



**ESCWA**

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC & SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

## Concept Paper for Workshop

# “Leaving No-One Behind: Targeted Social Assistance Programmes and Management Information Systems in Arab Countries”

**20-21 November 2019**

**Amman, Jordan**

### 1. BACKGROUND

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes “that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”. To furthermore underline the urgency and importance of this challenge, the first Goal is devoted to ending poverty. To deliver on this promise governments of the UN Member States are called to “implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable” (SDG1, target 1.3). In addition, Goal 10 aims at reducing inequality with special attention to the bottom 40 per cent of the population.

In recent decades, due to a variety of social, economic and political pressures, Arab countries are undertaking substantive and wide-reaching social protection reforms. In the domain of non-contributory social protection, countries are seeking to break the dependence on universal subsidies and to replace these with more targeted measures, typically cash-transfers. Targeted social assistance presumes that limited resources should benefit the most impoverished population groups which raises a number of questions of how to define poverty and set poverty line, what indicators can be used to identify the poor in the absence of reliable data of households’ incomes, how often poverty status of beneficiaries should be updated, etc.

Furthermore, these reforms require a lot in terms of information infrastructure. Such infrastructure is necessary to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of individual programmes and achieve coordination between programmes across the complex social protection landscape. Governments are increasingly integrating beneficiary registries of different programmes in order to cover a wide range of population, including the poor and vulnerable. Integrated beneficiary registries, in addition, have the potential to enable Governments to monitor and manage the social protection system in a holistic manner. To know who the poor are and where to find them, many countries in the region are creating so-called social registries, which contain data on potential social assistance beneficiaries indicating their level of poverty or vulnerability. An advantage of such registers is that they can be used by multiple programmes to select beneficiaries, eliminating the need for each such programme to carry out its own costly and time-consuming targeting process. Social registries also make it possible to rapidly scale up social assistance programmes in times of crisis. However, these registers also come with multiple dangers: notably, if a household is not in the registry, it risks being excluded from the whole spectrum of social assistance programmes. Critically, integrating social and beneficiary registries requires the existence of unique identifiers since different registers and users, in order to exchange data, need to identify individuals and households in the same way. Several Arab countries are therefore presently introducing such identifiers.

Developments on the technological front make it increasingly attainable for governments to set up the information infrastructure required by the ambitious social protection reforms. At the same time, doing so also brings to the fore many questions and challenges. For instance, establishing and utilizing social registries requires a valid and reliable way of identifying beneficiaries through an objective and transparent targeting system. Integrating registries renders necessary a high degree of cooperation

between ministries and agencies, and therefore functional governance structures. In addition, the collection and sharing of individual data raise fundamental questions about privacy and security.

The workshop will have the purpose of enhancing the knowledge and skills of ESCWA member countries to efficiently design, implement and monitor targeted social assistance programmes and establish management information systems leaving no one behind through experience exchange and peer-learning. This way, the workshop will strengthen the capacity of Arab countries to operationalize the 2030 Agenda (with specific focus on goals 1, 10 and 17). Furthermore, by applying an integrated “systems approach” to social protection – an approach that ensures better coherence across the different core components such as social insurance, health care and social assistance, and strengthens their connection to the wider social policy landscape – ESCWA will promote integrated manner of SDG implementation and stimulate coordination and collaboration between relevant ministries and other actors governing social assistance, management information systems and broader development policies. The 2-day workshop will have focused sessions on targeted social assistance programmes, poverty targeting methodologies, as well as management information systems set to govern social assistance. Morning sessions of the workshop will begin with thematic presentations of the international experts, followed by presentations of 2-3 country cases from the Arab region and moderated discussions or group work.

## **2. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP**

This workshop will be implemented under the DA project “*Implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Enhancing the Capacities of Arab countries*”. The workshop is targeted at policy-makers working on targeted social assistance and related management information systems in ESCWA member States. The key objective of the event is exchange experience across countries in the region about ongoing or future mechanisms to effectively identify poor and vulnerable population groups, efficiently deliver targeted social assistance programmes and better integrate different social assistance programmes and projects, including through the establishment of management information systems.

For instance, participants from Arab countries will:

- (i) exchange and discuss information on targeting mechanisms for targeted social assistance programmes in the Arab region;
- (ii) agree on regional development priorities in the areas of targeted social assistance delivery, poverty targeting and establishment of related management information systems;
- (iii) broaden their capacity and knowledge in the field of designing, implementing and monitoring of social assistance programmes, as well as developing and utilizing related management information systems;
- (iv) strengthen intraregional cooperation between the Arab countries in the sphere of social assistance and establishment and utilization of management information systems;
- (v) enhance the capacity of Arab countries to operationalize the 2030 Agenda (with specific focus on goals 1, 10 and 17) and promote integrated approaches to SDG implementation.

## **3. OUTPUTS OF THE WORKSHOP**

The workshop is expected to support social protection reform efforts in the Arab region through strengthened capacity of policy-makers as well as through increased cooperation and information sharing among countries. Participants will engage in discussions, learn from each other as well as from external experts and agree on regional development priorities in the areas of targeted social assistance delivery, poverty targeting and establishment of related management information systems. The capacity of Arab countries to operationalize the 2030 Agenda (with specific focus on goals 1, 10 and 17) and promote integrated approaches to SDG implementation will be strengthened.

#### 4. DRAFT AGENDA (TENTATIVE. SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

DAY 1	
9:00 – 9:30	<i>Registration</i>
9:30 – 10:00	<p>Opening and introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>By MOSA in Jordan</b></li> <li>- by Gisela Nauk, Chief of Inclusive Social Development Section, ESCWA</li> </ul> <p>Round of introductions</p>
10:00 – 12:00	<p><b>Session 1: Non-Contributory Social Protection: Main Challenges</b></p> <p><b>1. Definition of Poverty: Monetary Poverty, Basic Needs, Vulnerability, Multiple Deprivations</b> David Robalino, American University of Beirut (TBC)</p> <p><b>2. Overview of Non-Contributory Social Protection: Trends in the Arab Region</b> Anton Bjork, Consultant, ESCWA</p> <p><b>Moderated Discussion</b> <b>Moderator:</b> Gisela Nauk, Chief of Inclusive Social Development Section, ESCWA</p>
12:00 – 13:00	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:00 – 15:00	<p><b>Session 2: Identifying People in Need</b></p> <p><b>1. Targeting Approaches: Supplementary Support Programme of National Aid Fund in Jordan</b> Faisal Khalaf Salman Irsheid, Director of Financial Aid Department, National Aid Fund (Jordan) (TBC)</p> <p><b>2. Targeting Approaches: Tayseer Programme in Morocco</b> Elhabib Kinani, Project Director of the Tayseer Programme, Ministry of Education (Morocco) (TBC)</p> <p><b>3. New Approached to Poverty Targeting: Revising the PMT Formula According to Multidimensional Concept of Poverty</b> Ayman Sawalha, Minister’s Advisor, Ministry of Social Development (Palestine) (TBC)</p> <p><b>Moderated Discussion</b> <b>Moderator:</b> David Robalino, American University of Beirut (TBC)</p>
15:00 – 15:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:30 – 17:00	<p><b>Session 3: Levels of Benefits in Non-Contributory Social Protection</b></p> <p><b>1. Levels of Benefits: Major Challenges and Trends in the Arab Region</b> Gisela Nauk, Chief of Inclusive Social Development Section, ESCWA</p> <p><b>2. Levels of Benefits: Takaful and Karama in Egypt</b> Balquies Hagrass, Community and Social Accountability Consultant, Ministry of Social Solidarity, Egypt (TBC)</p> <p><b>3. Non-Contributory Social Protection in Iraq: Levels of Benefits</b> Najlāa Ali Murad, Ministry of Planning, Iraq (TBC)</p> <p><b>4. Non-Contributory Social Protection in Tunisia: Levels of Benefits</b> Hamada Mohamed, Economist-Researcher, Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Policies and Programs, Center for Research and Social Studies (Tunisia) (TBC)</p> <p><b>5. Levels of Benefits: Tayseer Programme in Morocco</b> Elhabib Kinani, Project Director of the Tayseer Programme, Ministry of Education (Morocco) (TBC)</p> <p><b>6. Modelling Tools for Social Protection Reform</b> Mohamed Hedi Bchir, Chief of the Modelling and Forecasting Section, ESCWA (TBC)</p> <p><b>Moderated Discussion</b> <b>Moderator:</b> (TBC)</p>
DAY 2	

9:00 - 10:00	<p><b>Session 4: Beneficiary Databases and Management Information Systems in Non-Contributory Social Protection</b></p> <p><b>1. Integrated Beneficiary Registries in the Arab Region</b> Khalid A. Moheyddeen, World Bank (TBC)</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> (TBC)</p>
10:00 - 11:00	<p><b>Session 5: Integrated and Social Registries in Non-Contributory Social Protection</b></p> <p><b>1. The Social Register in Mauritania</b> Moulaye El Hacen Abdel Maleck, Advisor on Social Affairs to the Minister, National Coordinator of the Social Net Support Project, Ministry of Economy and Industry (Mauritania) (TBC)</p> <p><b>2. Integrating Beneficiary Registries in Egypt</b> Magdy E. Elhennawy, Technical Assistance and Electronic Network Connections team leader, Takaful and Karama Program, Ministry of Social Solidarity (Egypt) (TBC)</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> (TBC)</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:30 - 13:00	<p><b>Session 5: Integrated and Social Registries in Non-Contributory Social Protection (continued)</b></p> <p><b>3. Developing National Platform for Social Protection: Drawing on Comparative Experiences</b> Sayed Blel, Social Affairs Adviser for the Head of the Government (Tunisia) (TBC)</p> <p><b>4. The Database of Poor and Needy Families in Tunisia</b> Najat Dkhil, Director, Unit for Achieving Objectives for the Completion of a Database on the Needy Families, Ministry of Social Affairs (Tunisia) (TBC)</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> (TBC)</p>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:00 – 15:30	<p><b>Session 6: Integrated and Social Registries in Non-Contributory Social Protection (continued)</b></p> <p><b>Moderated Discussion</b> <b>Moderator:</b> Khalid A. Moheyddeen, World Bank (TBC)</p>
15:30 – 16:30	<p><b>Session 7: Conclusions and Recommendations</b></p> <p>This session will consist of a final discussion on lessons learned during the workshop. It will also identify follow-up activities and needs and priorities for technical support from ESCWA.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Ms. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA)</p>