

T. Strengthening statistical capacity in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia)

Objectives

202. The project's objective is to strengthen national statistical systems in the countries of the ESCWA region and to promote interregional cooperation among these systems.

Background

203. Statistics and indicators are critical tools for countries in policy-making and for socio-economic planning. They are needed for assessment of the current situation to set objectives for the future, and to measure progress and development. The Economic and Social Council has recognized the importance of statistics and indicators in the context of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, and, in its resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/29, stressed the importance of relevant, accurate, and timely statistics and indicators for evaluating the implementation of the outcome of the recent international conferences.
204. A substantial gap still exists between the demand for information and the ability of most countries to routinely supply this information, both in terms of the availability and the quality of data. Most countries still need national and international support to strengthen statistical capacity-building and to make progress in the development of relevant statistics and indicators. In stressing the importance of statistics, the Economic and Social Council has reaffirmed the importance of statistical training and has urged United Nations organizations, including the Secretariat, to mobilize the required resources and coordinate their efforts to support national statistical capacity-building in developing countries.
205. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has provided assistance to Member States for many decades and has, over the years, accumulated the technical and managerial expertise required to implement the proposed project. Many guidelines, handbooks and other technical notes have been developed by the Statistics Division, which can be used as reference material for training sessions and regional coordination.
206. The project complements two statistical development projects implemented in the Caribbean countries and in the region of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) funded under the first and second tranches of the Development Account. The present project will draw from the experience gained and the lessons learned during the implementation and take advantage of technical material developed for training activities within these two projects.
207. The project will be executed by the Statistics Division in collaboration with the Statistics Division of ESCWA.

Relationship to the medium-term plan

208. The proposal is consistent with the scope and priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, under subprogramme 7.5 (Statistics) of programme 7 (Economic and social affairs) and under subprogramme 18.5 (Development, coordination and harmonization of statistics) of programme 18 (Economic and social development in Western Asia).

Expected accomplishments

209. The implementation of the project will result in:
- (a) Improved organization of the statistical systems and strengthened capacity of the countries in the region to develop and disseminate policies and practices;
 - (b) Development of common methodologies and classifications for the collection of data and common statistical priorities in areas such as economic and social statistics;
 - (c) Strengthened capacity of the countries to routinely produce statistical data in specific statistical areas such as the production of macroeconomic indicators and social statistics;
 - (d) Strengthened coordination and communication among countries;

- (e) Upgraded technological capacity to promote networking among statistical offices in the region;
- (f) Strengthened capacity of the Statistics Division of ESCWA in promoting regional statistical coordination.

Indicators of achievement

210. The proposed indicators include:
- (a) Development of and agreement reached on common code of principles for the dissemination and marketing of official statistics;
 - (b) Number of experts trained in and exchanged among national statistical offices in the region;
 - (c) Increased use of common questions in surveys/censuses, common statistical definitions and methodologies and common list of development indicators.

Duration

211. It is anticipated that the project will be carried out between 2002 and 2004.

Activities

212. The main activities of the project will include:
- (a) Three seminars for managers of statistical offices to develop a common regional approach to official statistics particularly related to the operation of statistical systems, dissemination, marketing and advocacy of official statistics. The seminars will include the introduction of a handbook on statistical operations developed by the Statistics Division and an exchange of information on the problems and the successes experienced by the countries of the region. Issues related to the implementation of regional strategies at country level will also be addressed;
 - (b) Two expert group meetings on social statistics and macroeconomic indicators to exchange country experiences, develop common methodologies and identify common statistical priorities;
 - (c) Three training workshops for staff of national statistical offices to improve the technical capability of countries in the collection of social statistics, the production of macroeconomic indicators and the implementation of international classifications and methodologies. The workshops will facilitate the implementation of common methodologies and will establish a regional network of statisticians, which could support national statisticians in the implementation of their day-to-day work;
 - (d) Exchange of experts between statistical offices in the region for short periods of time to encourage the implementation of common methodologies and facilitate the exchange of information on statistical procedures (estimated 13 fellowships);
 - (e) Upgrading the information and communication technologies in national statistical offices in order to improve the electronic communications of statisticians and to support the electronic and printed dissemination of regional statistical data;
 - (f) Advisory services in the field of collection and dissemination of statistics and use and maintenance of technology (estimated 10 missions). Experts from the Statistical Division and the Statistical Division of ESCWA and subregional, regional and international consultants will provide technical support for the implementation of this project.

Resource requirements (in United States dollars)**Project T****Strengthening statistical capacity in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia)**

General temporary assistance. Provision of a regional coordinator to be located at ESCWA to assure implementation of daily ongoing activities and to serve as administrative focal point in the region (estimated at 20 work months at \$3,500 per month). (In support of activities (a) to (f).)	70 000
Expert services for developing training material, conducting training workshops and providing technical assistance to countries (estimated at 9 months at \$7,000 per month). (In support of activities (a), (b), (c), (f).)	63 000
Organization of two expert group meetings (13 country experts each) to develop common statistical methodologies (estimated at \$45,000 per meeting). (In support of activity (b).)	90 000
Organization of three expert group meetings of managers of statistical office (estimated at \$45,000 per meeting). (In support of activity (a).)	135 000
Travel of staff and technical advisers to provide technical and administrative support to the activities of the project (estimated at 10 missions at \$7,000 per mission). (In support of activity (f).)	70 000
General operating expenses for supplies, materials, printing of reports, reproduction, translation and interpretation during meetings and for other miscellaneous services, including translation into Arabic of statistical documents by technical experts and for interpretation during meetings. (In support of activities (a) to (f).)	66 000
Acquisition of equipment, both hardware and software, to upgrade technology with network servers, power supplies, desktop hardware components and Internet connectivity hardware. (In support of activity (e).)	100 000
Organization of three workshops (13 participants each meeting) to strengthen the existing expertise in areas such as trade and social statistics (estimated at \$45,000 per meeting). (In support of activity (c).)	135 000
Fellowships and study tours (1-month study by 13 experts at \$7,000 per expert). (In support of activity (d).)	91 000

Summary

General temporary assistance	70 000
Expert services	63 000
Ad hoc expert group meetings	225 000
Travel	70 000
Contractual services	66 000
Acquisition of equipment	100 000
Training	135 000
Grants, fellowships and contributions	91 000
Total	820 000