



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

“Towards the Arab Horizon 2030: Enhancing Integrated National Development Planning in the Arab Region” (2018-2020)

1st Regional Meeting of Development Account Project Focal Points

**13-14 September 2018,
UN-ESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon**

Summary of Discussions

Welcome & Opening Session of the Regional Meeting of Focal Points

Mr. Mohamed Moctar El-Hacene, Director of the ESCWA Division for Economic Development and Integration, and Ms. Denise Sumpf, Chief (a.i) of the Economic Governance and Planning Section, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The participants have been nominated by their respective countries to serve as focal points for this project. Mr. El-Hacene emphasized on the element of collaboration across substantive areas as cornerstone for effective development planning as well as the topic of the meeting; referring also to the active engagement, not only for the two meeting days, but throughout the whole project implementation cycle.

Sessions 1: Setting the stage

Ms. Sumpf opened the meeting with a tour de table by asking the participants to introduce themselves and to explain whether their respective country has a national development planning in place, or if they are formulating one.

Mr. Mohmoud Ataya, Director General of the Policy and Reform Unit at the Office of the Prime Minister in the State of Palestine highlighted the will of the Palestinians to enhance their planning procedures. However, he reiterated the main challenges his country is facing: scarce resources and occupation. Mr. Ataya urged the different participants to agree on the main challenges facing each country, and only then, can the Arab nations develop an effective plan of action, be more responsive to the need of the population and establish a knowledge exchange platform between the different countries of the regions.

Mr. Refaat Hejazi, Advisor of the Chairman of the Planning and International Cooperation Authority in Syria shared that his country is currently working towards the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Before the crisis, Syria was well aligned with the Millennium Development

Goals as a result of ten years of “successful” development planning by the country. He added that his country is the first Arab nation to fully integrate the MDG’s. However, after the crisis began in Syria in 2011, the formulation of development plans was stopped and all planning efforts were refocused to address humanitarian needs.

Mr. Wissem Moatemri, Advisor to the Foreign Affairs of the General Directorate of International Organizations and Symposia in Tunisia noted that since the 1950s, the Tunisian government always used to launch a five-year plans for economic and social development. For these plans to succeed, it required a participatory approach with input from different stakeholders, an approach that the government of Tunisia is still applying to achieve development objectives. The main challenge is to better integrate the Sustainable Development Agenda within the National Development Plan of the country.

Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Al-Hawari, Deputy Minister for Economic & Feasibility Studies in Yemen, informed the participants that Yemen usually formulates five-year-plans; the last one being in place from 2005-2010 plan. After 2010, Yemen moved towards a transitional program due the country’s socio-economic situation. In 2011, the country entered in a conflict, which changed the priorities of the government and which still continues to hamper socio-economic recovery. The challenge was no longer the accomplishment of development for the country, but rather return to peace. Mr. Ahmed assured that his country is working towards a reconstruction vision that encompasses sustainable development, which could be achieved only with political stability. Another major challenge the country is encountering is the lack of resources to finance the sizeable reconstruction plan.

Ms. Reine Heloui, the Diplomatic Attaché of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Emigrants, indicated that in Lebanon, planning is under the purview of the Ministry of Reconstruction and that given the current political development after the parliamentary elections in May development planning is not been undertaken at the national level.

Mr. Alaadin Jaafar Mohammed Al Ameri, Economist at the Economic Policy Directorate within the Ministry of Planning in Iraq, described that his country has entered the implementation of the new Five-Year plan (2017-2022). This new development plan is a response to the recent political, social and economic crisis in Iraq. He added by saying that the new plan was conceived with the involvement of civil society, academia and the private sector, thus fitting within the overall 2030 vision of Iraq. Mr. Jaafar also shared the different challenges (e.g. high inflation, administrative burden, state budget deficit and a “prevailing” black market) that represent different barriers to the achievement of the plan’s objectives.

Ms. Mouchera Karara, Senior Economic Researcher working in the Technical Office of the Minister within Ministry of Planning in Egypt indicated that since 1958, the country always used to have a Five-Year plans as well as more operation annual ones. Nonetheless, she acknowledged that the current 2030 vision plan is the first long term vision based on a participatory approach reflecting the contributions and positions of different stakeholders in society. However, the main drawback of this plan is its non-integration with the SD framework, an issue which the Minister is currently working to remedy.

Mr. Moosa Abdulla Al Noaimi, Counselor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bahrain shared confidence that his country would achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals by 2026-2027. To date, and according to national assessment the country already achieved 78% of the goals. He briefed the participants that the main challenge for Bahrain are the fluctuating oil prices, given that

this directly impacts the resources available, the planning process and the economy in general. To address the challenge and to work towards greater economic diversification, the government reformed legislations to encourage investment from the private sector in the GCC and beyond. The government focused the reform package on enhancing service provision and removing restrictions on foreign investment or foreign ownership.

After the introductory tour de table sharing national experiences and current status regarding planning, Ms. Sumpf briefed the participants about the history and background that lead to the formulation of the development account project. The Development Account is a capacity development programme of the United Nations Secretariat aiming at enhancing capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the United Nations Development Agenda. The account was established in 1997 and since then has programmed over 400 projects, implemented by 10 UN Secretariat entities for a total budget of \$238 million.

Overall, the priority is to strengthen the planning and public management processes of the ESCWA member states, and to help them link these processes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ms. Sumpf elaborated that the objective of this projects is to achieve a more collaborative and integrated planning method by sharing the knowledge that exist in the different Arab countries, to learn from successes and challenges, to work towards more resource-efficient coordination on regional planning and to establish a capacity building system that builds local planning knowledge from regional expertise. The project also offers a tool for policy-makers, decision-makers, researchers and other stakeholders to analyze and compare the state of national planning in the region.

The implementation of the project must take into consideration the influence of regional development challenges (economic, social and environmental; structural vs. emergent), institutional challenges (governance mechanisms in place, coordination), and the difficulty of ‘Planning under Uncertainty’ (relationships between separate policy concerns, decision- making and biases, systems dynamics both internal and external, forecasting & probabilities).

Ms. Sumpf described different decision-making approaches. She explained that our knowledge, education, experience and other factors influence how every individual is subject to personal and professional biases as well as heuristics that frame the decision-making process. With the mandate of this program being the achievement of long-term development visions, planning process need to be strengthened by duly recognizing and addressing the impact of behavioural insights to support a more integrated and strategically coordinated development planning process towards the realization of the 2030 agenda.

Ms. Sumpf explained the experience with integrated planning from other regions using the example of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean’s programme “Planobarometro”, which combines theory, lessons learned from national/country experiences, inter-regional and expert advisory knowledge as well as insights from the normative global development agendas to guide planners in Latin-American and Caribbean countries. She added that integration of planning has many layers (horizontal as well as vertical), across stakeholders, institutions, themes and decision-makers.

Ms. Sumpf concluded the opening session by detailing the expectations of the meeting and hoping that the participants will agree on a project implementation roadmap over the next two years with a feasible timeline for each activity.

Summary of discussion during the first session

After her presentation, Ms. Denise Sumpf assured the participants that ESCWA is not advocating one unified guideline for everyone, and that the three proposed pilot countries are to be identified on a needs-assessment basis. As in all planning efforts “there should be always room to adjust and identify” she said. Mr. Mohmoud Ataya, shared his opinion by saying that if a country already has an existing guide, what the program should achieve in this case, is to remedy the gaps in his program and not replace one guide with a totally new one. He continued that Palestine is committed in applying and achieving the Agenda 2030.

Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Al-Hawri, commented that Yemen has a lot of expertise and experience when it comes to planning, however due to the ongoing conflict the country lacks human capacities in planning, resources and functioning institutions. The capacity of institutions to produce plans and coordinate between each other to achieve the SDGs is currently compromised and he proposed that the project needs to integrate effective re-building of capacity, especially training of stakeholders in all aspects of integrated planning.

Mr. Wissem Moatemri, emphasised on the importance of mainstreaming SDGs into national development planning. He indicated however that the main challenge the Arab countries are facing remains the lack of substantive data in this field. Ms. Mouchera Karara, added a national perspective from Egypt explaining that until now the development plans were not conforming to the need of the population, and hence lack the buy-in for implementation: “we should study more what the population needs and then we should prioritize accordingly”.

Session 2: ESCWA national plans database and guidelines on good planning.

Ms. Nathalie Grand, the Economic Affairs Officer at UN-ESCWA, briefed the participants on ESCWA’s preparatory research and analysis on the status quo of national development planning approaches in the Arab region. She emphasized that the ultimate goal would be to strengthen planning and to support public process management by using the database. For that it would be crucial to develop standardized indicators on development planning practices for the Arab countries. These indicators should track changes planning practices over time at the country level, across countries and also facilitate benchmarking across regions.

Ms. Grand emphasized that planning is not about controlling or commanding; it is about convincing stakeholders to take certain decisions of which can positively impact the economic outcome. She then continued by enumerating the different required information to achieve an integrative and indicative plan. Arab countries should have a comprehensive long-term vision, but with specific milestones objectives. To achieve this outcome, it is crucial to develop a data- and evidence-based analysis, in line with developing an integrated approach regarding KPI’s (cross cultural) that could potentially fit within the global frameworks (SDG’s).

In addition, the planning approach should be a consultative and inclusive process involving different stakeholders in society and holding the policymakers accountable for their work. Fundamentally countries should link the KPI’s to the specific objectives, and visions of the country to be able to track the progress being made. Moreover, quantifiable KPI’s are required to set a baseline, target the progress the country is making with a specific target year of achievement that will be the implementing authority. A country can’t reach its vision if the KPIs are not complete, and according to Ms. Nathalie Grand, 30% of planning documents in the Arab region have no KPI’s, and 25% are

inaccurately linked to broad programs rather than specific objectives and pillars.

She described a tradeoff between ambitious and implementable targets and suggested that countries should commit to a more general goal rather than specific one in order to have a chance to achieve it. Ms. Grand concluded by describing the way forward for ESCWA regarding this project; for short-term purposes a clear mapping methodology should be developed while reevaluating the methodological aspect of the plan. Regarding medium-term issues, the project should build an external cooperation with ECLAC, since they are already implementing a similar plan for their mandated countries and should redesign technical targets: a comprehensive data collection, cooperate with the different focal points, developing a dynamic interface and designing a special interface for countries. Finally, for a long-term plan (more than 6 years), a dashboard should be created alongside with a toolkit, country profiles and expands the Data Base into a repository.

Summary of discussion during the second session

In a closing comment to the session, Ms. Sumpf said that ESCWA is taking an integrated view, considering the full sequence of the planning process and that the database is currently in a “draft” stage requiring substantive validation of its content as well as its design. She emphasized on the importance to benefit from the already existing interregional and global experience when it comes to project planning. Mr. Hejazi, asked Ms. Grand to what extent can she judge of the effectiveness of indicators when designing the database. She responded by saying that the database should include a part that tracks the political and economic situation of the country and added that in order to not fail, the plan should include all the relevant information and should have more realistic and achievable goals. It is important to distinguish between operational KPIs and a strategic vision; KPIs are supposed to reflect practice in the best way possible, thus they need to be conceived and designed not as rigid but allowing a bandwidth for achievements.

Session 3: Integrating behavioral insights for effective national development planning

Fadi Makki, Founder and President of Nudge Lebanon, introduced participants to the importance of applying behavioral insights to the policy-making challenges that the Arab region faces and the usefulness of experimental approaches as well as behavioral economic tools. Mr. Makki firstly reminded the audience that assuming human beings are rational is a very limiting view. Nevertheless, this belief is still dominating government policy and economic models.

Due to state limitations, limited enforcement power, new ways of policy making arose. More than 200 nudge and behavioral units have been created around the world. Nudging and behavioral insights have already been tested in many public policy areas and as stated by Fadi Makki, “development plan visions of most Arab countries have strong behavioral roots”. Behavioral insights have been very effective in addressing the following issues: health related challenges, environmental objectives, education policy challenges and many others. He then enumerated several successful behavioral interventions that were done by several nudge units. The earlier the intervention, the higher the chance of changing the behavior of individual and the cheaper it would be he said.

Behavioral insights are an important complement to the rational toolbox as we are in need for evidence-based policymaking instead of ideology based one. He also believes that human beings tend to have good intentions but do not always translate them to actions, due to biases that affect their decision making abilities: “We have mental shortcuts” that push us to make quick decisions which may often not be in our best interest. He elaborated on the two systems of judgment that impact the

decision-making process that are known as System 1 and 2. System 1 is the implanted views, which are relational to the environment around, hence involuntary and based on experiences and non-deliberative links, prone to errors. System 2, on the other hand is categorized as explicit, that is, analyze cognitive processes and expressed behavior. While the two systems work separately, nudges complement both system 1 and system 2 by “gently” pushing the decision making of an individual in the right direction.

Finally, Mr. Makki briefed the participants on the behavioral informed strategic planning approach that should replace classical strategic planning approach: 1) starting with the stakeholder’s engagement, by mobilizing, engaging and follow -through of the main stakeholders in the planning process; 2) developing a policy agenda, which is driven through an assessment of local challenges, and guided by recent trends; 3) build an efficient governance and organizational/institutional system; an operating model composed of a nudge unit, an advisory panel, an ethical review committee, and an inter-agency cooperation a community of practice and finally building a linkage with academia; as well as capacity building teams to mainstream behavioral insights and experimentation for various stakeholders involved in strategic planning with workshops and training; and 4) implement different forms of experimentation to make sure of the well-functioning of the approach in line with effective monitoring the plan’s implementation.

Summary of discussion during the third session

“Most of what you said is familiar to us, we call it social pressure or peer pressure and have been using it since 1997” noted the representative of Syria and asked whether nudge is a planning method or a way of acting, in other words merging this new way of thinking to the traditional policymaking tools. Mr. Makki answered that, in general, behavioral tools are complementary methods and not substitutes methods and are only used when the issue has a behavioral root. The effectiveness of a nudge strategy would depend on the level of behavioral root within it. Mr. Makki highlighted the importance of experimenting because context matters; “what works in one country would not necessary work in another country”. Responding to a comment from Ms. Intirsar Bint Abdullah Al Wahaibi, on the importance to improve the investment environment in the Arab region, Mr. Makki said that in business world usually, there exist convoluted legal formalities, which can constitute an impediment for investors; reducing this barrier will eventually boost investments he believed. Responding to a concern by Ms. Mouchera Karara on the effectiveness and sustainability of nudges, Mr. Makki answered that there is no absolute answer, yet these experiments can be cost effective in terms of a cost benefit analysis and may result in a positive change of behavior towards addressing behavioural not structural policy challenges.

Working Group 1: Current national Development planning approaches –Opportunities and challenges.

The guiding questions for this segment of the meeting included the following:

- What is the status of national planning in your country?
- Did your country reflect the Sustainable Development Goals in its national development plan? If so, how?
- Based on your experience, what are key indicators for good national development planning?
- What challenges did you face in the conception phase of the national development plan and how did you address them?

- What challenges did you face in the implementation phase of the national development plan and how did you address them?
- What institutional framework do you have in place to drive national development planning efforts (e.g. human and financial resources)?
- *Other considerations you would like to share...*

Based on the above framework questions, this session discussed the opportunities and challenges experienced in previous and current national development exercises to identify lessons learned awareness and engagement of national stakeholders. Noting the disconnect between having a plan and its actual implementation, Ms. Mouchera Karara explained that Egypt has a government plan of action covering many different sectoral levels also involving the private sector as a main stakeholder in the decision-making process. Egypt would not spread policy reform across all the SDGs, because of national development objectives prioritization as well as due to the ongoing restructuring of many ministries. According to her, Egypt still has a long way ahead towards the achievement the 2030 agenda. One of the main challenges the country currently faces is the loss of credibility of the government in addition to socio-economic and demographic challenges. She stated that “anything the government is doing the people won’t trust it even if sometimes the government is well intentioned”.

So far, the Egyptian private sector appears willing to help, but its engagement was not harmonized across sectors and does not following a specific methodology. To highlight an institutional improvement, she mentioned the complementary work of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning, who collaborate and do not compete against each other. According to the Egyptian representative: “It is not enough to talk about the goals, we should first see if we have enough funding to fund these goals”. The participant from Egypt summarized a number of challenges: i) planning often takes place removed from the realities on the ground, ii) specific data gaps need to be remedied (e.g. number of schools vs. quality of schools), iii) importance of obligatory or binding mechanism for coordination (intra-government as well as inter-stakeholder involvement).

Ms. Intisar Bint Abdullah Al Wahaibi shared Oman’s approach akin to the replication of the experience of Malaysia with a strong leadership commitment to the development plan. Implementation challenges emerged due to a shift in available resources (ie. drop in oil prices reducing government budget). Oman has mechanisms in place to follow through on accountability and governance, for example by establishing several sectoral “policy laboratories” to support economic diversification as a well as a cross-sectoral “lab” on employment promotion.

Mr. Refaat Hejazi indicated that the main issue for Syria is the follow-up on implementation. The solution would be to create an independent entity that would make sure that implementation is well working. He added that the private sector is supposed to be contributing to development since 90% of the projects are implemented by the private sector in Syria.

Mr. Mahmoud Ataya shared Palestine’s main planning-related challenges, which includes the rebuilding of the Ministry of Planning. Moreover, the implementation rate of development projects is between 25 and 50 per cent. The representative of Mauritania emphasized on trying to achieve the best solution to create the good environment to integrate all the relevant stakeholders in the planning process. In Tunisia, the Five-Year plan – conceived in consultation with different stakeholders -was adopted by the parliament. Before 2011, the country used to record more than 5% growth rate yearly. However, the disparities and the unequal distribution of wealth were astonishing; some provinces recorded a 7% growth rate while others 34%. In addition to that, the country has a 30% unemployment level of youth graduating from universities, especially affecting women.

In Yemen and prior to the conflict, the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation was in charge of formulating the Five-Year plan. The Yemeni participant acknowledged that consultation of different stakeholders takes place only during the review phase of the plan. In terms of financial resources, he emphasized on the role of and necessary cooperation with the Ministry of Finance (e.g. a planning department under the Ministry of Finance monitored the plan's KPIs).

Dr. Alaadin Jaafar Mohmmmed Al Ameri briefed participants that Iraq has a long-term plan and went through a successful planning process (2017-2020 plan of action is currently being implemented), but resources for effective implementation are limited due to the different conflict across the country. However, he confessed that the country is highly dependent on the oil price and that similar to other natural resource-dependent countries a change in oil prices results in a change of budget. The Iraqi strategy is to enact new laws to support its market economy and promoted investments despite security concerns of international investors.

Working group 2: Stakeholder engagement

Syria's national development process encompasses consultations in sectoral working groups that are thematic and involve the private sector through Unions, as well as civil society. Decision on consultations and participation is made by the head of the Council of Ministers. The draft plan is submitted to the people's council for deliberation and ratification. The National Plan of Action covers two review meetings per year, one on budget and one on content. Furthermore, the new constitution should consider participation/consultation mechanisms across different stakeholders for longer-term planning.

In Yemen, the development plan goes through four main stages of consultations: (i) The preparation of the plan by the High Committee chaired by the Prime Minister and with representatives from all relevant Ministries, (ii) then the technical committees draft the actual plan and issue implementation guidelines for the planning focal points at the Governorate-level; (iii) government consultations are carried out at national, local and community and (v) involvement of civil society and private sector, which at the moment is not up to standard due to the lack of clear engagement mechanism and ad-hoc frequency.

In Palestine, with due consideration to its specific political context, planners need to figure out "who are our stakeholders" and to establish consultation mechanisms that brings on board highly fragmented public, private and civil society institutions (e.g. focus groups at sectoral level). The private sector played a crucial role in building a consultancy team to facilitate communication with the government; while civil society is having difficulties communicating their needs.

In Oman, social engagement always starts with a directive from HRH Sultan Qaboos. The Minister of Finance is the main stakeholder when preparing the plan of action with the help of the Minister of Oil, given the reliance on oil revenues. The draft plan is afterwards submitted to the Supreme Council of Planning, which also has a department in charge of the plan's implementation. For the next planning exercise, Oman envisages to study the budget and the different KPIs, with a view towards increasing stakeholder engagement at the local level (e.g. PPPs, involvement of Academia). Currently Oman uses focus group consultations in all the provinces. Prior to the adoption of the plan by royal decree and once the Supreme Council assessed the implementation of the 9th Plan consultations move to form new committees for the 10th Plan with a multi-year budget allocation and defined KPIs.

In Iraq, the main responsibility for planning lies with the Ministry of Planning but receives additional support from foreign partners and organisations (including the UN's UNDAF). Prior to Cabinet approval, ministers establish working groups and thematic committees. Since 2013, Iraq has become more open to engage stakeholders outside government (e.g. also Academia). Provincial planning units as well as the national Economic Policies Department follow-up on the plan and its implementation.

In Egypt, the Ministry of Planning is in charge of setting the long-term vision and setting the annual plan. In the context of the SDGs this also entails the preparations for the voluntary national review. The civil society is being much more integrated in the planning process than it used to through phased consultations (e.g. also involving youth groups). The government has developed a digital platform to show the development of the plan and get feedback from the population. The challenge however, is overall outreach and to integrate the private sector more in the process. Egypt would need to increase awareness when it comes to public participation in the decisions making process and raise awareness on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Mohamed Teghre contributed that Mauritania has an excellent plan and a high level of coordination between the different stakeholders. Once the plan is prepared by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, it is sent to the private sector that gives its feedback in order to follow up with the plan.

Summary of working group discussion

The lively debate during the workshop session centered around the need to address eight key concerns:

1. To remedy the disconnect between formulation of a plan vs. implementation strategy as well as follow-up/monitoring.
2. To contextualise international best practices and not “copy and paste”/emulate planning and implementation approaches from elsewhere.
3. To have a strategy for communication, advocacy and participation of stakeholders (across rural-urban divides, from public, private, civil society, etc.).
4. To recognize different planning philosophies (e.g. short vs. long-term, degrees of prescriptive depth, centralized vs. decentralized, degree of legislation/regulation).
5. To clarify mandate and authority of planning authorities/institutions as well as of implementation partners.
6. To consider the impact of demographic and conflict-related dynamics
7. To establish (realistic) resources requirements, allocations and budgets that are less prone to fluctuate over the lifecycle/duration of the national development plan.
8. To review results and consolidate lessons learned to inform the next planning cycle (e.g. close data gaps, solve measurement issues, correct projections).

Closing session: A path towards the future- mapping the implementation of the development account project.

During the closing session, Ms. Sumpf reminded all participants that good planning takes hard work and that having the necessary planning capability as well as capacity requires building up. She noted that planning is not enough and that due consideration to the actual implementation of a policy reform and its related challenges are necessary. In this context, Ms. Sumpf shared recent research to raise awareness of capability “traps” that emerge under specific conditions and that result in ineffective

interventions (ie. aim to reproduce particular external solutions considered ‘best practice’ in dominant agendas, apply pre-determined linear processes, pressure tight monitoring of inputs and compliance to ‘the plan’, and are driven from the top down, assuming that implementation largely happens by edict). The project aims to support countries towards avoiding such capacity traps.

Ms. Sumpf strongly emphasized on the need to adapt to the local context and concept, which is a learning process. She stressed on the four elements that planning activities should do “aim to solve particular problems in particular local contexts via the creation of an ‘authorizing environment’ for decision-making that encourages experimentation and ‘positive deviance’, which gives rise to active, ongoing and experiential (and experimental) learning and the iterative feedback of lessons into new solutions, doing so by engaging broad sets of agents to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate and relevant—that is, are politically supportable and practically implementable.

In terms of agreement for the project implementation roadmap, Ms. Sumpf reminded the participants again on their responsibilities as project focal points: Liaison between UNESCWA’s Economic Governance and Planning Section (the “Project Secretariat”) and the national stakeholders involved in development planning (Share, Communicate, Participate, Organize, Contribute, Support and Advise). As a follow-up to this meeting and in preparation of the next activities participants agreed to review the proposed implementation timeline and to come forward with expressions of interest for hosting national workshops.

As suggested in the project document and the implementation plan, activity A 1.1 should be the natural starting point of the project: conduct field visits to validate the existing information compiled in ESCWA’s planning database as presented by Ms. Grand.

Participants proposed to organize the next meetings with a strong thematic focus to satisfy the capacity-building needs.

*** End all ***

ANNEX 1: AGENDA

Concept Outline

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. 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.

The development account project was 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.

Objectives of the meeting include, for example:

- Discuss current national development planning approaches in the Arab region to identify lessons learned.
- Mindful of the requirements related to the implementation of the Agenda 2030, to identify specific capacity gaps to be addressed effectively and collaboratively;
- To agree on an implementation road map based on a feasible timeline for the project and ensure clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the focal points in support of project implementation.

For additional information or questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

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Draft Agenda

Day 1

- 8:30 - 09:00 **Arrival and registration**
- 09:00 - 09:30 **Welcome & Opening Session of the Regional Meeting of Focal Points**
- Mr. Mohamed El-Hacene, Director, EDID, UNESCWA
- 09:30 - 11:00 **Session 1: Setting the stage**
- Introduction to the development account project and explanation of the terms of references of the national project focal points. The session will also discuss national development planning experiences from other regions (e.g. Latin-America and the Caribbean), whose lessons learned for a collaborative regional approach (e.g. Planobarometro) can inform the Arab initiative.
- Speakers:*
- Ms. Denise Sumpf, UNESCWA
- 11:00 - 11:30 **Coffee break**
- 11:30 - 13:00 **Session 2: ESCWA national plans database and guidelines on good planning**
- The session will brief the participants on ESCWA's preparatory research and analysis on the status quo of national development planning approaches in the Arab region. Participants will also learn about UNESCWA's national plans database as a collaborative tool to identify commonalities, interlinkages and approaches to resolve challenges.
- Speakers*
- Ms. Nathalie Grand, UNESCWA
- 13:00 - 14:00 **Lunch**
- 14:00 - 15:45 **Working Group 1: Current national development planning approaches – Opportunities and challenges**
- Format: Break-out session
- Discussion on opportunities and challenges experienced in previous and current national development exercises to identify lessons learned awareness and engagement of national stakeholders (e.g. policy-makers from difference Ministries, decision-making procedures).
- 15:45 - 16:30 **Working Group Presentations Day 1**
- The individual working groups present their intermediate discussion results.

Day 2

09:00 - 10:30	Session 3: Integrating behavioural insights for effective national development planning The discussion introduces participants to the importance of applying behavioural insights to the policy challenges that the Arab region faces and of using experimental approaches as well as behavioural economics tools (e.g. randomized controlled trials). The application of behavioural science to a variety of public policy settings is aimed at improving citizen-centered policies and at improving the quality of policy choices at the national level.
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 - 12:30	Working Group 2: Stakeholder engagement The discussion focuses on how to partner within the government and beyond (e.g. private sector, academia, civil society) for national development planning initiatives. What worked well, what did not and how can balanced engagement and ownership be established.
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 14:30	Working Group Presentations Day 2: Final presentations The individual working groups present their consolidated discussion results.
14:30 - 15:30	Session 4: A path towards the future – Mapping the implementation of the development account project Discuss and agree on the next steps towards implementation of the project and will clearly define activities to be undertaken between August 2018 and February 2019 <i>Moderation:</i> Ms. Denise Sumpf, UNESCWA
15:30 - 16:00	Conclusions & Closing Mr. Mohamed El-Hacene, Director, EDID, UNESCWA

TORs

Terms of reference for National Focal Points supporting the Development Account Project “Towards the Arab Horizon 2030: Enhancing Integrated National Development Planning in the Arab Region”

In April 2018, UNESCWA Member States were encouraged to nominate national focal points for the above-mentioned project to facilitate coordination, information sharing and joint planning of activities at the national and regional level. In most cases this person is from a government ministry involved in national development planning.

In this capacity, a national focal point, either himself or herself or with the support of staff:

- Serves as liaison between UNESCWA’s Economic Governance and Planning Section (the “Project Secretariat”) and national development planning bodies, as appropriate
- Shares information on project-related programmes, activities, materials and events with the project secretariat

- Ensures that the country engages in integrated national development and shares relevant information, documents, and material with the project secretariat
- Supports outreach to potential partners (e.g. public sector, private sector, academia) to encourage contributions to the project, as necessary;
- Supports the project secretariat in all aspects related to the implementation of specific activities outlined in the project document, including logistics and administrative support for the organization of field visits, meetings, seminars and/or national workshops
- Ensures that the country contributes to the national development planning database and related tools;
- Participates and substantively contributes to regional meetings, national workshops, seminars and field visits;
- Provides input and feedback to the regular reports on the progress of the development account project
- Communicates regularly with constituents and stakeholders as well as supports communication on and dissemination of project results
- Supports the project secretariat in all other functions related to the effective and cooperative implementation of the development account, as per mandate.

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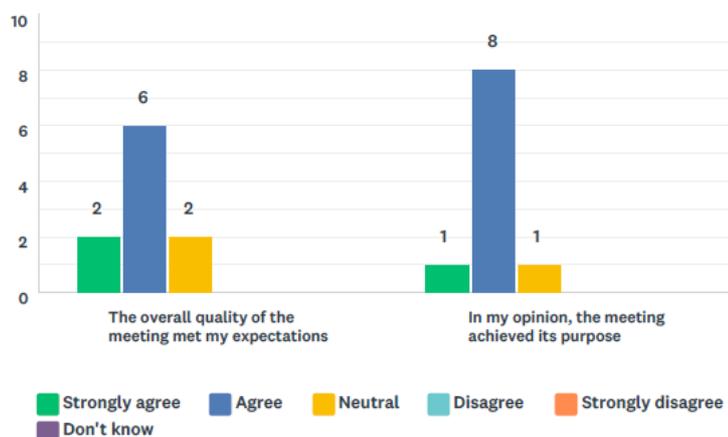
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ANNEX 3: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Q1 Meeting Questions

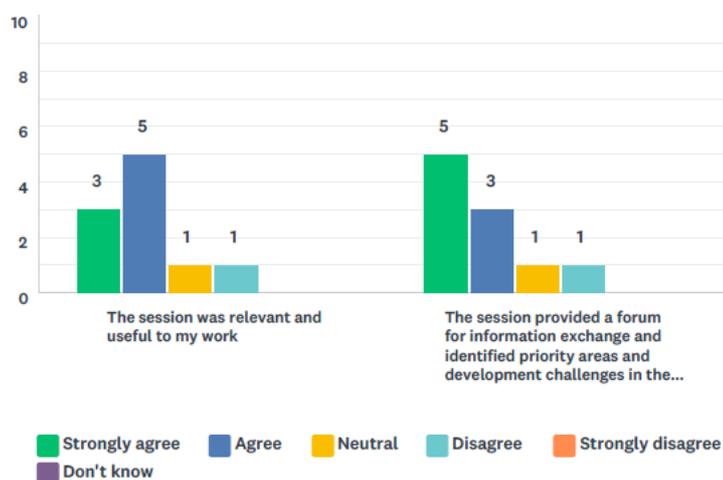
Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
The overall quality of the meeting met my expectations	20.00% 2	60.00% 6	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	2.00
In my opinion, the meeting achieved its purpose	10.00% 1	80.00% 8	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	2.00

Q2 Questions regarding the Sessions

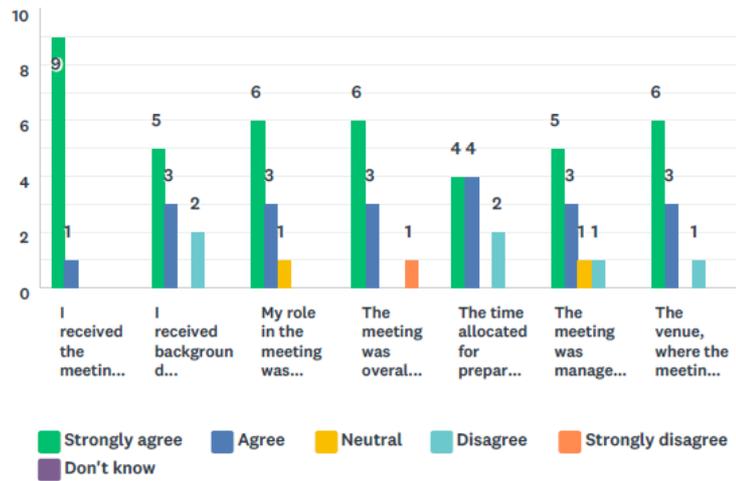
Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
The session was relevant and useful to my work	30.00% 3	50.00% 5	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	2.00
The session provided a forum for information exchange and identified priority areas and development challenges in the region	50.00% 5	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.80

Q3 Details on Meeting Organisation

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
I received the meeting invitation in a timely manner	90.00% 9	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.10
I received background documents in preparation for the meeting in a timely manner	50.00% 5	30.00% 3	0.00% 0	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.90
My role in the meeting was clearly communicated	60.00% 6	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.50
The meeting was overall well organized and structured	60.00% 6	30.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	10	1.70
The time allocated for preparing my inputs prior to the meeting was sufficient (if applicable)	40.00% 4	40.00% 4	0.00% 0	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	2.00
The meeting was managed efficiently (start and end on time)	50.00% 5	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.80
The venue, where the meeting took place was appropriate	60.00% 6	30.00% 3	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.60