



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/STAT/2002/WG.2/INF.1
3 September 2002
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Statistics
Beirut, 10-12 September 2002

INFORMATION NOTE

TRANSOU
18-09-2002
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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Statistics
10-12 September 2002
Beirut

INFORMATION NOTE

It is becoming evident that the issue of poverty is gaining momentum at both the international and national levels. At the international level, the United Nations Statistical Commission, in its session of 1996, established an expert group on poverty statistics (later known as the Rio Group) that is headed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as its Secretariat. As a starting activity, a first seminar on poverty statistics was held in Santiago in May 1997. The seminar was an opportunity for many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to present and share experiences and methodologies in measuring and analyzing the situation of poverty. At the end of the seminar, the Rio group identified a set of topics that reflect the work finished and underway in the area of poverty statistics. A second seminar took place in 1998, which focused on specific topics that were addressed in the first seminar.

Later, in 2000 the United Nations Millennium Summit declared that poverty is the greatest challenge for the international community. At the Summit, 189 head of States of the United Nations took a pledge to halve by the year 2015 the proportion of the world's population whose income is less than one dollar a day and to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

At the national level, governments are according high priority to formulating programmes for alleviating poverty. However these programmes have often been slow because data on poverty are weak. Hence the demand for appropriate statistics on poverty is essential. Against that background, ESCWA in collaboration with Paris 21 and the Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) is planning to hold an Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Statistics at the UN-House in Beirut during the period from 10 to 12 September 2002.

A. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The meeting aims at sharing the experiences and concerns of ESCWA member countries and UN organizations working on poverty, on issues related to measurement and use of poverty statistics. The meeting will also attempt to identify the indicators and statistical sources that best measure poverty in ESCWA member countries. This would help member countries report the progress in achieving the target of reducing poverty set by the United Nations Millennium Summit.

The agenda of the meeting consists of the following topics:

1. Review of poverty measurements (work in FAO, World Bank and Rio Group)
2. Data needs and availability in ESCWA countries (country papers prepared by Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen)
3. Sources of poverty statistics (strengths and weaknesses)
4. Poverty statistics as a tool for policy formulation

B. PARTICIPANTS

National, regional and international experts are invited to attend the meeting and prepare papers. ESCWA will also contact selected United Nations organizations and agencies working on poverty statistics to present supporting papers.

C. LANGUAGE

The meeting will be held in Arabic; Simultaneous interpretation from English to Arabic and vice-versa will be made available.

D. DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of the meeting will be made available on-line at <http://www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/statistics>

E. TRAVEL AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

All participants are expected to make the necessary travel arrangements for processing passports and visas. Travel grants and daily subsistence allowances (DSA) will be made available to a limited number of experts, in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations. Other experts are expected to attend at the expense of their respective organizations. Information regarding hotel arrangements will be sent to participants in due time.

F. COMMUNICATIONS

Should you have any query pertaining to the meeting, you are kindly asked to contact

- Mr. Ahmed Hussein, Chief Social Statistics
Tel: +961-1-981301 Ext. 1539
Fax: +961-1-981510
Email: ahussein@escwa.org.lb

- Ms. Nadine Shaar, Statistics Assistant
Tel: +961-1-981301 Ext. 1548
Fax: +961-1-981510
Email: nshaar@escwa.org.lb