

ESCWA Information Sheet

Date established : 1974

Mission, Core Functions and Comparative Advantage To promote economic and social development in the West Asia region by fostering cooperation and integration between the members. The internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide the overarching objective for ESCWA. As a regional commission, ESCWA provides the link between national and global work of the Organization by providing regional support to national development needs and regional inputs to the global agenda. It promotes knowledge sharing, replication of good practices and south-south cooperation.

ESCWA work focus on the following substantive focal areas:

- Sustainable management of natural resources (water/Energy)
- Technology, especially Information and communication technology
- Regional integration/trade, transport and finance
- Social policies
- Advancement of women
- Statistics
- Post-conflict recovery, rehabilitation and development
- Economic analysis and forecasting
- Productivity and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises

ESCWA fulfils its mandate by undertaking a combination of normative, analytical and operational activities in its mandated areas of work. Technical assistance is focused on improving the capacity of countries through policy advice and capacity-building activities through advisory services, technical cooperation projects and workshops and training courses, to individual countries or at a regional/sub-regional level.

Specific Area of Technical Assistance: ESCWA provides technical assistance for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Specifically it provides technical assistance in the following areas:

Efficient management of energy and water resources: Strengthening the capacity for the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. This includes:

(i) Strengthening the capacity for trans-boundary water cooperation and management, the use of Integrated water resources Management for the efficient management of the scarce water resources in the region, water quality and other issues; (ii) Strengthening the capacity for increasing the efficient use of energy resources; and, (iii) Improving national environmental governance through the development of strategies, plans and legislation and the adoption of environmental impact assessment.

Promoting social policies: Strengthening the capacity in the adoption of social policies with emphasis on socially inclusive policymaking to include youth, vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, women and older persons. ESCWA is advocating the adoption of coherent and integrated social policies to enhance social equity.

Stimulating globalization, economic development and integration: Building the capacity in (i) Developing trans-boundary flows of goods and services; (ii) Enhancing negotiation and accession skills for the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other trade agreements; Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus that emanated from the Financing for Development Conference; and (iii) Assisting the countries to better manage challenges posed and opportunities offered by globalization.

Harnessing Information and communication technologies (ICT) for development: Support the countries in reducing the digital divide in the ESCWA region to achieve the MDGs and the establishment of an information society and knowledge-based economy. Emphasis is put on the development of ICT policies and strategies in development programmes and the implementation of the recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society (phases I and II)

Developing statistical capacities: Developing the capacities to have reliable, timely and harmonized statistics for the use of policy-makers and for monitoring the achievement of the MDGs.

Empowering women: Assisting the countries in the formulation of policies that reduce gender disparities and improve the participation in contribution of women in the development process. Technical assistance also focuses on providing assistance in monitoring the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) and in the implementation of Beijing +10.

Assisting conflict-stricken countries: ESCWA assists conflict-stricken countries, namely Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, in developing mechanisms and tools to reduce the impact of conflict on development, mainly through employment creation in small and medium enterprises, rehabilitation of management skills, networking academies (in Iraq), and better governance through increased participation of civil society institutions and the private sector .

Governance structure: ESCWA is composed of 13 member countries (and two Arab countries with observer status).

The Ministerial Commission meets once every two years, in even years, with the next session scheduled in April/May 2008.

Location: Regional Office in Beirut, Lebanon.

Staff: 226, of which 36% Professional and 64% General Service, all of the staff are located at the regional office in Beirut.

Programming mechanism: Central/thematic, every biennium, 2008-2009, 2010-2011 etc.

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