Project on:
“Strengthening capacities of civil servants and development practitioners on the management and prevention of transboundary threats to national development trajectories”

1. Context and Objectives

Context

ESCWA’s subprogramme 7, Division for Emerging and Conflict Related Issues (ECRI), aims to address development and institutional challenges associated with ongoing conflict and transformations in the Arab region. Within this mandate, ECRI is undertaking a project aimed at advancing risk planning, management and prevention of transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability by improving capacity among senior civil servants for risk conscious development planning and implementation. The project will deliver a methodology, manual and training (for civil servants) to conduct such assessments, and consequently advance public administration’s capacity in risk management and prevention.

This project is intended to provide a regional public good by helping member states allocate resources more efficiently, take steps for prevention and mitigation, and prioritize the people and assets that are most exposed—and thereby support the attainment of their sustainable development targets on schedule.

The Arab region is undergoing profound transformations due to social, economic, environmental and governance factors, as well as from violent conflict, humanitarian crisis, and political instability. Furthermore, the Arab region does not have an effective security and economic cooperation framework, and this while transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability threaten (national) social and economic development trajectories undermining the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. ESCWA and partners should fill this void.

Objective

The overarching objective of this project is to strengthen the capacities of civil servants and development practitioners for the management and prevention of transboundary threats to national development trajectories, including the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. For countries to reach their development targets, policymakers and stakeholders must understand the current and future drivers of hazard and vulnerability so that they can tailor their social, economic, environmental and governance policies to enhance prevention, mitigation, resilience, and response. Understanding risks—defined here as a combination of the probability of an adverse outcome and the potential impact of that outcome—is the first step in addressing those risks. In that regard, ESCWA and the partner in addition to other partners within and outside the UN system, will cooperate to produce a series of technical papers, studies and manuals for constructing a risk assessment methodology that draws on qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The project will also establish and support a biannual regional technical dialogue platform, which will be reinforced by regularly updated risk assessments with the aim of construing policy options to manage, mitigate and prevent transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability that impact national SDG attainment. The periodic risk analysis is well placed to support decision making as well as UN Common Country Analysis.
Ultimately, this project is intended to provide a regional public good by helping member states allocate resources more efficiently, take steps for prevention and mitigation, and prioritize the people and assets that are most exposed—and thereby support the attainment of their sustainable development targets on schedule.

3. Proposed Activities

The partner will co-develop and implement several activities that serve to develop and implement a risk assessment of transboundary (conflict and non-conflict) threats to development. The assessment will serve to strengthen the capacity of development practitioners to manage and prevent risk that threatens development through a risk assessment methodology that draws on quantitative and qualitative methodologies. These methodologies must be transferable and translatable to civil servants and/or development practitioners of ESCWA member states/multilateral organizations. Furthermore, the regular update of risks will support a regional technical dialogue among ESCWA member states, which is aimed at advancing regional cooperation on addressing regional threats to national development trajectories, including the attainment of the SDGs. The regular risk assessment will also support the UN Resident Coordinators’ Common Country Assessments. The partner will produce technical papers, flagship publications and co-host expert group meetings that will lead to a risk assessment methodology and a capacity-building module for development practitioners and decision makers, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and its translation into policy action.

In particular, the partner will be responsible for implementing the following:

- Forecasting Transboundary Risks to Development (including forced displacement, climate change, food insecurity and water scarcity) and adopting the Views model to the Arab region.

- Mapping of geospatial data sets of RICCAR with geospatial data sets on conflict.

- Analyses water-food security, climate change and conflict trends in the Arab region, in that regard produce three technical papers on water and conflict trends; food security and conflict trends and climate change and conflict. The technical papers are individually to focus on the Arab region and explore the causality of conflict, driver of instability and war. The papers should be publishable and illustrative for the policy maker, and to include mitigation strategies as well as best practices.

- Develop risk assessment tool: Climate change, water/food security as a transboundary threat to development/peace. Risk assessment to include: Forecasting model based on the outputs mentioned above. This, in addition to develop and implement a qualitative approach to be utilized to regularly monitor risks of instability associated with climate change, food security and water scarcity.