



ازدهار البلدان كرامة الإنسان



Expert Group Meeting – DA Project 15th Tranche

‘Dynamic simulators to address ranking deficiencies of international indices in the Arab region’

14-16 November 2023

Cairo, Egypt

Concept paper

Background

In 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) passed resolution 52/12 B, establishing the Development Account (DA). The main objective of projects under the DA is to strengthen the capabilities of developing countries in alignment with the priority areas of the United Nations Development Agenda.

Amidst the far-reaching impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Arab governments are currently confronting unparalleled challenges in facilitating a comprehensive recovery. The pandemic has exerted immense pressure on all sectors and has jeopardized the developmental progress made in areas such as economic growth, inequality, labor market, and political participation. To achieve a successful recovery, the ability of Arab governments to monitor, encourage, and support entrepreneurial innovation, productivity, and regional economic growth will be crucial. Additionally, their proficiency in harnessing new technologies to mitigate the pandemic's adverse effects and effectively stimulate recovery will play a pivotal role.

The specific DA project, titled 'Dynamic Simulators to Address Ranking Deficiencies of International Indices Platforms in the Arab Region,' pursues two main objectives:

- 1) **Strengthening Member States' Capacity:** This involves equipping member states with the necessary skills to utilize a range of international indices for assessing and monitoring performance, devising scenarios, identifying obstacles and priorities, and drawing insights from international best practices and experiences of other countries. This information will inform policy changes and reforms across various domains while also assessing the potential economic and social impacts of these measures.
- 2) **Building Technology Indicators and develop national policies in digital technologies and innovation:** The project aims to enhance the expertise of Arab nations in technology indicators and facilitate the development of national policies pertaining to digital technology and innovation.

The DA project endeavors to contribute significantly to the region's recovery efforts and pave the way for a more resilient and prosperous future.

During the meeting, ESCWA’s Financial Inclusiveness report will be launched. The methodology as well as the results of the audit performed by the experts will be shared with the participants for discussion.

Objectives

The main objectives of this expert group meeting are to:

- 1) Introduce Member States to the 'Index Simulator for Policy Makers in the Arab Region (ISPAR)' interactive platform, its functioning, and features.
- 2) Discuss the methodology used to develop a series of analytic tools that enhance policy design in terms of policy prioritization and optimization.
- 3) Explore options for developing a user-friendly interface to extend access to all public servants, particularly non-technicians, to engage and utilize these tools effectively by gathering field experts.
- 4) Launch ESCWA's Financial Inclusiveness Index.

This workshop aims to strengthen Member States' capacities in utilizing the ISPAR platform's features to create assessment documents with policy recommendations. By the end of the meeting, Member States will have generated a draft policy brief and gained familiarity with ESCWA's Financial Inclusiveness Index, which complements the existing series of indices on the ISPAR platform for comprehensive assessments.

Participants

This workshop aims to engage 20 representatives, with 1 experts from each of ESCWA Member States. The participants will include professionals from the Ministry of Economy and Planning, as well as ministry employees involved in economic and social development matters. These employees are drawn from various ministries such as the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Gender machinery, National Statistics Offices.

Date & Place

The three-days in-person expert group meeting will be held in Cairo, Egypt, on 14-16 November 2023.

Proposed Agenda

Day One: November 14, 2023	
09:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 10:15	Opening Ceremony Member State Representatives ESCWA representative Ahmed Al-Awah, Chief Technology Officer
10:15 – 10:30	Session I: Presentation of the DA project This session provides a general presentation of the DA project that will be followed by a Q&A session. Presenter: Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah, Chief Technology Officer
10:30 – 11:00	Session II: Introduction to the Indices Simulation Tool for Policy Makers in the Arab Region (ISPAR)

	<p>This session identifies the typical problems faced by Member States when using indices for policymaking, which the ISPAR project aims to address. It includes a comprehensive presentation of the ISPAR platform, an interactive simulation tool at the core of evidence-based policymaking. The session will also offer an overview of the dedicated country pages available on the platform.</p> <p>Presenters: Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
Step one: Understanding indices and their role in policy making	
11:30 – 12:00	<p>Session III: What is an Index?</p> <p>This session serves as a statistical refresher, focusing on good practices for index construction and the implications of discretionary decisions during the design and computation process. It covers outlier treatment, normalization options, and handling missing data. Additionally, experts will discuss key weaknesses that can undermine the potential of using indexes for policymaking.</p> <p>Presenters: Experts TBD</p>
12:00 – 13:00	<p>Session IV: Using indices for policymaking case study</p> <p>In this session, an expert or participant will share their experience of developing a policy brief with comprehensive analysis of different policy responses to a particular policymaking issue. They will focus on key aspects such as correlation analysis, thematic interlinkages, data availability, and other advanced analytical dimensions. The session will provide valuable insights into practical challenges and effective strategies in the policymaking process.</p> <p>Presenters: Experts TBD</p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
Step two: Facilitating the use of indices for policymaking using ISPAR	
14:00 – 14:45	<p>Session V: Introduction to ISPAR Simulators</p> <p>This session aims to demonstrate practical usage of ISPAR in crafting comprehensive policy packages for effective and efficient policies and reforms. Participants will review country performances on relevant international indices. Interactive exercises will help develop scenarios and policy packages to address challenges and opportunities collaboratively.</p> <p>Presenters: Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>
14:45 – 15:45	<p>Session VI: Advanced features of the ISPAR platform</p> <p>The aim of this session is to familiarize participants with the advanced features of the ISPAR platform tailored for policymaking. It will cover the methodology and demonstrate the optimal utilization of these tools in the policymaking process.</p> <p>Presenters: Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>
15:45 – 16:15	<p>Debrief and Reflection</p> <p>Debrief and reflection on how ISPAR enables the use of indices for policymaking.</p>

Day Two: November 15, 2023	
9:15 – 9:30	Review Previous Day Discussions
Step three: Developing a step-by-step guide for developing policy document using ISPAR	
9:30 – 10:00	<p>Session VII: Practical guidance on the use of ISPAR for policymaking Best practices for using ISPAR in developing policy documents using international indices will be thoroughly explored, and participants will benefit from a step-by-step guide provided during this session to design their policymaking project documents and optimize their policymaking process.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Presenters: Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Session VIII: Introduction to ISPAR Thematic Simulators The main aim of this session is to explore the interconnectedness among indices and how it can aid in identifying interactions across different Ministries, promoting collaboration among them. Through interactive exercises, participants will work together to develop diverse scenarios and policy packages that effectively address the challenges and opportunities arising from these interlinkages.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Presenters: Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
Step four: Thematic Ateliers – Hands on workshop	
11:30 – 13:00	<p>Session IX: Introduction to groups working During this session, participants will engage in group work to choose a policy issue and generate policy recommendations using the ISPAR platform. By the session's conclusion, each group will have selected a country and a policy issue, identified the most relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and indices for addressing the problem, conducted data quality assessments and simulations using ISPAR, and proposed the most pertinent policy recommendations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Moderators: The experts will guide the work of each group.</p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 16:00	<p>Session X: Tell your story During this session, each working group will have the opportunity to showcase their findings and policy recommendations. The experts who moderated the groups will actively engage with the presentations, providing valuable feedback and sharing best practices based on the group's work. This interactive exchange of ideas and expertise will foster a collaborative and enriching environment, allowing participants to gain deeper insights and refine their policy recommendations further. The constructive feedback from the experts will play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the proposed policies. It will also encourage knowledge sharing and peer learning among the participants, contributing to the overall success of the workshop.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Moderators: Member States and Experts</p>

16:00 – 16:15	Debrief and Reflection Debrief and reflection on the day’s activities.
Day Three: November 16, 2023	
Step five: Sharing ESCWA’s efforts towards greater financial inclusiveness	
9:15 – 9:30	Prior day activities review
9:30 – 10:30	Session XI: Data Considerations & Relevant Issues During this session, participants will delve into the critical aspects of data accuracy, availability, and timeliness challenges in index construction, which significantly influence policymaking. They will gain insights into ESCWA's proactive efforts to tackle these challenges, resulting in enhanced index credibility and reliability. By addressing these data-related issues, policymakers will be equipped with reliable information that can inform their decision-making processes effectively. The session will provide a platform for knowledge sharing and discussions on practical solutions to ensure robust indices that better serve the policymaking needs in the Arab region. Presenters: Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)
10:30 – 11:30	Session XII: Presentation of the Financial Inclusiveness Index During this session, participants will have the opportunity to be acquainted with ESCWA's Financial Inclusiveness Index, designed to assess the availability and usage of both traditional and digital financial services. The session will delve into a comprehensive analysis of the implications of existing barriers, considering the broader goal of achieving greater inclusiveness in the Arab region. Participants will gain valuable insights into the meticulous framework and methodologies employed in developing this index. Presenters: Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 13:00	Session XIII: ESCWA’s Financial Inclusiveness Report In this session, participants will be presented with the findings of the report. The discussions will shed light on the initiatives and policies that have contributed to enhancing financial inclusiveness, while also exploring areas that require further attention and improvement. The interactive exchange of insights and perspectives among participants and experts will provide a holistic view of the index's effectiveness as a powerful tool for evidence-based policymaking. By the end of the session, attendees will be enriched with valuable knowledge and practical insights, empowering them to drive positive change and create more inclusive financial landscapes in their respective countries. Presenter: Expert TBD
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
Step six: Development Account Project – The Way Forward	

<p>14:00 – 15:30</p>	<p>Session XIV: Group discussion</p> <p>In this highly interactive session, working groups will come together for in-depth discussions and panels to reflect on their firsthand experience using the ISPAR platform. Participants will have the opportunity to share their valuable insights, best practices, and lessons learned while effectively employing the ISPAR simulators and tools.</p> <p>Under the guidance and expertise of facilitators and experts, the session will foster a dynamic exchange of knowledge and experiences, allowing participants to gain a deeper understanding of the platform's capabilities and its potential for evidence-based policymaking. The collaborative atmosphere will encourage open dialogue and exploration of innovative approaches, ensuring that participants leave the session equipped with practical strategies and newfound confidence in using ISPAR to address complex policy challenges.</p> <p>Presenters: Experts TBD, Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>
<p>15:30 – 16:00</p>	<p>Session XV: Closing discussions</p> <p>During this session, through engaging discussions, attendees will grasp the full potential of the Financial Inclusiveness Index in shaping more inclusive financial landscapes and fostering sustainable development. This session serves as an essential platform for knowledge sharing and exploration, encouraging meaningful collaborations that contribute to building resilient and inclusive financial systems in the region.</p> <p>Moderators: Experts TBD, Ms. Nathalie Grand (Data Scientist) and Mr. Ahmed Al-Awah (Chief Technology Officer)</p>