

E/ESCWA/PI/2009/5

ESCWA Center for Women

09_0291



ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Photo Credits:

Cover: © Assafir Newspaper



Background

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Centre for Women (ECW) was established on 1 October 2003, following the adoption by the Commission of ESCWA resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003.

Recognizing that a fundamental part of development is the empowerment of women, the resolution called for the creation of a Committee on Women and the establishment of a centre for women at ESCWA consisting of specialists in women's issues.

Who Are We?

The Centre for Women includes specialists in gender and women's issues who assist member countries and the Commission in promoting the rights of women and mainstreaming a gender perspective in national policies, plans and programmes. The Centre consists of two units: the Unit for Advancement of Women and the Unit for Gender Mainstreaming.

What Is Our Vision?

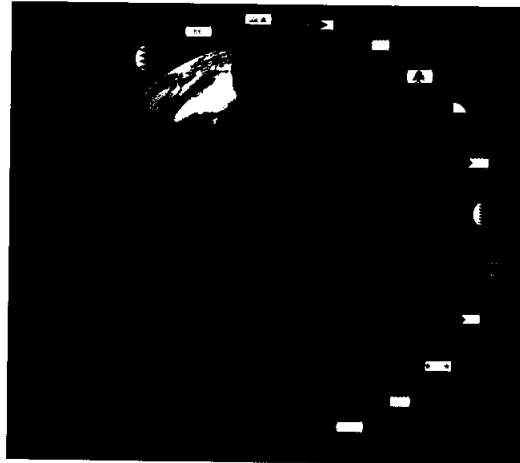
The vision of the Centre for Women is that of a region in which all ESCWA member countries enjoy sustainable human development and a culture of human rights in which men and women are treated with equal dignity, considered to be of equal value and receive equal rights and opportunities.

Who Do We Serve?

The ESCWA Centre for Women serves the 14 ESCWA member countries, namely: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

What Is Our Mission?

The mission of the Centre for Women is to assist in the process of empowering women in the ESCWA



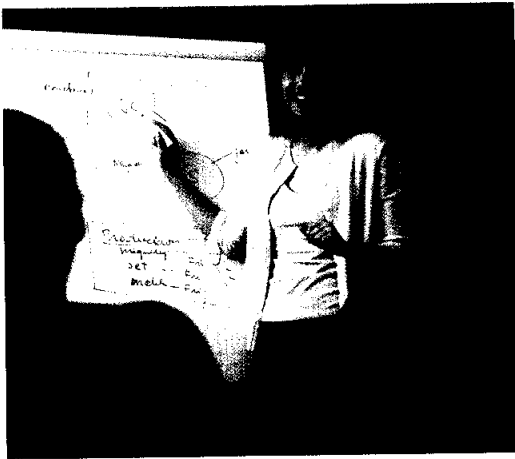
region economically, socially and politically; and to mainstream a gender perspective in national policies, plans and programmes.

In order to realize its mission, the Centre provides technical assistance and training services in sectoral gender mainstreaming. It also provides policymakers and machineries for women with tools that aim to eliminate gender discrimination and empower women.

What Do We Do?

The Centre for Women:

- ▶ Raises awareness on gender issues through reports, studies, conferences and media campaigns
- ▶ Monitors developments and analyses the situation of Arab women in the ESCWA region, and disseminates relevant information
- ▶ Provides technical assistance for capacity-building of national machineries for women and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- ▶ Advocates a right to development approach for empowering and advancing Arab women in order to eliminate discrimination and reduce gender imbalances
- ▶ Organizes national and regional meetings in preparation for the follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action



- ▶ Undertakes pioneering and thematic research on ways of improving the status of Arab women
- ▶ Formulates operational projects for the empowerment of women
- ▶ Provides advisory services in mainstreaming a gender perspective into development policies, programmes and projects
- ▶ Follows up on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

- ▶ Serves as a forum and regional coordinator among Arab States for women and gender issues

Major Achievements

The Centre for Women has made significant efforts towards achieving its stated goals since its inception. These include the following:

Regional Inter-Ministerial Meetings

- In October 2003, the Centre hosted the Arab Meeting for the Ten-year Review of the International Year of the Family
- In December 2003 and July 2004, the first and second sessions of the Committee on Women were convened at ESCWA to focus on the ten-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the national and regional levels. The second session resulted in the Beirut Declaration on Arab Women Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace, which outlined the steps required for empowering and advancing Arab women in the next decade
- In 2007, the third session of the Committee on Women focused on the advancement of women in situations of war and armed conflict
- In 2009, ESCWA will convene the regional preparatory review for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +15

Publications and Reports

Since 2005, the Centre has issued the following publications:

- Arab Women: Beijing +10 (2004)
- Women and the Information Society: Use of Information and Communications Technologies to Empower Women in ESCWA Member Countries (in Arabic) (2005)
- Studies on Arab Women and Development – Gender, Citizenship and NGOs in Selected Arab Countries: Egypt (in Arabic) (2005)
- Status of Arab Women – The History of the Women’s Movement in the Arab World (in Arabic) (2005)
- Studies on Arab Women and Development – Guidelines for





- Enhancing the Effectiveness of National Mechanisms for Women in ESCWA Member Countries (2007)
- Regional Shadow Report of NGOs on the Implementation of CEDAW in the ESCWA Region (2007)
- Regional Report on Gender Mainstreaming Fact Sheets and National Sectoral Policies for the Empowerment of Women and Gender Equality (2007)
- Status of Arab Women – Means to Strengthen the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace-building in the Arab Region (in Arabic) (2009)
- Studies on Arab Women and Development – Women’s Control Over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, Including Microfinance (in Arabic) (2009)
- Guidelines on the Protection of the Rights of Women in the ESCWA Region Through the Proper Use of United Nations Resolutions and International Protocols on War and Armed Conflict, a joint publication with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2009)
- Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women (2009)

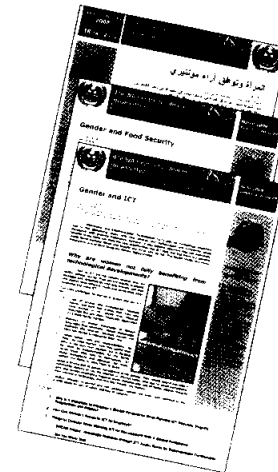
Media Campaigns

- In 2003, the Centre initiated a gender awareness media campaign, aimed at changing public attitudes. This campaign comprised a documentary film and seven television spots, which were aired on a number of Lebanese television channels
- In 2006, the Centre produced two documentaries, one focusing on the impact of armed conflict on the advancement of women, and another highlighting the major challenges facing Arab women and the ways in which the activities of the Centre can help them to overcome such challenges
- In 2009, the Centre produced a documentary entitled “Women Pioneers in Different Sectors of the Arab Economy”

Electronic Newsletter, e-Network and Databases

In 2007, the Centre extended its work via new media with the launch of the following e-activities:

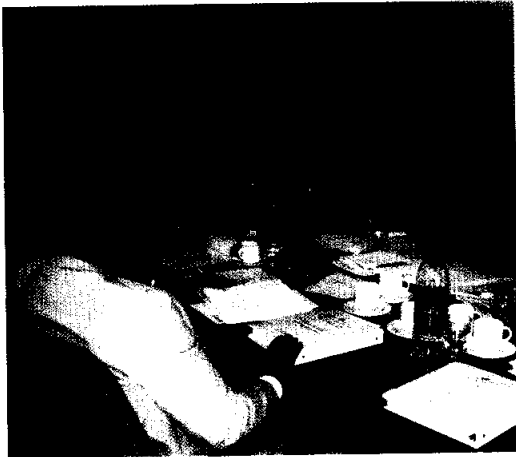
- An e-network/forum in which Arab national machineries for women and other stakeholders can post ideas and opinions, and exchange best practice on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the units, ministries, councils and commissions of their respective countries. It includes gender mainstreaming guidelines and checklists to be used at the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of all development projects. An e-learning tool that will benefit women in general and national machineries for women in particular is being developed to expand the current activities of the e-network.
- Two electronic databases: a compilation of all United Nations gender activities in the Arab region and an electronic repository that brings together the details of Arab women politicians, members of parliament, businesswomen, female scientists and women in the media and academia
- A quarterly electronic newsletter that explores the gender dimension in all spheres of life, thereby assisting member countries and United Nations agencies in sectoral gender mainstreaming. To date, 20 issues have covered such varied topics as gender and migration; gender and the Monterrey Consensus; gender and climate change; gender and food security; gender and conflict; gender and the Millennium Development Goals; and gender budgeting



Workshops

Since 2003, the Centre has organized the following workshops:

- A regional workshop on gender mainstreaming in the ESCWA region (Beirut, December 2003)
- Four workshops training over 100 women on electoral and constitutional processes in Iraq. Participants have included women from NGOs, activists, new parliamentarians and ministers (Beirut, July 2004, December 2004, May 2005 and September 2005)
- A regional workshop on the effective use of information and communications technology by national women's machineries in preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society (Beirut, July 2005)
- Two subregional workshops on gender mainstreaming, tailored to the specific needs of the Arab Mashreq region and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council respectively (Amman, February 2007 and May 2007)



- A regional workshop on gender budgeting (Amman, November 2007)
- The first regional workshop for judges and parliamentarians on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Amman, October 2007)
- The second regional workshop on the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Beirut, November 2008)
- A training workshop on how to prepare national Beijing +15 reports (Cairo, March 2009)

Technical Assistance and Advisory Services

In connection with the 10 year and 15 year reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action, Arab States were provided, upon request, with technical assistance and advisory services for institutional building and assistance in report-writing.

In the past five years, the Centre has also undertaken the following activities:

- Training workshops for the 22 Arab countries on the preparation of national reports for Beijing +10
- Training workshops for the preparation of country responses to the questionnaire directed to Governments on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
- Technical assistance to Bahrain through the organization of training workshops on CEDAW report-writing, gender mainstreaming and using the media as a tool to promote the advancement of women
- Technical assistance to Egypt on conducting research on violence against women
- Advisory services to the national machinery for women in Jordan, focusing on gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting

- Technical assistance to Kuwait on CEDAW and CEDAW report-writing
- Technical assistance to Lebanon on CEDAW report-writing and Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) concerning women, peace and security
- Advisory services to Oman, focusing on the implementation of CEDAW
- Technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Palestine on institutional building, strategic planning, media campaigning, CEDAW report-writing and the formulation of a plan of action for the advancement of Palestinian women. The mission also included a training session on synergies and networking with other branches of the Government and NGOs
- Technical assistance to Saudi Arabia, focusing on integrating a gender perspective into its ninth development plan
- Technical support to the Syrian Arab Republic through a number of training sessions on institutional building, strategic planning, the drafting of the CEDAW national report, and combating violence against women
- Technical assistance to the United Arab Emirates, including a training workshop on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming
- Technical assistance to Yemen through the organization of training workshops on basic concepts including gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, CEDAW report-writing and leadership skills

ECW webpage

In 2004, the Centre launched a new webpage to accommodate its growing projects and publications, available at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecw.asp?division=ecw>.

Contact Information

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Afaf Omer

Chief, Centre for Women

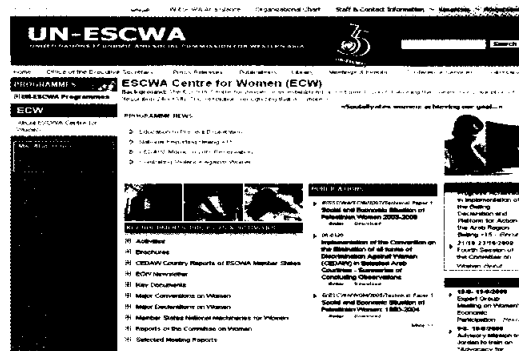
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

P.O. Box 11-8575

Riad El Solh Square, Beirut, Lebanon

Telephone: + 961-1-978729, Fax: + 961-1-981510

E-mail: omer1@un.org



ACTIVITIES OF THE ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN 2010-2011

Building on the experience gained in previous years and following the fifteen year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the ESCWA Centre for Women will concentrate on two main areas, namely:

- ▶ Enhancing the capacity of national mechanisms, in particular those in conflict-affected countries, to be effective agents for change and act as coordinators between policymakers and civil society in order to promote gender mainstreaming in national policies, plans and programmes;
- ▶ Enhancing the capacity of member countries to make further progress in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

I. The First Area

In respect of the first of these areas, the Centre aims to intensify its efforts to enhance the institutional capacity of national mechanisms through regular dissemination of new information on gender issues, the provision of advocacy tools and research methodology, and the development of in-house training, knowledge and skills. The Centre will also provide a forum in which national mechanisms, both in the ESCWA region and other regions, can actively share knowledge and experience. Particular attention will be paid to the national mechanisms in conflict-affected countries in order to address the special needs of women living in such areas and promote their active participation in decision-making, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The following activities will be implemented in 2010-2011 and will contribute to the introduction of a gender perspective into policies in the ESCWA region and to the strengthening of national machineries for women in member countries:

Publications

- ▶ *Women and Development Series: Mainstreaming Gender in the Plans and Programmes of the Ministries of Labour and Finance in Selected ESCWA Member Countries*
- ▶ *Progress Towards the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in ESCWA Member Countries: A Gender Perspective*, produced in coordination with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

- ▶ *Revised Guidelines to Increase Effectiveness of National Mechanisms for Women in the ESCWA Region*

Expert Group Meetings

- ▶ Mainstreaming gender in the plans and programmes of the ministries of labour and finance in selected ESCWA member countries
- ▶ Progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in ESCWA member countries: a gender perspective

Workshops

- ▶ A training workshop for members of the national mechanisms for women on the protection of women living in conflict-affected areas

II . The Second Area

In the second area, the Centre will target the capacity-building of national mechanisms, members of parliament, the judiciary and civil society institutions, notably the media, in order to monitor the progress achieved in the implementation of CEDAW. While almost all ESCWA member countries have ratified the Convention, reservations on a number of substantive articles continue to hinder full implementation. In response to the expressed needs of member countries, the Centre will aim to enhance the capacity of those stakeholders to address critical issues and take concrete measures in that regard. The following activities, which will be implemented in 2010-2011, aim to build the capacity of stakeholders towards the full implementation of the Convention:

Publications

- ▶ *Status of Arab Women – Equal Participation of Women at All Levels of Decision-making*, a joint study with the League of Arab States, the Arab Women Organization and the Tunisian Center for Arab Women Training and Research
- ▶ *Best Practice and Success Stories in the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in Selected Arab Countries*, produced in coordination with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Expert Group Meetings

- ▶ Peer review of *Status of Arab Women – Equal Participation of Women at All Levels of Decision-making*

- ▶ Review of strategies and policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women in media institutions

Workshops

- ▶ The third regional training workshop on the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of CEDAW

Fifth Session Of The Committee On Women

In 2011, ESCWA will host the fifth session of the Committee on Women, in which two parliamentary documents will be presented for discussion by member countries: a review of the progress achieved in the implementation of CEDAW in ESCWA member countries and a review of a key development issue on the advancement of women in the Arab region.

Other Activities

Building on its commitment to fostering relationships between Government bodies dealing with the empowerment and advancement of women and civil society organizations at the regional level, the Centre will also undertake the following activities in 2010-2011:

Technical Material

- Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women

E-Activities

- ESCWA Centre for Women quarterly newsletter on sectoral gender mainstreaming
- The provision of a specialist Web portal for non-governmental organizations, highlighting United Nations entities, international conventions and resolutions relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women

Advisory Missions To Member Countries

- Specialist practical advice and support on gender mainstreaming, follow-up on implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, and international conventions and resolutions on gender equality and the empowerment of women

Interregional Field Projects

- Interregional project on national mechanisms for women
- Enhancing capacity to eradicate violence against women in the ESCWA region