



UNITED NATIONS

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ESCWA

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region

Implementation and Monitoring

Internal governance

The 2030 Agenda Unit is leading efforts and will also monitor project implementation. Cooperation between the different ESCWA divisions will be coordinated through the 2030 Agenda Steering Committee.

Partnerships

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the League of Arab States are the main partners.

Timeline

The project will be implemented from 2016 to 2019.

Sustainability

The project is funded through the regular budget of ESCWA. The tools produced will be made available to all member States, which will receive training in using them for their national plans.

Evaluation

An independent evaluation will be carried out upon the completion of the project.

**Estimated four-year budget:
\$3 million**

Background

In September 2015, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since then, United Nations Member States have been engaged in the process of adapting the Agenda to their specific contexts and integrating it into their national development frameworks, action plans and budgets.

Arab countries, which have also embarked on that new development path, are currently experiencing severe crises, including dramatic surges of conflict, violence and terrorism, and rising numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Injustice and inequality persist, with mounting frustration over unemployment and high poverty rates, while access to the scarce and overexploited natural resources remains unequal. In a globalized world, countries do not suffer alone; troubles spread into neighbouring ones. Solidarity is thus essential in tackling these issues.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has designed the project on Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region to formulate an integrated approach to the SDGs relevant to the region and develop tools for operationalizing it in national development policy planning. Regional consultations will be held to agree on priority areas for cooperation and devise common strategies and actions plans.

Development Challenges in the Arab Region

Human development in the Arab region has been far from dismal. There has been a steady rise in human capabilities, especially among young people and women, reflected in most national and regional Millennium Development Goal indicators on health and education. Nevertheless, the first Arab Human Development Report, published in 2002, highlighted deficits in freedom, gender equality and knowledge. A number of other United Nations reports have also highlighted such problems as food insecurity, skewed income distribution, social exclusion, fragile and oil-led economic growth, high unemployment, weak trade and industrial performance, and slow development progress in Arab least developed countries.

All these issues have contributed to bringing the region to a boiling point in late 2010. The quality of social services in non-oil middle-income countries has deteriorated rapidly since liberalization began in earnest in the 1990s. Governance indicators are extremely poor. Democracy deficits are compounded by profound gender inequality, particularly in political and economic participation. Opportunities for decent employment are limited, despite rising education levels and relatively high growth rates between 1990 and 2010.



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

Human Rights and Gender Considerations

In recognition of the centrality of human rights to the 2030 Agenda, all expected accomplishments of the project will take the **realization of human rights as a starting point** and seek to reinforce the capacities of both duty bearers and rights holders in that regard.

Special attention will be given to **the specific needs of women and men** and to **gender** issues throughout the project.

Sustainable development is bound to justice, which is, in turn, **grounded in freedoms**. The peoples of the region must be **free from occupation, repression, inequity and violence**.

The **absence of justice** alas **remains a common feature across the region**; it prevents people from achieving their potential **and impedes nations from realizing growth and prosperity**. It fosters extremism and sectarianism, encouraging the recourse to violence. Arab conflict-affected countries need to **bring violence and human suffering to an end and address the root causes of conflicts**.

Urgent humanitarian needs should be met and the seeds of reform and future development should be planted.

Project Description

1. An integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs and targets are intertwined. If countries ignore the links between them, they risk undermining their ability to reach the targets. They will achieve the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda only by adopting mutually reinforcing actions that maximize synergies, minimize trade-offs and optimize the use of resources and funding. In an effort to identify the nature and dynamics of these links and interactions, ESCWA has set three priority clusters to address some of the most urgent challenges in the Arab region:

1. **The water–energy–food security nexus**
2. **The poverty–decent work–sustainable growth nexus**
3. **The equality–inclusion–justice Nexus**

The aim of such clustering is to highlight the practical benefits that an interdependent approach to SDGs can offer, for example in terms of integrated planning and decision-making, and efficient allocation of resources between competing needs. These three clusters are not exhaustive, but have been chosen for their relevance to key issues facing the region. The nexus approach will primarily benefit planning at the national level, but it also has an important regional dimension, in that it allows for exploring the interdependency between neighbouring countries, especially for identifying the areas of positive or negative spillovers.

2. Priority issues in the Arab region

ESCWA will build on the outcomes of the 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and facilitate further dialogue between Governments, civil society and the private sector on the issues outlined above. The purpose of this dialogue is to identify a list of priority issues in the region, produce indicators to measure development progress in those issues, and provide a forum for sharing experiences and solutions.

3. Commitment for joint action

Countries in a given region share development challenges and opportunities that can be addressed more efficiently through regional collective action. Identifying key shared priorities provides a foundation for the development of regional public goods and helps to mobilize commitment for joint action. Regional public goods are goods, services or resources that are produced and consumed collectively, mainly through the public sector of at least three countries.

ESCWA will work with its member States to formulate regional strategies and action plans for addressing regional priorities, measuring progress in meeting the associated SDG targets, and establishing regional mechanisms for mobilizing financing and facilitating technology transfer. ESCWA will build on its experience in common issues such as the Arab customs union, the mapping of shared water resources and the multi-dimensional regional poverty index.