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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME
AND REGIONAL ADVISORY SERVICES**

Activities funded by the United Nations Development Account

Summary

This report provides an overview of the technical cooperation activities carried out in 2008-2009 by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) that were funded by the United Nations Development Account (DA). It presents a snapshot of all DA projects where ESCWA was involved, and elaborates progress of work and achievements of the three DA projects where ESCWA acted as lead agency.

Good practices and lessons learned from implementation of activities funded by DA are discussed with a view to strengthening knowledge-sharing and collaborative work between ESCWA and member countries and between member countries themselves.

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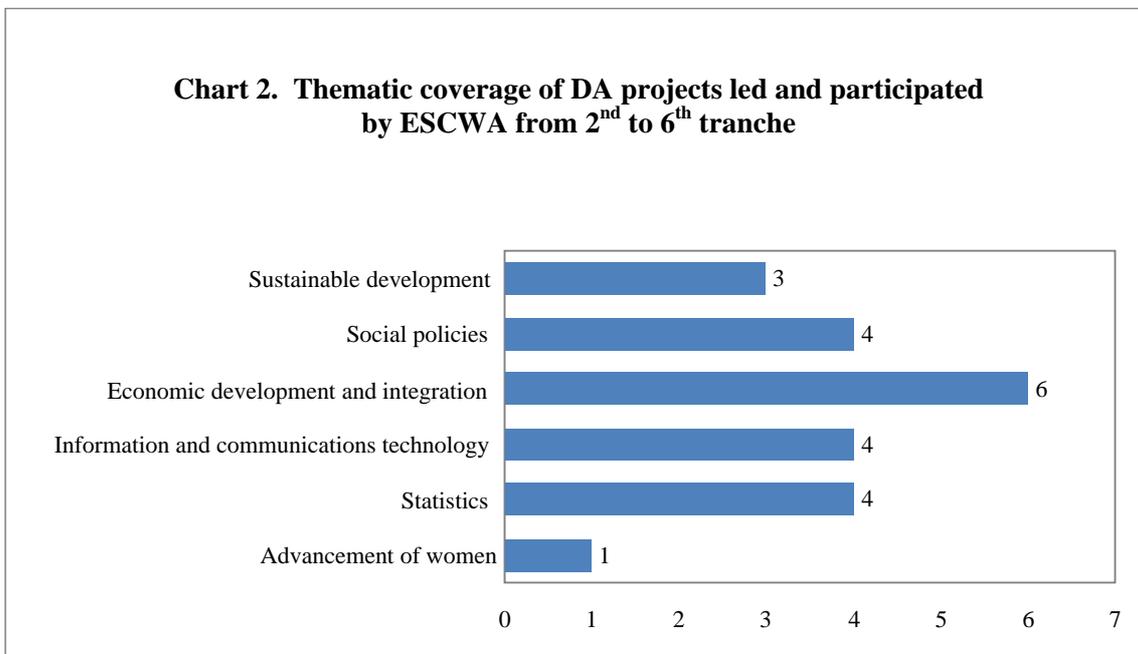
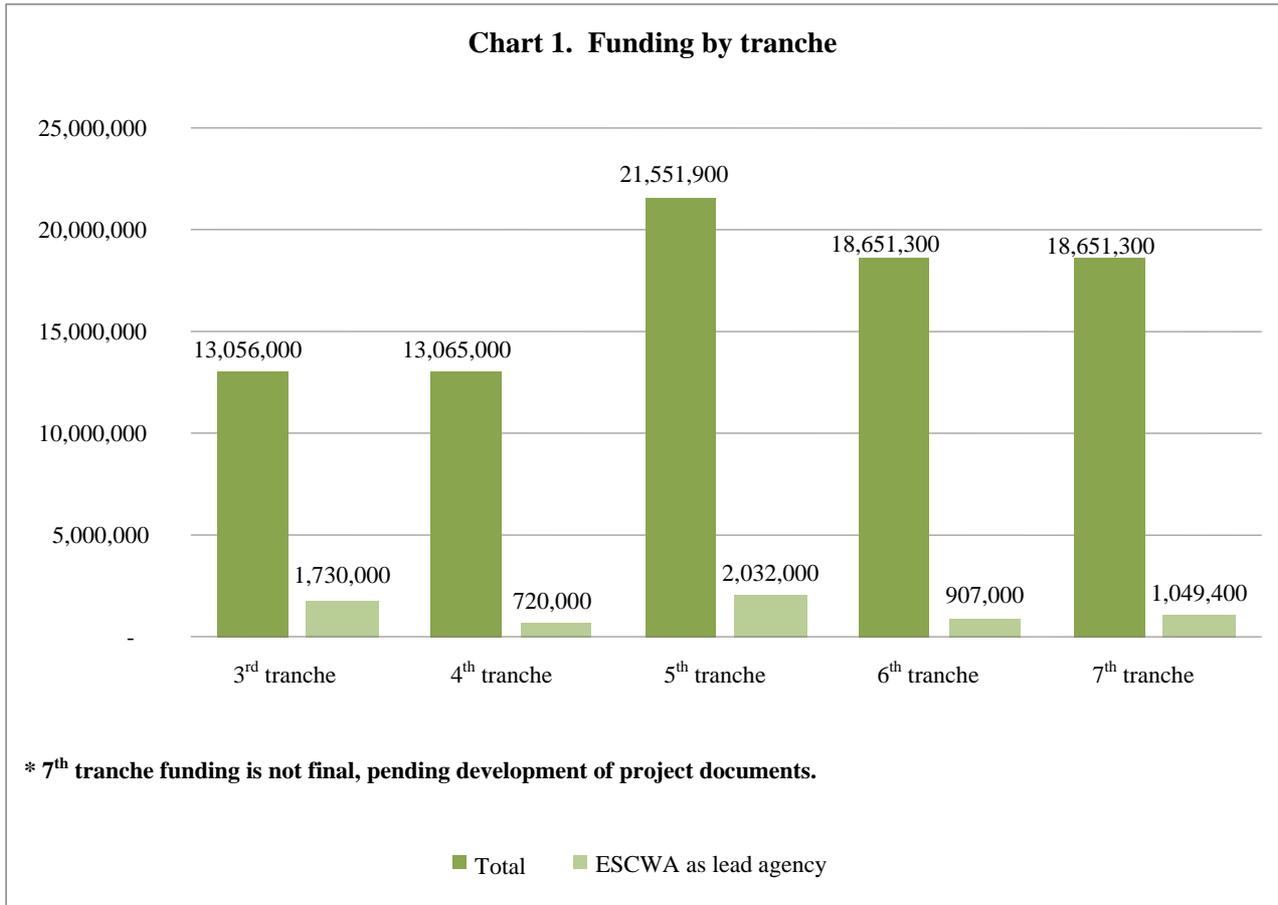
Introduction

1. The Development Account (DA) was introduced into the United Nations programme budget pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/15 of 29 October 1999. The Account is a special, multi-year account designed to complement development activities and analytical and normative work undertaken under regular budget/extrabudgetary (Section 21) and Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) (Section 22) on the basis of the priority objectives of the strategic framework.
2. DA projects aims to enhance capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the United Nations Development Agenda and allows for interregional and inter-agency cooperation. It is funded from the Secretariat's regular budget and has a biannual budget of US\$19 million funding around 28 projects implemented by 10 entities of the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA, five regional commissions, UNCTAD, UNEP, Habitat and UNODC).
3. The Development Account provides funding for projects that can achieve the following: (a) demonstrate the benefits accruing from capacity-building; (b) utilize the technical, human and other resources available in developing countries; (c) have multiplier effects and promote capacity-building in developing countries; (d) promote regional and interregional economic and technical cooperation among developing countries; (e) lead to some durable, self-sustaining process and have synergies with other development interventions; and (f) be executed within a limited timeframe.
4. Development Account projects are executed by member entities of the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs and often in cooperation between more than one entity. The Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) acts as Programme Manager of the Development Account, while the overall guidance on its use is provided by the General Assembly. In addition to the criteria set by that body, projects are usually implemented in conformity with a biennium-specific theme, referred to in this context as a tranche.
5. The participation of ESCWA in the DA began in the second tranche (2001-2002). Since its initial involvement, ESCWA has increased its participation in DA-funded projects (see the table below). The 2008-2009 biennium represents the sixth tranche, the theme of which has been "Supporting the implementation of internationally agreed goals through innovation, networking and knowledge management". In the 2008-2009 biennium, ESCWA was involved in 12 DA projects, eight of which were carried over from the fifth tranche (2006-2007), while the rest were initiated in the sixth tranche. During each of those tranches, ESCWA served as the leading agency for five projects, with total allocated funds of the order of \$2,032,000 and \$907,000 for the fifth and sixth tranches, respectively (see chart 1, which represents ESWCA share of DA; and chart 2, which represents thematic areas). For the current tranche (2010-2011 biennium), two projects were approved for ESCWA and others are in the pipeline for consideration. A further description of DA-funded projects that are implemented by ESCWA is presented in the section below.

DA PROJECTS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA AS LEADING AGENCY OR AS PARTNER

Leading agency	Project title	Start year	End year	Budget	Status
5th tranche (2006-2007)					
ESCWA	Knowledge networks through ICT access points in disadvantaged communities	2006	2009	970,000	Active
ESCAP	Interregional cooperation to strengthen social inclusion, gender equality and health promotion in MDG process	2006	2009	855,000	Active
ESCAP	Interregional cooperation in measurement of the informal sector and informal employment	2006	2009	800,000	Active
DESA	Capacity Building to integrate older persons in development goals and frameworks through the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing	2006	2009	510,000	Active
ESCWA	Strengthening National Capacities in Environment Statistics, Indicators and Accounts in supporting of progress toward achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the ESCWA and ECLAC Regions	2006	2009	602,000	Active
ESCWA	Strengthening the development of international merchandise trade statistics and the compilation of e-commerce in member countries of ESCWA	2006	2009	460,000	Active
ECE	Improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets	2006	2009	658,000	Active
6th tranche (2008-2009)					
ESCWA	Participatory human development in post-conflict countries	2008	2011	506,000	Active
ECLAC	Enhancing capacities to eradicate violence against women through networking of local knowledge communities	2008	2011	736,000	Active
ECE	Enhancing capacity of developing countries to implement international standards for commercial agricultural products in order to improve their trade competitiveness	2008	2011	703,000	Active
ESCWA	Regional harmonization of cyberlegislation to promote the knowledge society in the Arab world	2008	2011	401,000	Active
ECLAC	Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration [Maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact]	2008	2011	1,193,000	Active

Leading agency	Project title	Start year	End year	Budget	Status
7th tranche (2010-2011)					
ECA	Facilitating effective integration of developing countries in the global economy through aid for trade schemes	2010	2011	975,300	Approved
ECE	Facilitating climate change adaptation in transport through addressing the energy-environment linkage	2010	2011	738,000	Approved
ECLAC	Strengthening national statistical and inter-institutional capacities for monitoring the MDGs through inter-regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing	2010	2011	1,192,000	Approved
ESCAP	Enhancing energy security and improving access to energy services through development of public-private renewable energy partnerships	2010	2011	1,006,500	Approved
ESCAP	Strengthening social protection in Asia and the Pacific	2010	2011	749,400	Approved
ESCWA	Capacity-building on climate change mitigation for poverty alleviation in Western Asia	2010	2011	547,200	Approved
ESCWA	Strengthening capacities in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region to negotiate bilateral investment treaties	2010	2011	502,200	Approved
UNCTAD	Addressing the impact and implications of the global financial crisis on developing countries through support to services sector development	2010	2011	653,000	Approved
DESA	Strengthening regional knowledge networks to promote the effective implementation of the UN development agenda	2010	2011	526,300	Approved
DESA	Enhancing key statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals	2010	2011	810,600	Approved



I. SUBPROGRAMME 2. INTERGRATED SOCIAL POLICIES

6. As part of the DA sixth tranche, ESCWA undertook a project, entitled “Participatory human development in post-conflict countries in the ESCWA region”.
7. The project aims to foster Government-civil society participation in conflict-afflicted ESCWA member countries in matters of initiating social policy dialogue, and supporting and contributing to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of social policy. It also provides a platform for leading-edge thinking on increasing civil society participation in all public policy processes and demonstrating the need for countries in the region to adopt a participatory social development approach towards that end.
8. As a result of delays in receiving funds, the implementation began in the second half of 2009. The project led to establishing networks of expertise, with links at national, subregional and regional levels, and the provision of information and advice affecting national, subregional and regional policies and practices. Partnerships with UNDP Lebanon, ILO, UNESCO, the League of Arab States, Oxfam and the Arab Center for Rule of Law and Integrity (ACRLI) were established. Collaboration and partnerships were also tailored with national counterparts from the ministries of social affairs and planning in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen.
9. While the project encompasses a number of capacity-building workshops, advisory-related activities and electronic discussions that boost networking, participatory dialogue and knowledge-sharing, the project has implemented two out of nine programmed activities since its inception, namely, a stakeholder analysis and an inception expert group meeting to review and validate two pre-developed technical materials on “Local Community Development” (E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/Technical Paper.8) and “Participatory Research for Local Development in ESCWA countries” (E/ESCWA/SDD/2007/WP.3).
10. Briefly, the stakeholder analysis produced a strategic view of primary and secondary stakeholders in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, including line ministries, local authorities and civil society organizations. This field-analysis was accompanied by a one-day brainstorming meeting (Beirut, 19 July 2009) whereby four national coordinators representing the project targeted countries were gathered to discuss modalities for undertaking the desk-analysis, based on a well-defined questionnaire and data-collection templates, as well as to decide on the thematic areas to be tackled in the electronic discussion fora that are scheduled within the project. Brief reports reflecting setbacks and challenges faced while undertaking the analysis were produced by the National Coordinators.
11. Another expert group meeting was held in Bahrain on 12-14 October 2009 in close collaboration with the League of Arab States and the Ministry of Social Development in Bahrain. The meeting provided a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and experience-sharing on participatory social development (PSD) and local development between 22 Government representatives, 12 regional experts and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As an immediate outcome and impact-based result of the meeting, three ESCWA members, namely Bahrain, Jordan and Palestine, formally approached ESCWA to explore avenues for cooperation on capacity-building in the field of participatory community development and technical assistance.
12. While the project is at a stage that is too early to monitor long-term impact, the qualitative analysis of the stakeholder survey and the validation of ESCWA guidelines on “Local Community Development (LCD) approach” and “Participatory Action Research in the ESCWA region” in the above-mentioned expert group meeting have strongly identified the need for using the success of the LCD approach to sensitize policymakers in moving the social agenda forward. Moreover, it identified the need for further analysis of civic participation in public policy processes both in terms of learning about Government policy plans and making their opinions heard, and in providing input to decision-making and identifying policy gaps at the national level.

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

13. Under this subprogramme, ESCWA led the following two projects:

(a) Knowledge networks through ICT access points in disadvantaged communities (carried over from the fifth tranche);

(b) Regional harmonization of cyberlegislation to promote the knowledge society in the Arab world (sixth tranche).

14. The first of those two projects aims to empower poor and disadvantaged communities through the transformation of existing ICT access points in selected countries across the world into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks. The project also aims to increase engagement of target beneficiaries in disadvantaged communities in these knowledge networks. This involvement will serve to deploy relevant knowledge pertaining to key areas of sustainable development, including employment, education, gender and health.

15. During the 2008-2009 biennium, the following major activities were undertaken:

(a) Participating regional commissions contracted one global knowledge manager and four regional knowledge managers, who designed and developed the Knowledge Strategy that contains guidelines for the transformation of ICT access points into knowledge hubs and the establishment of regional and global knowledge networks;

(b) The ESCWA Knowledge Network was designed in 2008 and implemented in 2009. It currently includes telecentres from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Its future expansion is planned to take place in 2010;

(c) During the last quarter of 2008, ESCWA developed the Knowledge Networks' Portal of the ESCWA region. Its specifications were based on the requirements set forth in the above-mentioned Knowledge Strategy. The portal emphasizes cooperation and enhances the networking capabilities of access points;

(d) A workshop on knowledge sharing and networking, which took place in December 2008 at the United Nations House in Beirut, focused on training telecentre managers of selected access points from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen on the use of the Knowledge Networks' Portal of the ESCWA region and the adoption of a strategy that facilitated the future transformation of ICT access points into knowledge hubs;

(e) ESCWA, in association with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology in Jordan, World Links Arab Region, telecentre.org and Egypt ICT Trust Fund, co-organized the Telecentre Leaders' Forum (TLF), which took place in Amman during July 2009. This Forum aimed at building functional relationships that could lead to the foundation of new telecentre networks or the strengthening of existing ones;

(f) High technology sectors do not flourish if they are left to market forces alone. In order to prosper, these sectors need a proactive and favourable environment which, in turn requires the creation and maintenance of a reliable legal and regulatory framework. The second project, entitled "Regional harmonization of cyber legislation to promote the knowledge society in the Arab world", aimed to enhance regional integration and strengthen the capacity of member countries in order to develop the information society and build a strong and sustainable ICT sector by developing appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks;

(g) The implementation of this project began in May 2009 with preparatory studies for the regional harmonization of cyber legislation. Four consultancy contracts on the status update of cyber legislation for four subregions of the Arab region were prepared. Moreover, the Guidelines and Directives for the Regional Harmonization of Cyber legislation will highlight the essential role cyber legislation plays in building the Information Society and will suggest directives that could lead to harmonization of legislation in that area for the ESCWA region;

(h) In addition, ESCWA established a steering committee for the project to advise and follow up on its implementation. The first steering committee meeting was held in Beirut on 16 December 2009.

III. SUBPROGRAMME 5. STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

16. Under this subprogramme, ESCWA undertook the following two projects:

(a) Strengthening the development of international merchandise trade statistics and the compilation of e-commerce in member countries of the ESCWA;

(b) Strengthening national capacities in environment statistics, indicators and accounts in support of progress toward achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the ESCWA and ECLAC regions.

17. The first of those two projects aims to enhance the capacities of ESCWA member countries to collect, process, analyse and disseminate trade data in order to strengthen the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of national plans and policies, including those in the context of international and regional trade negotiations. This includes refining the methodologies of compilation, processing and dissemination of trade data, improving the coverage and the quality of trade data collected and promoting the knowledge of the standard concepts and definitions.

18. During the 2008-2009 biennium, the following major activities were carried out:

(a) ESCWA organized in coordination with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) the third workshop in the project on data quality and external trade indices in Cairo, 12-15 June 2008;

(b) The fourth workshop on trade indices and data dissemination was organized by ESCWA in coordination with MEDSTAT II in Rome, 2009;

(c) The fifth workshop on e-commerce and external trade indicators was organized in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 March to 1 April 2009, on measurement of e-commerce, especially with respect to international trade;

(d) An ESCWA trade database was created for International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) data for Arab countries and an electronic link was established between UN Comtrade database and the ESCWA comtrade database;

(e) A training session on external trade indices was conducted in Beirut, 14-16 December 2009.

19. The aim of the second project, entitled “Strengthening national capacities in environment statistics, indicators and accounts in support of progress toward achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the ESCWA and ECLAC regions” is to enhance the national capacities of ESCWA member countries in environment statistics, indicators and accounts in order to integrate environmental concerns into economic development by taking advantage of an integrated environmental statistical system approach (IESS) in support of progress towards achieving national and internationally agreed development goals.

20. Project accomplishments during the 2008-2009 biennium included the following:

(a) ESCWA, UNSD, MEDSTAT and ECLAC further strengthened their partnerships to implement the planned activities and prepare for training material jointly, which is now available in Spanish and in Arabic. The joint work was conveyed to the international World Water Forum (Istanbul, Turkey, 20-21 March 2009). UNSD organized Topic 6.4 Data for All aimed at sharing results and lessons learned from water and environmental accounting. Delegates from Mexico, Lebanon and Jordan presented their experience in developing pilot water accounts;

(b) ESCWA conducted, in collaboration with partners, two subregional meetings, five missions in ESCWA countries and three study visits in 2008 and the Expert Group Meeting on Environmental Accounting for the ESCWA Region in 2009 to set guidelines and provide recommendations on methodological documents on integrated environmental statistical systems;

(c) Technical assistance missions were proven to be very important for the countries to develop environment statistics and accounts and to fill data gaps and design a work plan for implementation. ESCWA conducted a mission to the United Arab Emirates in order to deliver a training workshop on environment statistics during 8-12 March 2009 in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy in the United Arab Emirates and with the participation of 20 national stakeholders from other ministries, the private sector and NGOs. Additional missions to Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan were planned to assist countries in complementing monetary accounts to physical water accounts;

(d) Given the priority of climate change and the relation between energy and environment statistics in that regard, ESCWA offered a mission to the Sudan in September 2009 to assist the Ministry of Petroleum and the Statistical Office in compiling energy data and relating energy and environment. ESCWA, in collaboration with UNSD, also provided fellowships to statistical offices and ministries of energy from three countries, namely, Lebanon, the Sudan and Yemen, in order to receive training in Turkey on compiling monthly data on oil statistics where information on oil production and consumption is required to estimate carbon dioxide emissions;

(e) ESCWA also developed a database with modules on environment, water and energy statistics. In addition, ESCWA continued to promote the project by managing the network and the database on the Environment Statistics, Indicators and Accounts Project (ESIAP) website (which can be accessed at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/esiap/>). New network members are consulting the database and are exchanging ideas and discussing issues in the field of environment statistics and accounts;

(f) Several publications were issued by ESCWA, namely: "Manual on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEAW). Part I (in Arabic); "General and specific surveys to compile data on water accounts in Arab countries" (in Arabic); "Framework for environmental economic accounting for ESCWA"; and "Environmental expenditures in Jordan" (in Arabic).

IV. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

21. DA projects that were executed by ESCWA in 2008-2009 demonstrated several successful practices and generated useful lessons. One such example was the project, entitled "Strengthening the development of international merchandise trade statistics and the compilation of e-commerce in member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia". Within that context, the report of an external evaluator highlighted the significance of involving other international entities in the project in areas where they made meaningful contributions, such as UNSD and MEDSTAT. Specifically, experts from these entities contributed significantly to the accomplishment of the objectives of the project, including by linking national trade database to regional trade database and co-organizing a workshop on trade indices and data dissemination. Organizing activities jointly with project partners created synergies and delivered better coordinated capacity-building activities.

22. The project, entitled “Strengthening national capacities in environment statistics, indicators and accounts in support of progress toward achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the ESCWA and ECLAC regions”, also established important partnerships with various regional entities, including UNEP/ROWA, UNEP/ROLAC, MEDSTAT and UNSD. The impact of established partnerships was highly significant at the financial and substantive levels. At the financial level, sharing expenses allowed for the means to invite more experts and delegates from ministries of water and environment, while accumulating savings that could be redirected for other activities.

23. The main lessons learned from the project on “Participatory human development in post-conflict countries in the ESCWA region” included the importance of investing in broad-based consultations with partners, securing political commitment and high-level buy-in, thereby getting the analysis and diagnostics right and setting in place appropriate monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for the diverse activities of the project. Cooperation with the League of Arab States was also pivotal in terms of increasing geographical impact and harmonization, thereby leading to an increase in the project’s impact. Incorporating the insights of experts and the needs identified by ESCWA member countries contributed to the quality of the activities, thereby lending legitimacy. Moreover, it was proved that engaging national coordinators in the preparation of stakeholder analysis was constructive in terms of ensuring the timely implementation of country-based surveys and of maximizing its outcomes. It was also proved that devising proper templates and well-defined questionnaires for candidacy was crucial in order to ensure an equitable, gender-based and objective selection of beneficiaries. Finally, it was concluded that encouraging targeted countries to move away from isolated sectoral interventions towards promoting an integrated and participatory social development approach represents a long process that requires both time and extensive advocacy to show concrete results in the four targeted countries as well as in the wider ESCWA region.

24. In order to enhance the implementation of DA projects, occasional revisions are recommended in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness as well as to address challenges and constrains. It is acceptable to adjust activities and even expected accomplishments if the change facilitates implementation. It is important that such assessments need to be undertaken by external independent evaluators.

25. DA projects contribute to enhancing the quality of ESCWA deliverables and their impact, and offer an excellent opportunity for strengthening outreach at both interregional and international levels, thereby expanding opportunities for South-South cooperation, the sharing of experiences and maintaining project ownership, all of which are facilitated by the use of various information technology tools. Such cooperation is challenging, however, especially in the context of maintaining effective collaboration and coordination between the various stakeholders and beneficiaries. While modern technology offers various tools for coordination, there is no substitute for face-to-face consultations. Difficulties in communication and effective negotiations have been encountered by interregional DA projects. Nevertheless, this global approach is an essential and positive feature of the DA projects given that it offers opportunities for South-South cooperation and encourages wide sharing of experiences and ownership of projects.

26. ESCWA must continue to undertake a proactive approach to mobilize resources in order to implement development projects and programmes in line with priority areas and the comparative advantage of ESCWA, and complement activities initiated under the DA. This could provide an excellent opportunity to scale up impact of ESCWA activities according to shared goals and objectives as well as enhance synergies.
