as DESA, ECLAC and UN Country Teams would be advantageous for the success of the project. These partner organizations will be involved throughout the process but will be asked to contribute to activities within their field of expertise and where they have a strong comparative advantage. Below is a bit detailed explanation of the role of these entities and they would contribute in the project.

ECLAC has established a similar initiative and has been successfully implementing it as an integral part of its strategic framework. In fact, the established Depository has evolved recently to an Observatory where more engaging analysis using qualitative and quantitative data gathered through the Depository could be carried out to benefit potential users. ESCWA has been in close contact with ECLAC specifically, the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) where the main idea of the project was shared with ECLAC. In addition, in these communications, we have indicated our wish to collaborate and benefit from ECLAC's experience in this domain. More specifically, one of the main activities as presented in section 4 is A 1.2 where ESCWA staff will visit ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago to learn from their experiences with the Regional Planning Depository and development planning practices. ECLAC has been very receptive and has shown its willingness to collaborate and pass their experience and good practice to ESCWA through the different phases of the project via direct communication with ECLAC's officials.

The project will also contribute to, and benefit from the work of UN Secretariat partners in DESA more specifically the following subprogrammes: Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), the Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD), the Statistics Division, and the Division for Social Policy and Development. This project is closely aligned with DPADM's mandate of promoting greater awareness, common approaches, understanding and sustainable policy options among governments through advocacy and knowledge transfer on good governance. DPADM may find the resources produced by this DA project, and the contacts and case studies that will emerge from the engagement with ESCWA member States useful for its recurring World Public Sector Report, which in 2017 will examine how governments, public institutions and public administration can foster integrated approaches to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The project can also fit within the framework

of the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN), especially the work that is being done on integrating the SDGs into national development planning and institutional arrangements for implementation. The project team will coordinate with the Development Management Branch and explore how the information we gather from ESCWA member States and other outputs of the project can enrich their work at the global level. With regards to DPAD, ESCWA's project can utilize and build on the analysis and tools produced by the Division on global macroeconomic trends and long-term development issues to support planning and weighing policy options in the region, as well as learning from DPAD's experiences providing capacity development support for developing countries. ESCWA will coordinate with both the Global Economic Monitoring Unit and the Development Strategy and Policy Analysis Unit. DPAD can also benefit from the analysis, planning tools and platforms that will be produced by this DA project.

UN Country Teams are also important partners for the success of this project. UN Country Teams have access to up-to-date information and data on the economic stance in Arab countries. In addition, UN Country Teams maintain close contact with government officials and other national stakeholders who are responsible for setting national development plans. This is the case of UNDP, for example, which principle mandates include assisting countries in developing policies and institutional capabilities in order to achieve sustainable development. The main objectives of this DA project are aligned perfectly with UN Country Teams mandates. Working strategically together would greatly benefit our member states and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our joined efforts and initiatives.

Ministries of Planning (planning agencies) and other relevant Ministries as well as the League of Arab States, UN-ESCWA's primary regional partner, and other external partners such as the CSOs, academics, and the private sector, will also be approached to participate and share their expertise and viewpoints in the activities related to the multi-stakeholder regional capacity building and training workshops/seminars held in the second phase of the project.