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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Statistical Committee  
Sixteenth session  
Manama, 22-23 October 2024

Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda

**Activities implemented in the field of statistics****Activities of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic  
and Social Statistics****Note by the ESCWA secretariat**

The secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia is referring to the Statistical Committee the report of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics on its fifth and sixth meetings, held on 7 and 8 March 2023 and on 3 and 4 July 2024, respectively.

The two meetings aimed to discuss the importance of providing and completing statistical data within the framework of the “project for the modernization of social statistics in the Arab region”, and addressed related topics such as the future of population censuses, civil registration and vital statistics, labour and refugee statistics, and statistical work in times of crisis.

The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of the present report and to discuss and adopt the recommendations therein.

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## **Introduction**

1. At its eleventh session, held in Amman on 4 and 5 February 2015, the Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted a recommendation to establish two advisory groups on economic and social statistics. Pursuant to that recommendation, the ESCWA secretariat established the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics, which held its first meeting in Tunisia, on 17 and 18 October 2016.
2. The present report provides the results of the two meetings convened by the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics since the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 16–17 November 2022), i.e. the fifth meeting held in Beirut and online on 7 and 8 March 2023, and the sixth meeting, held online on 3 and 4 July 2024, in cooperation with the League of Arab States.
3. The fifth meeting aimed to review and discuss the ESCWA project on "Supporting the promotion and modernization of demographic and social statistics in Arab countries", present the available data for core demographic and social indicators in the Arab countries, discuss the ESCWA electronic questionnaire on these indicators, propose solutions to bridge the data gap, discuss the results of the questionnaire on the availability and sources of labour force data, including surveys and/or relevant records, determine the coverage of data collection of core indicators and ways to disseminate them, and discuss national good practices and existing challenges. During the meeting, a summary of the ESCWA initiative on the classification of social classes in the Arab region was presented, in particular the conceptualization and measurement of the middle class. The meeting also included a review of the regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics, and called for the formulation and development of national strategies for strengthening civil registration and vital statistics.
4. The sixth meeting reviewed the core list of demographic and social indicators including those related to sustainable development indicators in Arab countries, discussed tools for collecting data for those indicators and formulated proposed solutions to bridge the data gap. Participants tackled the role of international organizations in providing statistical data, discussed an overview of migration statistics and reviewed developments in censuses, civil registration, vital statistics and statistical surveys, including in countries in difficulty.

## **I. Outcomes and recommendations**

### **A. Fifth meeting (Beirut and online, 7 and 8 March 2023)**

5. Participants in the fifth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics agreed on a set of outcomes. They issued the following recommendations on the expected activities of national statistical offices and ESCWA.

#### *1. Recommendations to national statistical offices*

- (a) Intensify cooperation and coordination between national statistical offices and data producers within the national statistical system, and relevant regional and international institutions to complete the necessary data series and calculate estimates (in the absence of data);
- (b) Welcome ESCWA estimates and calculations of missing data to fill gaps in the data time series of some indicators, with the need to consult with statistical offices, and present the methodologies used to estimate data wherever they are received and ensure their adoption by statistical offices;
- (c) Welcome the use of a special electronic platform to complete the ESCWA questionnaire for the periodic collection and exchange of statistical data online from countries and national statistical offices to incorporate such data in ESCWA databases and disseminate them;

- (d) Eliminate 36 indicators that do not respond to national statistical offices' continuous updating needs, stressing that their removal from the list does not in any way negate their importance and the need to provide them within the national statistical system, and highlighting the importance of ESCWA support in working on them;
- (e) Attach the utmost importance to providing ESCWA with the required data for the agreed core list of indicators, through the approved mechanism and through statistical offices in accordance with national procedures;
- (f) Ensure that indicators cover all resident populations, including refugees and migrants, and disaggregate data, where possible, to obtain an accurate description of the entire population, by gender, age, geographical location, disability status, income, etc.;
- (g) Intensify efforts to integrate and use international standard definitions with a view to producing high-quality comparable indicators;
- (h) Work on the formulation of national action plans using the ESCWA regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics (2021–2025) to achieve progress in this area;
- (i) Benefit from the ESCWA study on measuring the middle class using labour force surveys and other data sources, and examine technical needs for statistics in this area;
- (j) Continue to encourage the exchange of expertise and experiences among countries in the production of demographic and social indicators.

## *2. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat*

- (a) Send a copy of the amended electronic questionnaire to the members of the Committee for follow-up with the concerned stakeholders in statistical offices and with the components of the national statistical system to ensure that the questionnaire is completed within the specified time period;
- (b) Strengthen cooperation and coordination with specialized agencies and international and regional organizations to consolidate efforts, reduce duplication of activities and validate work methodologies, where applicable;
- (c) Organize trainings and workshops for national statistical capacity development as requested by Arab countries, including in areas of population projections and estimates at the local level, particularly in countries facing crises that are not conducive to the implementation of official statistical activities, and provide capacity-building in the area of middle-class measurement;
- (d) Consider the possibility of preparing a study on national good practices and challenges related to the provision of labour force statistics in Arab countries;
- (e) In addition to the official correspondence, consider the possibility of engaging representatives of member States of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics in updating the demographic and social data and statistics that statistical offices are required to provide to ESCWA;
- (f) Adopt the regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics (2021–2025) and follow up on national progress in this regard, including assisting in the formulation of national or subregional action plans, discussing difficulties and obstacles facing stakeholders and ways to overcome them, and identifying ways forward.

## **B. Sixth meeting (online, 3 and 4 July 2024)**

6. Participants in the sixth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics agreed on a set of outcomes. They issued the following recommendations on the expected activities of national statistical offices and ESCWA.

### 1. *Recommendations to national statistical offices*

(a) Intensify cooperation and coordination between statistical offices and data producers within the national statistical system, and relevant regional and international institutions to complete the necessary data series and calculate estimates by national statistical offices in coordination with specialized international organizations involved in calculating indicators, and produce data according to the agreed and approved methodology (in the absence of data);

(b) Continue to update data on the special electronic platform to complete the ESCWA questionnaire for the periodic collection and exchange of statistical data online from countries and national statistical offices to incorporate such data in ESCWA databases and disseminate them;

(c) Attach the utmost importance to providing ESCWA with the required data for the agreed core list of indicators, through the approved mechanism and through statistical offices in accordance with national procedures;

(d) Ensure that indicators cover all resident populations, including refugees and migrants by nationality, and disaggregate data, where possible, to obtain an accurate description of the entire population, by gender, age, geographical location, disability status and income;

(e) Intensify efforts to integrate and use international standard definitions with a view to producing high-quality comparable indicators;

(f) Continue the formulation of national action plans using the ESCWA regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics (2021–2025) to achieve progress in this area and build on the framework until 2030;

(g) Consolidate and coordinate efforts in the development of statistical capacities for the production of demographic and social indicators;

(h) Continue to conduct and document censuses, exchange expertise, participate in the proposed working groups for the implementation of the 2030 census round and present updates on census implementation methods;

(i) Intensify joint statistical work between countries facing crises, promote the exchange of good practices between them, and provide them with advice and technical support.

### 2. *Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat*

(a) Continue to coordinate regional and national efforts to collect data from questionnaires, provide support to reduce the data gap upon request, and take advantage of global events to update and partially disseminate data through regional press releases;

(b) Strengthen cooperation and coordination with the League of Arab States, specialized agencies and international and regional organizations to consolidate efforts and reduce duplication of activities, develop statistical capacity-development programmes that include training programmes, workshops and technical support activities, and validate work methodologies, where applicable;

(c) Continue to organize trainings and workshops for national statistical capacity development, as requested by Arab countries in various areas, including population projections and estimates, the use of administrative records for statistical purposes, and income and expenditure at the local level, especially in countries facing crises that hinder the implementation of official statistical activities;

(d) Extend the regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics for Arab countries until 2030 in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, continue to implement the framework guidelines and assess progress, and strengthen the coordination of the regional working group for civil registration;

(e) Adopt the recommendations emanating from the regional workshop on the mid-term review of the regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics (2021–2025);

(f) Serve as a secretariat in following up on the activities of the proposed population and housing census working group for Arab countries that will be chaired by one country in the 2030 census round, and establish a small working group for countries implementing a combined census in the next three years, defining its tasks to coordinate joint regional action during the 2030 census round (and assist in the search for census funding for low-income countries, whenever possible);

(g) Serve as a secretariat in following up on the activities of the statistical support working group for countries facing instability;

(h) Support the reconstruction of post-conflict statistical systems and ensure business continuity and data flow within statistical systems in countries facing conflict and humanitarian crises.

## **II. Organization of work**

### **A. Participants in the fifth meeting (Beirut and online, 7 and 8 March 2023)**

7. The fifth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics in Arab countries was attended by 22 participants with practical and applied experience in demographic and social statistics in national statistical offices from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. The meeting was also attended by experts representing the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the Regional Office for Arab States of the United Nations Population Fund, the Gulf Cooperation Council Statistical Centre, in addition to ESCWA experts. The list of participants is set out in the annex to the present report.

### **B. Participants in the sixth meeting (online, 3 and 4 July 2024)**

8. The sixth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics in Arab countries was attended by 38 participants with practical and applied experience in demographic and social statistics in national statistical offices from the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The meeting was also attended by experts representing the League of Arab States, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Gulf Cooperation Council Statistical Centre, in addition to ESCWA experts. The list of participants is set out in the annex to the present report.

### **C. Agenda of the fifth meeting**

9. Participants adopted the following agenda:

- Opening session:
  - Meeting objectives and agenda.
  - Overview of the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the fourth Advisory Group meeting.
- Project on "Supporting the promotion and modernization of demographic and social statistics in Arab countries".
- Data availability: an overview of data availability in the Arab region.
- Data gap:

- Possible solutions for data gaps.
- Revisiting the core list of indicators.
- Labour force statistics: an overview of labour force statistics in the Arab region.
- Experience of countries in labour force statistics:
  - Register-based statistics.
  - Survey-based statistics.
- Electronic questionnaire on social statistics and indicators: design and use.
- Regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics.
- Middle-class measurement using labour force surveys.
- Recommendations and closing statements.

#### **D. Agenda of the sixth meeting**

10. Participants adopted the following agenda:

- Opening session:
  - Meeting objectives and agenda.
  - Overview of the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the fifth Advisory Group meeting.
- The work of the Demographic and Social Statistics Section of ESCWA:
  - Supporting the promotion and modernization of demographic and social statistics in Arab countries.
  - Progress and the way forward.
- The future of censuses in the Arab region.
- Civil registration and vital statistics:
  - Regional strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics (2021–2025): progress and the way forward.
- Data availability:
  - Overview of data availability in the Arab region.
  - The role of international organizations in providing statistical data.
  - Revisiting the core list of indicators.
- Country experiences in collecting and producing the indicators of the unified Arab framework for sustainable development with a review of the most important difficulties facing Arab statistical offices in this process and proposed solutions.
- Asylum statistics:
  - Overview of the status of asylum and displacement statistics in the Arab region.
  - Statistical work in conflict: challenges and opportunities.
- Recommendations and closing statements.

**Annex\***

**List of participants in the fifth meeting**

**A. ESCWA member States**

Bahrain

Ms. Fatema Salem  
Senior Statistician

Ms. Dalal Jasim  
Statistician

Egypt

Mr. Mohamed Ahmed  
Director of the Department of Social Studies and  
Research  
Central Agency for Public Mobilization and  
Statistics

Iraq

Ms. Bushra Qadir  
Director of Population and Labour Force Statistics  
Central Bureau of Statistics

Jordan

Ms. Fedda Ananbeh  
Head of the Department of Population and Social  
Statistics  
Department of Statistics

Lebanon

Ms. Mayssaa Daher  
Math Statistician  
Central Administration of Statistics

Libya

Mr. Haitem Ben Taleb  
Director of the Department of Social and  
Demographic Statistics  
Bureau of Statistics and Census

Morocco

Ms. Nadia Lkhoulf  
Head of the Population Census and Vital Statistics  
Division  
High Commission for Planning

Oman

Mr. Hilal Al-Abri  
Acting Head of the Demographic Statistics Section  
National Centre for Statistics and Information

Mr. Hamad Al Dughaishi  
Head of the Special Groups and Community  
Participation Statistics Section  
National Centre for Statistics and Information

State of Palestine

Mr. Khaled Abu Khaled  
Acting Director General of Records and Statistical  
Control  
Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

Qatar

Mr. Mohamed Saeed Al-Mohannadi  
Director of the Statistics Department  
Planning and Statistics Authority

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Abdullah Al Daafas  
Statistician  
General Authority for Statistics

Mr. Hazzaa Al-Mutairi  
Director of Population Statistics  
General Authority for Statistics

Ms. Wijdan Al-Hadyani  
International Relations Officer  
General Authority for Statistics

Ms. Fatima Ghamdi  
International Relations Officer  
General Authority for Statistics

Ms. Maha Khalidi  
Chief Statistician  
General Authority for Statistics



Saudi Arabia (continued)

Mr. Nasser Al-Rajeh  
Chief Statistician  
General Authority for Statistics

Mr. Saad Al-Askar  
Head of International Partnerships  
General Authority for Statistics

Sudan

Ms. Amna Babiker  
Director of the Population and Social Statistics  
Directorate  
Central Bureau of Statistics

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Chadi Mouhanna  
Director of the Population and Social Statistics  
Directorate  
Central Bureau of Statistics

Tunisia

Ms. Dorra Dhraief  
Director of Demographic and Social Statistics  
National Institute of Statistics

**B. Regional and international organizations**World Health Organization

Ms. Solara Sinno  
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Ismail Lubbad  
Statistician

Ms. Irina Dinko  
Senior Technical Advisor

International Labour Organization

Ms. Grace Eid  
Labour Statistician

Gulf Cooperation Council Statistical Centre

Mr. Salah Nasser al Muzahmi  
Director of the Research and Development  
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Cluster

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Mr. Mohammad Al Abbas  
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## List of participants in the sixth meeting

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Technical Director of Population Statistics  
National Office of Statistics

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Ms. Sinan Ali Mohsen  
Director of Population and Demographic Statistics

Ms. Fatema Salem  
Head of Labour Force Statistics

Ms. Aisha Fakhro  
Senior Statistician

#### Djibouti

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Demographic Researcher  
National Institute of Statistics

#### Egypt

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General Director of Fertility and Population  
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Central Agency for Public Mobilization and  
Statistics

Ms. Wafaa Majed  
Central Agency for Public Mobilization and  
Statistics

Ms. Suhair Metwally  
Director General of the General Department of  
Family Research, Migration Data Analysis Unit  
Central Agency for Public Mobilization and  
Statistics

#### Iraq

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Director of Population and Labour Force Statistics  
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Head of the Department of Population and Social  
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Department of Statistics

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Head of Field Units and Sample Design Section  
Labour Controller  
Central Statistical Bureau

Ms. Mariam Al-Matouq  
Central Statistical Bureau  
Statistical Analyst

#### Lebanon

Ms. Mayssaa Daher  
Math Statistician  
Central Administration of Statistics

#### Libya

Ms. Nada Al-Baruni  
Head of the Demographic Statistics Section  
Bureau of Statistics and Census

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Mr. Salem bin Rashid Al-Jaafari  
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National Centre for Statistics and Information

Morocco

Ms. Nadia Lkhoulf  
Head of the Population Census and Vital Statistics  
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Oman

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Planning and Statistics Authority

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Ms. Wedad Al Madani  
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General Authority for Statistics

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Mr. Mohamed Abdi  
National Census Coordinator

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Director of the Population and Social Statistics  
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Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Chadi Mouhanna  
Director of the Population and Social Statistics  
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Ms. Houda Bouhlel  
Director of Demographic and Social Statistics  
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Yemen

Ms. Tauqir Yassin  
Director of Population and Vital Statistics

Ms. Asrar Haidara  
Director of the Department of Social Statistics  
Central Statistical Organization

Mr. Mohammed Saeed  
Director of the Vital Statistics Department  
Central Statistical Organization

## **B. Regional and international organizations**

### League of Arab States

Ms. Abir Al Jalahma  
Director of Statistics and Databases

Mr. Karim Mohamed Abdelilah  
Statistical Consultant

### Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics

Mr. Hadi Al-Saidi  
Director General

### World Health Organization

Ms. Iman Ali  
Technical Officer

### United Nations Children's Fund

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Data and Research Specialist  
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