

# Technical assistance

## *Tools for policymakers*

ESCWA assisted member States in measuring and tracking both monetary and multidimensional poverty, which are crucial steps toward reaching SDG targets 1.1 and 1.2. This support involved introducing new tools and methodologies for monitoring national multidimensional poverty indices (MPIs). In 2023, ESCWA applied its custom-developed MPI Assist Tool (MAT)<sup>1</sup>, a user-friendly platform enabling countries to develop MPI frameworks tailored to their specific challenges. Likewise, in the domain of monetary poverty, ESCWA is developing the Money-Metric Poverty Assist Tool (MPAT)<sup>2</sup> to allow users to calculate national and regional poverty across different income poverty thresholds. To further support policy solutions to reduce inequality, ESCWA launched the Inequality Solutions Portal<sup>3</sup>, which showcases examples from around the world of policies that have successfully reduced inequality in any of its forms.

## *Social Assistance Programmes*

Since the establishment of the Group of Experts on Social Protection Reforms (EGSPR) in the Arab Countries in 2019, following the recommendation of the 12th Session of Social Development (Beirut, 8-9 October 2019)<sup>4</sup>, ESCWA has actively supported efforts to enhance regional coordination and collaboration in social protection reform.

During 2023-2024, ESCWA convened two meetings for the EGSPR. The meeting in Beirut on 8 June 2023<sup>5</sup> showcased the ESCWA skills monitoring and job-matching tool, enhancing beneficiary analysis. This tool aids in identifying needed skills in the job market for effective job-skills matching, enabling managers of social assistance programs to pinpoint beneficiaries' upskilling requirements and customize job-matching initiatives.

The EGSPR meeting in Oman on 21-22 February 2024<sup>6</sup> highlighted various graduation programs aimed at sustainably lifting individuals and households receiving cash assistance out of poverty. These programs aim to gradually transition beneficiaries from social assistance programmes by integrating them into the labour market or supporting their involvement in small and micro-business ventures.

In this context, ESCWA facilitated peer exchange and knowledge sharing with Arab social protection policymakers, for example organizing presentations and discussions about Egypt's "Bab Amal" pilot test project as a successful case study of ultra-poor graduation. Beneficiaries in selected villages in marginalized regions received productive assets and tailored coaching sessions. This initiative aimed to enhance social assistance beneficiaries' access to productive assets and related business skills, thereby facilitating socioeconomic empowerment and poverty reduction.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/portals/mdpat>

<sup>2</sup> <https://moneymetrics.unescwa.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sdg16.plus/policy/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/report\\_-\\_twelfth\\_session\\_of\\_the\\_committee\\_on\\_social\\_development.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/report_-_twelfth_session_of_the_committee_on_social_development.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/events/eighth-meeting-group-experts-social-protection-reform>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/events/ninth-meeting-expert-group-social-protection-reform-arab-states>

## Poverty Monitoring and design of poverty reduction policies

ESCWA partnered with UN DESA and the League of Arab States (LAS) to organize a regional workshop on “Optimizing poverty reductions in Arab States: Measurement and tools to inform policies”<sup>7</sup> in Amman on 29-30 November 2023. Officials from the ministries of social affairs and planning and national statistics bureaus discussed best practices in setting national monetary poverty lines and using national MPIs to effectively inform policy strategies.

Building on the interest by member States generated in prior years, ESCWA accommodated several technical requests by member States for developing national MPIs and jointly developing poverty reduction strategies. From October 2023 onwards, ESCWA assisted the Governments of Somalia and Jordan to develop their first national MPI. ESCWA also supported the launch of the first Iraqi national MPI on 15 August 2023 and has subsequently partnered with the Ministry of Planning to develop an MPI-reduction optimization strategy, kickstarted in Baghdad on 29-30 January 2024 with an “Optimizing poverty reduction pathways in Iraq”<sup>8</sup> workshop. ESCWA has also supported the Government of Mauritania by partnering with the Ministry of Economy and Statistics Bureau (ANSADE) to design a national-MPI reduction optimization plan<sup>9</sup> which led to an agreement to advance the optimization models towards developing a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for Mauritania. ESCWA has also continued its support to Egypt to develop the first national MPI using the latest household survey data, and finalized a report slated for release in 2024.

ESCWA provided technical support to the National Aid Fund (NAF) in Jordan to review their graduation guidelines in 2022 and conduct beneficiaries’ professional and educational profile analyses with the requested soft and hard skills in the job market as analyzed through ESCWA Skills Monitor<sup>10</sup>. The report titled “Graduation through skills improvement and job matching” published by NAF on its official website<sup>11</sup> concluded with recommendations on how to improve the beneficiaries’ data collection surveys.

Additionally, ESCWA provided technical advice to national social protection policymakers in Jordan (MoSD, MoL, MoF etc.), aiming – amongst others – at including the ultra-poor graduation approach via transfers of productive assets and related business coaching into the updated national social protection reform strategy, expected to be finalized in January 2025.<sup>12</sup>

## Contributions to knowledge

ESCWA has embarked on assessing poverty worldwide to enhance the accuracy and comparability of poverty measurement. As part of this agenda, ESCWA published “Methodologies for assessing world poverty”<sup>13</sup> outlining the technical approaches to poverty assessment in the global perspective. This

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/events/optimizing-poverty-reductions-arab-countries>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/news/optimizing-poverty-reduction-using-multidimensional-poverty-index>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/events/optimizing-poverty-reduction-pathways-mauritania>

<sup>10</sup> <https://skillsmonitor.unescwa.org/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.naf.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/AR/EB\\_List\\_Page/NAF\\_Proposed\\_Graduation\\_Policy\\_Report-AR-\(07-03-2023\).pdf](https://www.naf.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_List_Page/NAF_Proposed_Graduation_Policy_Report-AR-(07-03-2023).pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [Social protection reform options in Jordan - United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia \(unescwa.org\)](https://www.unescwa.org/publications/social-protection-reform-options-in-jordan);

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/methodologies-world-poverty>

technical paper notes that economic growth in many world regions has not translated into significant poverty alleviation, with national growth often failing to trickle down to households.

In light of the lack of understanding of poverty in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, ESCWA has produced a technical report "Poverty in the GCC countries: 2010–2021"<sup>14</sup> and a policy brief "3.3 million GCC nationals living in poverty"<sup>15</sup>.

ESCWA also assessed poverty levels across the Arab region at large, in the "Arab Poverty Report"<sup>16</sup>. The report concludes that, regardless of the scenario considered, the Arab region is unlikely to achieve SDG 1 targets by 2030.

ESCWA also contributed to knowledge of multidimensional poverty by bringing to publication a multi-year inter-agency flagship "Second Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report"<sup>17</sup>– in collaboration with the LAS, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Building on this Report, ESCWA undertook poverty-reduction optimization exercises in five Arab States (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania and Tunisia) to support the States' drives toward reducing multidimensional poverty<sup>18</sup>.

ESCWA also published a flagship report on the challenges faced by the Arab region's middle classes<sup>19</sup> and assessed the poverty and vulnerability experienced by the social middle class in three middle-income Arab countries<sup>20</sup>. Additionally, ESCWA released a technical paper "Social Protection and the Middle-class: Evidence from Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia"<sup>21</sup> examining the impact of recent economic reforms on social protection coverage among the middle class in these countries. ESCWA also organized an expert group meeting "The middle class in Arab countries" on 9-10 May 2023 in Beirut to evaluate its modeling and simulation techniques for poverty and middle-class measurement<sup>22</sup>.

At the national level, ESCWA examined Egypt's inequality and poverty experience over an extended period in a technical paper "Inequality in Egypt: facets and challenges"<sup>23</sup>. This paper assessed the long-term evolution of various dimensions of inequality, including monetary and multidimensional, and disparities in both outcomes and opportunities.

ESCWA's work also contributed to the global understanding of inequality measurement through the technical report "Inequality Projection for Poverty Analysis"<sup>24</sup>. This methodology holds particular

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/poverty-in-the-gcc-countries-2010%E2%80%932021#:~:text=Poverty%20in%20the%20GCC%20countries%20has%20declined%20since%202010%20%E2%80%93%20except,483%2C000%20Saudi%20nationals%20from%20poverty.>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.unescwa.org/publications/policy-reforms-lift-three-million-gcc-nationals-poverty#:~:text=3.3%20million%20Gulf%20Cooperation%20Council,\)%20of%20the%20countries'%20nationals.](https://www.unescwa.org/publications/policy-reforms-lift-three-million-gcc-nationals-poverty#:~:text=3.3%20million%20Gulf%20Cooperation%20Council,)%20of%20the%20countries'%20nationals.)

<sup>16</sup> E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/2023/10 (forthcoming)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/second-arab-multidimensional-poverty-report>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/policies-multidimensional-poverty-reduction-impact-simulation-optimizationon>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/middle-class-arab-countries>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/middle-class-arab-countries-working-paper-3.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/middle-class-arab-countries-working-paper-5.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/EGM9-10may23.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/inequality-egypt-facets-challenges>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/inequality-projection-poverty-analysis>

significance to countries facing data challenges, such as the low-income and conflict-affected countries in the Arab region.

ESCWA hosted the second Arab Forum for Equality<sup>25</sup> in Beirut on 6-7 June 2023, under the theme ‘One Voice... Equality in Food Security’. The forum was supported by the flagship publication ‘Inequality in the Arab Region: Food Insecurity Fuels Inequality’<sup>26</sup>, and brought together political leaders, concerned ministers, the private sector, experts, civil society organizations, and youth from the Arab region to address regional priorities to tackle inequality, review national and international experiences, and engage multi-stakeholders in a dialogue focused on practical solutions and policies to reduce inequality.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://afe-2023.unescwa.org/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://publications.unescwa.org/2023/iar-2023/index.html>