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**SOCIAL POLICY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES****Summary**

This report demonstrates that social policies which are formulated and implemented on sound bases are effective tools in national development strategies that seek to build equitable societies, provide work opportunities, strengthen economic growth, eradicate social exclusion and avert conflict. This report also explains the concept of social policy and how it is approached in the ESCWA region, setting out the strategy and tools for its practical application to social analysis and social policy, including (a) mainstreaming the social element in national development strategies; (b) incorporating the principle of equality in national development; (c) adopting targeted and comprehensive policies; and (d) giving some examples of the tools used to accelerate the realization of social equality and development.

As part of its description of the social policy-related features of the ESCWA Social Development Division, this report explains the new strategy and programme of work which the Division will apply in facing the challenges which the question of social policy presents in the region.

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## I. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL POLICY

1. Social policy is a vehicle for building societies in which justice and stability prevail, providing them with the essentials for sustainability, and therefore falls within the scope of interest of national general policymakers. It encompasses sectoral policies and social programmes and services, including education, health and social security policies. The basis of social policy is an identified institutional framework and the necessary provisions for incorporating the principles of social equality and human rights into general State policy. The final goal of social policy is to alleviate poverty and social exclusion and ease areas of social tension, improving general welfare for all citizens.

2. Experiences in high income countries, including Australia, Japan and New Zealand, in addition to examples in Europe and North America, have demonstrated that investment in social development leads to the building of more productive and sustainable societies. Numerous countries in East Asia have also undertaken huge investment in social areas which play a part in strengthening productivity and keeping it abreast of industrial development. Some countries in Latin America have employed social policy as a tool to alleviate poverty and strengthen equality, by widening the scope of the social security programme. Well-designed and implemented social policy is an effective tool in national development strategies that aim to build equitable societies, provide employment opportunities, strengthen economic growth, eradicate social extremes and avert conflict.

### **Equitable development policies**

Equitable developmental policies derive their importance to Governments and individuals from the following factors:

- Investment in human resources leads to an improvement in the quality of the workforce and an increase in production, and hence to an improvement in the investment climate and a strengthening of growth;
- An increase in the income of the poor leads to an increase in local demand, which in turn strengthens growth, and an increase in rates of consumption in poor sectors play a part in the expansion of the local market;
- Societies in which equality is deficient have reduced rates of growth;
- Poverty and malnutrition damage children's health, cause premature death, weaken cognitive capacities and produce low productivity in future generations;
- The advancement of women strengthens social and economic development;
- Societies which lack equality are not only lacking in justice, but are incapable of guaranteeing the long-term social and political stability necessary for the realization of economic growth;
- Conditions of aggravated inequality and the social pressure to which it leads kindle armed conflict, which undermines the stability of Governments and regions, and makes individuals more likely to participate in and make common cause with acts of terrorism;
- Inequality is incompatible with the United Nations Charter, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all of which instruments accord to every individual the minimum requirements for a decent life, including access to food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care and social security.

Those are some of the reasons which justify the need to adopt economic and social policies together, and to put them into balanced and synergistic effect from the earliest stage of development, in order to ensure that they are a part of the strategy for national development and the social contract between Government and citizens.

### **Rethinking social policy and rejecting erroneous ideas**

“Social policy is imperative for strategically opening up economies not only because it provides the human capital necessary for enhancing competitive capacity, but also because it provides the necessary protection for citizens from the vagaries of global markets.”

“Social policy is not something to engage in only after reaching a certain development threshold; nor is it an exclusive domain of advanced welfare states: social policy is a key instrument for economic and social development.”

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*Source: UNRISD Research and Policy Brief, No. 5, Transformative Social Policy: Lessons from UNRISD Research (UNRISD, 2006).*

#### **A. SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND CONSUMPTION**

3. In the past, social policy was not considered a suitable tool for national development, because it involved an unsustainable and inefficient manner of using resources. Furthermore, Government social transformations, which traditionally constituted part of spending on social security, health, education and social programmes, was viewed as social consumption spending, giving no return and hence having no investment value. Cash benefits were considered as equivalent to charity for low income groups to be spent on consumption, rather than being employed in order to build up savings in order to make investments that would give higher economic returns.

4. However, social transformations do not only strengthen social consumption, but are an investment in a more wide-ranging social process that aims to produce individuals who enjoy an increase in skills and productive capacity and are a productive economic resource and a pillar of social cohesion. If social policy is constructed more effectively, it can contribute to an increase in social returns, an improvement in economic productivity and a strengthening of national prosperity.

#### **B. THE SEGMENTATION OF SOCIAL POLICY IN PROJECTS**

5. Rather than social policy being at the core of national plans, its role is more frequently limited to dealing with their results. It is basically used as a method of dealing with such social consequences of market failures, as unemployment and reduction in income, and the problems of certain marginalized and deprived social groups, including disabled and ageing persons. Social policy has therefore been limited in many social programmes to meeting urgent and pressing needs, and remains tied to a narrow vision which focuses on the component level. It is restricted to direct sectoral programmes, which are often ineffective because they allocate minimal resources and fail to assess their impact on economic market incentives, rarely being concerned with having a meaningful effect on long-term economic growth.

6. At the project level, social policy experts have focused on vertical sectoral projects unconnected to other sectoral and economic considerations. The result was a “division of social policy and its segmentation in programmes”, and the creation of a chasm between social programmes at the component level and social policy and economic goals at the macro-level.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore necessary to place social policy in its correct domain, by considering it an integral part of the policy formation process at the macro-level.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Tendler, “Social policy in a development context: an introduction”, *Why social policy is condemned to a residual category of safety nets and what to do about it: thoughts on a research agenda*, ed. T. Mkandawire (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 3.

### C. INDIRECT EFFECT POLICIES

7. With the general focus on economic growth in development during the 1980s and 1990s, issues of equality and social integration took second place. Economists decreed that the benefits of growth and development would automatically trickle down to low income groups, gradually turning into social benefits for all. The primary goal of social policies in that period was limited to the manner of reducing any negative effects arising from economic policies, rather than on avoiding the occurrence of any social distortion.

8. However, the expected benefits of economic growth and structural adjustment did not trickle down to all automatically, but in most cases led to widening of disparities and social distortion on the international and national levels, leading to social tension. That situation led in turn to an aggravation of poverty and an increase in the marginalization of deprived groups. Such dangerous social consequences of economic planning impelled the international community concerned with development to rethink the development programme followed in the 1980s and direct it towards the achievement of social equality. Nevertheless, the role of social policies and programmes remains secondary, not being founded on the principle of distribution, and they remain the chosen means of dealing with certain social problems. Donor-financed social programmes, including the Social Fund of the World Bank, helped the needy, but fell short of providing long-term solutions.

### D. RETHINKING SOCIAL POLICY

9. Rather than treating social policy as secondary to economic growth, and implementing social programmes in a disjointed and segmented manner, Governments should view social policy on the basis of its actual value and its capacity to achieve positive effects and strengthen economic and social growth. Countries may prosper as the result of granting “equal work opportunities and fair outcomes for all” and “achievement of a high national income”, achieving a balance between the State and the market, even while remaining a market economy.<sup>2</sup>

10. There is a great deal of evidence that confirms that economic growth and social development must be pursued together. It must therefore be recognized that economic growth provides an increase in investment in human development, and hence that social development strengthens the capacities of individuals, thereby enabling them to participate productively in economic growth process.

11. Such time as the necessary effective social development efforts have been achieved, focus should be placed on various principles, including the following:<sup>3</sup>

(a) Striking a balance between economic growth and social development, in order to ensure that one reinforces the other;

(b) Implementing a strategy of redistribution/protection, which is concerned with meeting the needs of individuals and reducing potentially damaging risks;

(c) Investing in production, including building human capital and making job opportunities available;

(d) Implementing a strategy based on participation which, from the outset addresses the needs of those concerned, including marginalized groups.

12. Furthermore, social policy and its micro-effects, must be included within the policymaking framework at the macro-level, and social policy analysis must be included in all aspects of national development

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<sup>2</sup> Keynote speech by the Prime Minister of Norway, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, at the opening of the Economic and Social Council (Geneva, 3 July 2006), which is available at: [www.odin.no/sml/norsk/aktuelt/taler\\_artikler/taler\\_statsmin/001001-090903/dok-bn.html](http://www.odin.no/sml/norsk/aktuelt/taler_artikler/taler_statsmin/001001-090903/dok-bn.html).

<sup>3</sup> I. Ortiz, “Social policy” (14 September 2006), which was presented as a draft policy note to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), p. 11.

strategy formulation at all levels. The purpose is to involve such policy in the identification and determination of general policy options, and budget allocations which reflect national development priorities. In order to pursue the goal of dealing with social failures strategies and tools for social policy must be put in place in the following fields: (a) social policy and equality must be mainstreamed in all sectors; (b) comprehensive policies benefiting all must be adopted; (c) institutional and legal frameworks for decision-making and implementing change must be formulated; and (d) tools must be developed that provide the benefits of development fairly for all sectors of the population, by ensuring employment, education, health and culture, guaranteeing social security and averting conflict.

13. With the goal of adopting effective social policy and achieving positive change, it is incumbent upon Governments to provide social development initiatives with the necessary financial, material and human resources, and back them up with political commitment and legal support, putting them on an equal footing with economic policies in the process of formulating national policies.<sup>4</sup>

## **II. STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL POLICY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

14. A study recently produced by ESCWA deals with success factors in five countries, namely, Canada, Korea, Malaysia, Norway and Tunisia, in strengthening equality and reaching a relatively advanced stage in adopting and implementing social policy. The study emphasized a number of factors common to the five countries, albeit at different levels. It is possible to summarize those factors as follows: (a) factors connected with moral values and principles which prize equality highly; (b) factors related to the adoption of centralized strategies, especially those which call for the integration of the economic and social fields and which focus on investment in human capital; (c) supporting factors, including favourable public opinion and an active civil society; (d) factors linked to the economy, especially with regard to Governments playing an active role in the organization of the economic sector and the existence of an effective tax system; (e) factors relating to the existence of such pressing matters as disparities between population brackets or geographical groups, the role and status of women, and the increase in certain population brackets, including ageing persons, all of which matters demand solutions from the national plan.<sup>5</sup>

15. In addition, international experience in development and in the application of successful social policies afford numerous strategy models, a summary of which will be presented below.

### **A. STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL ELEMENT IN A STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

16. National development strategies are an expression of the vision shared by all concerned persons in society, from the public sector, the private sector and civil society, which embodies their aspirations for a better society. Such strategies provide an opportunity to reconsider the social contract and confirm that the principal element in that contract is always to ensure the welfare of all.

17. In the past, social policy did not have a role worthy of mention in influencing developmental planning. In order to correct that, the role of social programmes must be emphasized and they must be strengthened by reviewing comprehensive and sectoral strategies. The importance of social policy in the planning process at the national level must be underlined from the diagnostic stage to the study of options, funding and budget allocations, and programme implementation and impact evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> "Social policy must be integrated as a central component of policies to ensure the wherewithal for their sustainability social policy must not confine itself to the 'social inclusion' part but must also directly address the issues of economic development and the consolidation of the democratic order". J. Tendler, "Social policy in a development context: an introduction", *Why social policy is condemned to a residual category of safety nets and what to do about it: thoughts on a research agenda*, ed. T. Mkandawire (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> H. Hammoud, "Critical review of success stories in Integrated Social Policies" (in Arabic) (unpublished manuscript).

### *1. Identification of social policy*

18. Countries must undertake quantitative and qualitative analyses in order to identify needs, become familiar with the facts and appreciate national social, economic and political dynamics. The diagnostic process must focus upon assessing needs and the population groups to be given priority; the hindrances and structural obstacles which will impede the uptake of development opportunities and their outcomes; the risks which limit capacity to face up to unfavourable circumstances; and employment market and sources of livelihood strategies that can contribute to the improvement of well-being and productivity.

### *2. Planning social policy and setting priorities*

19. Poor social policy planning may so undermine the social programme as to limit the scope of such programmes to particular groups, those most often being the Government sector and wealthy segments of society. They may be limited to formulating and implementing an inappropriate social policy inherited from the developmental priorities of the 1980s and 1990s; financial resources may remain assigned to an insufficient number of sectors; and resources may be assigned to expensive yet ineffective programmes, which take no account of the interconnection between sectors.

20. There must be a balance between spending on programmes and their benefits, and the setting of a list of priorities during the planning process. The estimated budget must take into account administrative spending and the social returns of any programme, in order to give priority to effective, positive intervention in society at low cost. Planning must lead to the correction of deficiencies in the role of social programmes and ministries of social affairs, which were considered to be secondary. The social policy planning process must rely upon effective negotiations, based on economic and political arguments, with the ministries of finance and national planning and other ministries associated with the goal of improving the status of social programmes, thereby increasing the resources allocated thereto in the budget. Budgets must be allocated in a manner characterized by transparency and partnership, with the goal of determining the needs of the population and addressing them effectively.

### *3. The financing and implementation of social policy*

21. Social programmes are often considered expensive, and the financial resources necessary in order to maintain their impact are therefore not provided. Social impact and spending effectiveness must be evaluated in order to encourage continuing investment in the social sector.

22. The arguments which must be put forward to support the benefit of spending on social programmes and justify increased spending on social policy must be based on accounts and actual studies and focus initially on analysing the effect of the proposed programmes or policies for distributing benefits to different population groups. Such arguments must also be based on an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the programme or policy, taking into account the scope of the programmes and the proportion of the cost arising from gross domestic product (GDP) and its share of public expenditure, the proportion of administrative costs in the total expenditure, its long-term social effect and its multiplying effect. The cost of a particular programme can thus be compared to another, alternative, programme. The cost of programmes in terms of financial revenue must also be assessed by estimating national expenditure and income, calculating any anticipated change in resource allocation arising from changes in national priorities, and a study must be undertaken of any alternative sources of internal funding in order to prevent financial loss.

23. Because the benefit of spending on social programmes is a question of political will and priorities, it is necessary to present evidence which shows the intangible benefits of any long-term programmes in comparison with the immediate benefits, limited in scope and effect, of any short-term programme.

### *4. Social policy and participation*

24. Participation must be a fundamental element in the social policy formulation process, from the determination of needs, to the implementation process, to monitoring and assessment. Effective participation, which involves a wide network of persons engaged in social policy, is an important tool for laying the

necessary foundations and elements to ensure the effectiveness of policies and guarantee ability to meet the needs of the groups concerned. When individuals feel that they have a voice in decision-making and the allocation of resources which affect their lives and welfare, their confidence in Governments increases and their commitment to development activity is reinforced.

25. Efforts must therefore be made to facilitate participation and broaden the scope of policymaking in order to develop tools and structures to widen the sphere of participation in keeping with circumstances and cultural characteristics, and hence to increase the effect of proposed policies. Those efforts must have the goal of taking those concerned into partnership: partnership should therefore not be limited to those groups which it is easy to reach, but should also include all marginalized groups.

26. Successful cooperation requires stakeholders to be provided with information and enabled to participate fully and effectively in discussions. It also requires the allocation of sufficient time and resources to facilitate the process.

## B. MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

27. With a view to mainstreaming equality issues and social policy in all sectors and in national development plans, each sector must undertake a social analysis of the effect of its policies on the welfare of various population groups, and their needs and development. Analyses of poverty and its social impact such as are employed by international organizations, including the World Bank, are undertaken using quantitative and qualitative tools to determine the beneficial impact of a policy on various groups (see table below).

SHARES OF INCOME BY FIFTHS IN SELECTED ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Country	Poorest	Poorest	Richest	Richest
	10%	10%	20%	20%
Jordan	2.7	6.7	30.6	46.3
Egypt	3.7	8.6	29.5	43.6
Yemen	5	7.4	25.9	41.2

Source: Assembled by ESCWA on the basis of World Bank, *World Development Indicators* (2006).

28. In order to legitimize social policy initiatives, and strengthen and support them by political commitment, it is necessary to give responsibility for leadership and direction in multi-sector undertakings to joint ministerial committees which have extensive authority. It is possible to draw up diagrams of areas of equality and social injustice, with the goal of informing policymakers and experts of the best type of intervention for the prevailing social circumstances. The process of drawing up diagrams which include analysis of the welfare and poverty indicators in the region is very useful because it includes comparable changes and hence provides a measure of the extent of the distribution of social injustice.

### Social benefits

- Social benefits provide resources to low-income families which assist in the alleviation of poverty and improvement of food security at low cost. Basic benefits may account for between 1 and 2 per cent of the GDP;
- Allowances for the elderly in poor families help to meet the basic needs of the family as a whole;
- Retirement allowances may assist in widening the scope of social security. In Namibia, for example, cover by means of a lump sum paid at a fixed level of income in the form of unconditional payments reached 92 per cent of the population between 1990 and 2001.



### C. TARGETED AND COMPREHENSIVE POLICIES AND SERVICES

29. Targeted measures and programmes focus on specific population brackets, and include the provision of additional food for children aged under five years. Such programmes are generally costly and face many challenges, especially in guaranteeing that benefits reach the targeted groups. In order to carry out effective targeted interventions, it is necessary to base them on a system on means-testing, which is in itself a complex and costly system which often involves an infringement of social dignity.

30. On the other hand, investment in comprehensive services can be an effective tool for achieving a basic level of social welfare, redistributing wealth and investing in the population. Those policies have been adopted in such democratic systems as the Netherlands and Sweden, because they are based on the principle of solidarity and the inclusion of all citizens on a basis of equality. Numerous international organizations concerned with development call for the implementation of comprehensive policies in developing countries, especially in countries where the majority of the population live in poverty, enjoy few services or are subject to exclusion.

31. The countries which have implemented that type of comprehensive policy, including some industrial countries in East Asia, have witnessed a swift and effective improvement in social norms and human capital. However, comprehensive services remain of limited effect in other developing countries for the two following reasons: (a) lack of provision in the Government sector; and (b) the difficulty in extending services because of material, financial, institutional and cultural obstacles.

32. As a result, the achievement of equality remains an important matter at that level. If the achievement of comprehensive cover is expensive for the Governments of poor countries, such cover may begin with limited groups and be broadened gradually, as occurred in Germany and Japan, where the scope of social programmes was gradually broadened by means of an increase in support, the introduction of new beneficiaries and the adoption of new conditions for benefiting. Effective realization requires institutions to be developed and enabled to set out the conditions of exclusion, and improvement in the capacity of the marginalized population to obtain the benefits of comprehensive policies. Targeted intervention may complement those policies and accelerate the realization of comprehensive social cover.

### D. EXAMPLES OF TOOLS FOR ACCELERATING THE REALIZATION OF EQUALITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

33. Social programmes in the fields of employment, education, health, social security, culture and conflict avoidance are frequently long-term social programmes, the effect of which only becomes clear after several years. While Governments must commit themselves to putting in place policies and strategies to deal with structural change, countries can hardly wait for a long time until those policies have produced a positive effect under the protection of social and political spending. In such cases, immediate profitable interventions are paramount. Within that framework, it is possible to implement programmes to meet the pressing needs of the most disadvantaged brackets of society. Those targeted and fast impact programmes may include such elements as food distribution, provision of food aid to disadvantaged groups of the population, including children, pregnant women and mothers, improving water quality and sanitation and repairing houses in poor condition.

34. Examples of fast impact programmes are direct cash transfers, including social benefits and old age allowances. Those methods were tried in Argentina, Brazil, Namibia and South Africa and it was found that they contributed greatly to the alleviation of poverty at a relatively low cost.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I. Ortiz, "Social policy" (14 September 2006), which was presented as a draft policy note to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), p. 55. For example, such programmes as "From Zero" in Brazil have been very successful.

### III. ESCWA AND INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICY

#### A. SOCIAL POLICY IN THE ESCWA REGION

35. The roots of modern social policy in the ESCWA region go back in many cases to the colonial period and beyond, and take the form of social care. Among the principal tools for social policy in the region are welfare by means of allowances, support with basic consumer goods, provision of job opportunities in the public sector for university graduates and supply of some education and health services free of charge for workers in the public sector.

36. The result of programmes that targeted workers in the Government sector was the exclusion of wide sectors of the population, including workers in the non-Government sector and agriculture and economically inactive women, who constituted the poorest social groups. That defect has impaired all the systems operating in the region, and must be corrected in order to improve levels of social equality.

37. In Lebanon, for example, estimates indicate that more than 50 per cent of the population have no form of health insurance. The majority of those affected are seasonal workers, fishermen, workers in the non-governmental sector and employed persons.<sup>7</sup>

38. In addition, provision of welfare in the region depends upon a combination of non-governmental social organizations independent of the State, including family and community associations and religious and charitable civil society organizations; and customs and cultural traditions which commend acts of charity. While those mechanisms are sometimes effective during specific periods, their scope remains limited and their effect is selective and unsystematic. Such interventions are no substitute for coordinated Government programmes.

39. While social expenditure and programmes in the fields of health, education and social security occupy an important place in some countries of the region, their implementation is limited to a narrow sectoral ambit, that is not related to development priorities, on integrated in a comprehensive political framework for the realization of equality and the alleviation of poverty.

40. The obstacles which weaken the capacity of ministries of social affairs to improve the welfare of the population vary from one country to another in the region. However, such obstacles are attributable to the general lack of consciousness of the role of social policy in national planning, and the failure to give it the position that it deserves within Government priorities, which limits the capacity of ministries of social affairs to realize perceptible change. Ministries of social affairs often occupy a position of lower importance than ministries of economic development or national planning, and are less equipped with financial, material and human resources for the implementation of their tasks. Exceptions to that rule are the ministries of social affairs in the Gulf Cooperation Council region, which enjoy large resources, enabling them to provide such services as social assistance and cash payments. However, those ministries do not play a role in comprehensive development that would strengthen the capacity of individuals to realize their own welfare. As a result, ESCWA works in the field of publicity, with the goal of raising the consciousness of policymakers in the region and clarifying the crucial role which social policy can play within the framework of development.

#### B. ESCWA ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL POLICY

41. ESCWA is involved in achieving social equality and social development in the Arab region, and its activities in that field are targeted at: (a) raising Government awareness of the role of social policy and its importance; (b) supporting Governments in seeking to build capacity in the field of delineating, implementing, monitoring and guaranteeing the essential elements of social policy, with the goal of increasing equality in the distribution of development spending.

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<sup>7</sup> National Household Expenditure and Utilization Survey, 2001 (data for 1998).

1. *An overview of the activities of the Social Development Division in the field of social policy*

42. The ESCWA Social Development Division launched its integrated social policy programme in 2001 within the framework of supporting policymakers in the Arab world in their efforts to comprehend social policy planning, and ensuring the setting of realistic goals for such policies within the context of the prevailing political, social and economic climate.

43. Since that time, ESCWA has undertaken a number of activities aimed at explaining the concepts of social policy and social equality, and to improve the standards and sustainability of those policies, with the purpose of strengthening social equality in member countries.

44. In that context, numerous studies have been issued to explain the basic elements of successful social policy within the circumstances of each country, and in-depth analyses have been carried out in order to set out the different stages that lead to success in formulating and applying social policy in advanced and developing countries and, in particular, the stages when such policies are formulated, established at the institutional level, implemented and monitored and their continuation as part of national plans is ensured.

45. ESCWA has seen that social policy in some countries of the region is obsolete and uncoordinated and fails to heed national particularities, which aggravates social isolation and poverty. A programme of integrated social policies has therefore been designed in order to provide support and strengthen the capacity of those persons in member countries who are involved in improving the formulation, implementation and monitoring of social policy.

46. The work of ESCWA is based on its appreciation of the need for experts, decision-makers, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to share an understanding of the goals of social policy, that will enable them to design tools and provide the resources necessary to create a targeted social vision which is appropriate to the particularities of each country. By formulating flexible, well-founded policies which have specific goals at the national level, policymakers are enabled to adopt the optimum approach to issues in various sectors, including health, education, law and employment.

47. In 2006, the Social Development Division was restructured, refocusing its programme of work in order to enable it to confront the social policy challenges in the region and, ultimately to realize the goal of building member country capacity to formulate integrated social policies and programmes which would respect regional circumstances and particularities and help in supporting civil society institutions capable of participating in the process of applying social policy.

48. The Division works on the realization of those goals of strengthening social integration and building societies in which equality and social justice prevail, with the focus on four fields covering the various aspects of integrated social development policy and its applications, namely, the general policy framework and mechanisms, social policy and development based on participation, social policy and the population, and social policy in the city. The goals of the Division may be summarized as follows:

(a) Mainstreaming equality and social justice by considering them as two key principles of national policymaking for Governments and civil society organisations in member countries, and creating a common view of concepts and principles of integrated social policy;

(b) Supporting countries in the region by giving the utmost priority to drawing up integrated social development policies, and implementing, establishing and monitoring them at the institutional level, provided that such policies are built on a sound basis, and concern social equality, economic productivity and environmental sustainability;

(c) Supporting the building of partnerships between Governments and civil society organisations in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of integrated social development policies, strengthening active cooperation, and applying methodologies based on the participation of civil society organizations in the policymaking process, using procedures that take into account the circumstances and cultural particularities of the region;

(d) Mainstreaming social policy concerns and clarifying the concepts, analytical tools and provisions of social policy and its tools in dealing with development matters pertaining to particular population groups and, in particular, youth, migrants, disabled persons and the family;

(e) Providing facts-based consultancy to countries in analysing, formulating, implementing and monitoring social policy, in a manner that will strengthen social inclusion, especially that of marginalized groups in urban environments in the region.

2. *Social policy: the Integrated Social Policies Project*

49. The Integrated Social Policies Project is to be implemented in three stages. It sets out the conditions necessary to support institutional change in member countries, providing practical foundations for realizing such change. The following table outlines the three stages:

<p>First stage (2001-2003)</p>	<p>A study was issued entitled “Globalization and labour markets in the ESCWA region”, with the aim of explaining the effects of globalization on the economic and social situation and, in particular, on labour markets in the ESCWA region. The study sets out the goals which policymakers must work towards achieving, and emphasizes the importance of the role played by education in the development process.</p> <p>Five case studies have been issued with the goal of explaining the factors which led to successful adoption of social policy in selected countries and providing important sources of information to stakeholders. Those studies deal with social policy programmes in Canada, Korea, Malaysia, Norway and Tunisia.</p> <p>A meeting on social policies in the ESCWA member countries was held for decision makers in Cairo, from 10 to 12 December 2002. The goal of the meeting was to guide policymakers in the region in formulating clear social programmes and setting goals within the framework of each country; explain the concept of social policy; and assess policymaking modes appropriate for the region. During the meeting, papers were presented on the historical perspective of social policy in the Arab world, the development of the economic and social vision in Lebanon, and conceptual analysis of the approach towards integrated policies for social development.</p>
<p>Second stage (2003-2005)</p>	<p>A study was issued entitled “The response to globalization: policies for the creation of skills and the reduction of unemployment”. That study was the follow-up to the above-mentioned study on globalization and labour markets in the ESCWA region, and deals with the reasons for the inability of the public education system in the region to meet the needs of the current generation and the requirements of the labour market. The study reached the conclusion that a small number of students acquire the necessary skills for finding dignified and appropriate employment, while the whirlpool of unemployment and poverty deepens.</p> <p>Country notes on the social conditions in each country contain an analysis of the extent of financial and human resources and the way in which they are allocated. Those notes explain policy implementation at the national and sectoral levels, coordination between stakeholders, the availability of knowledge and the harmonization of economic and social concepts in every country. The notes form a basis for the exchange of information and experiences between decision-makers and researchers in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national social policy.</p>

Second stage (*continued*)

In order to discuss the report on integrated social policies, an expert group meeting was held in Beirut from 31 January to 2 February 2005.

In 2005 a study was issued entitled "Towards integrated social policies in the Arab states: framework and comparative analysis". It contained an introduction to the concept of social policy and the options for its implementation, and reviewed the characteristics of social policy in Arab countries. It highlighted the functions of that policy in development, and proposed an eight-stage comprehensive strategy for the successive implementation by experts of social policy. It also set out the circumstances that either assist or impede the formulation, implementation and monitoring of social policy based on the experiences of other countries.

At the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held in Beirut, from 29 to 31 March 2005, participants called upon ESCWA to concentrate on social integration and social security networks and to take into consideration the effect on the region of globalization. They also requested the Committee to play a pivotal role in promoting partnership with civil society bodies and private sector institutions, in coordination with the Civil Society Committee of the League of Arab States and other United Nations organizations.

From 19 to 21 December, an expert group meeting was held in Beirut on the effect of globalization on the social situation in the Arab region, organized by ESCWA in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation with the aim of following up the outcomes of international and world conferences on that subject. The meeting concentrated on the measures necessary in order to deal with the effects of globalization from the perspective of social development, and on enabling experts to meet each other and exchange their experiences of the effect of globalization on the social situation in the Arab region. During the meeting a number of papers were presented on the effect of globalization on Arab societies and the challenges and opportunities that it presents; the economic context of globalization in Arab countries; globalization, poverty and inequality in the Arab region; globalization and vulnerable groups and social exclusion in the Arab region; globalization and Arab culture; information technology, communications and social development in the Arab region; globalization, good governance and the changing role of the State in the Arab region: new horizons; and globalization and social protection in the Arab region.

During this period, several papers were prepared on major social policy issues, including one on "Key issues connected with social policy: comparative study and guiding principles for the formulation of social policy in the ESCWA region". That paper contains an analysis of the five case studies referred to above and the principal characteristics which distinguish work in each country at the social policy level. A report was prepared on the effect of globalization on social development in the Arab region; a study on the Arab family, the merging of roles and the enabling of the concept of social policy; and a study on social safety nets in the Arab region within the framework of social policies.

<p>Second stage (<i>continued</i>)</p>	<p>ESCWA has set up a social development network with the goal of encouraging discussion between those involved in matters of social policy and publishing information and best practices in the Arab region. That electronic network is a means of permitting ESCWA to follow up social development issues and the Millennium Development Goals, and enables policymakers, academics, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to obtain the latest information on population and development-related issues. The network includes links to articles, websites and electronic publications, and is expected to be completed by mid-2007.</p>
<p>Third stage (2006-2007)</p>	<p>The third stage will focus on the organization of national conferences, with the purpose of discussing the framework of social policy in every country and identifying the mechanisms necessary in each country to promote local social policy initiatives. It will also focus on the organization of training workshops in member countries to build stakeholders' capacities to apply social policy.</p> <p>A national conference was organized on social policies in Bahrain, which was held in Manama, on 24 and 25 April 2006; followed in December 2006 by a workshop on social policy analysis and development. The goal of the workshop was to build the capacity of staff from the recently-established Social Policy Unit of the Ministry of Social Development in the field of social policy and development analysis. Staff involved in coordination from various different ministries, Government institutions and civil society organizations in Bahrain also attended the workshop.</p> <p>It has been decided that a similar national conference should be held in Cairo in February 2007. A paper on Egypt has been prepared for discussion at the conference, in addition to the case studies mentioned above which set out the factors that have contributed to successful experiments in the countries concerned, with the goal of extracting lessons which can be used in the Egyptian situation and in other countries of the region. In that context, other ESCWA member and Arab countries have expressed an interest in organizing a national conference on social policy. Those countries include Kuwait, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.</p> <p>The second regional report on social policy will be issued in 2007. It will contain proposals for adapting the guiding principles appearing in the social policy handbook issued by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in order to facilitate its use in the region. The report will focus on the employment of strategies for the implementation of social policy in the ESCWA region, in order to explain points relating to particular groups of the population, and the positive and negative factors in the various circumstances prevailing in the region. Extensive preparations have been made for the report and it is expected to be discussed at the expert group meeting which will be held for that purpose in 2007.</p> <p>It is planned to implement activities aimed at increasing awareness, including the organization, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, of an Arab forum on social policy and the issuance of a series of materials, including publications, fact sheets and booklets on social policy, for distribution to stakeholders in member countries.</p>

As indicated above, there are many ways to mainstream social policy within the national development strategy. ESCWA proposes the establishment of a national authority that will deal with the monitoring and follow-up of matters of social policy in each country. To that end, ESCWA encourages member countries to establish such an authority within the relevant ministry, in order to enable and strengthen the coordination of social policy at the national level, and to provide those authorities with the political legitimacy and the institutional mechanisms that will permit social policy concerns to be mainstreamed in all sectors. Such authorities may support the prioritizing of social programmes and increasing investment in them by developing a database of social indicators for a more precise identification and evaluation of spending on social programmes and its returns.

## Annex

### **INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICY PROJECTS: BAHRAIN AND EGYPT**

#### **I. THE INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICY PROGRAMME IN BAHRAIN**

The experience of countries has shown that there must be a clear State social policy. Such policy is just as important as the economic policy which directs economic activity and the policy that directs the relations of the State with neighbouring States and the outside world. Such social policies support unity, equality and social justice in every society and State, because they seek to influence the lives of all individuals in that society, by adopting, first and foremost, the principal of human development, ensuring the provision of opportunities and distributing the income of that society fairly between all its constituent parts. The term "social policy" encompasses all the activities undertaken by the State which influence the creation of living conditions for the citizen, including education, health, housing, welfare, security and the organization of social life, and the establishment of a prevailing environment for achievement, development and the promotion of individuals and institutions.

Within the framework of promoting national conferences on the strengthening of integrated social policies, the Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain and ESCWA have signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the formulation and implementation of integrated social policy in Bahrain. The two parties have commenced implementation of an integrated social policy project in Bahrain, consisting of the following three stages:

##### **A. FIRST STAGE: ORGANIZING THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BAHRAIN: VISION AND APPLICATION**

The Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain organized, with the cooperation of ESCWA, a national conference on social policy in Bahrain "Vision and Application", which was held in Manama on 24 and 25 April 2006. The meeting was attended by participants from all the ministries of Bahrain, Government and civil society institutions, NGOs, United Nations organizations and agencies, experts, communicators and specialists in social policy in the Arab region.

One of the goals of the conference was to institute dialogue and national consensus between experts and officials in the Government and community sectors on the social policy that can be pursued by the Ministry in order to develop Bahraini society and create a vision of the process of formulating and implementing integrated social policy in Bahrain with the participation of the Government, civil society and the private sector in its preparation, implementation and monitoring.

The key points of the conference dealt with the pillars of social policy, beginning with social legislation and social safety nets, and the influence of social development upon the social dimension. There was also a presentation of some experiences of social policies in selected countries, together with a presentation of a draft social development policy prepared by the Ministry of Social Development Bahrain.

Participants made a number of key recommendations on the creation of a vision for integrated social policy in Bahrain.

#### **Recommendations**

(a) The political leadership should support and give priority to integrated social policy; Government and community institutions should be enabled to implement and realise the goals of such policy including peace, social justice and solidarity between individual members of society;

(b) The Ministry of Social Development should be invited to accelerate the integrated social development project for Bahrain in cooperation with ESCWA, taking guidance from pioneering models and in conformity with the cultural, social, political and economic structure of the country;



(c) There should be cooperation and coordination between Government institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector in the preparation, implementation and following-up of integrated social policy, in accordance with the specializations, roles and goals of each sector;

(d) International treaties should be used in the development of social laws, and there should be coordination with the National Assembly over the draft laws promoting social policy which will be presented to the Government;

(e) The importance should be emphasized of the role undertaken by the representative legislative authority in the National Assembly in respect of accountability for and supervision of the realization of transparency and equality between the various institutions responsible for implementation of social policy;

(f) Public interest in social policy and the means of achieving it should be raised by reform and development of the education and training system on the basis of the necessary competencies for engaging with the challenges of globalization and the obligations of assimilation into the employment market;

(g) There is a need to prepare and qualify employees and specialists in the implementation of social policy in Bahrain, including the skills required for its achievement, quality assurance and improvement of services;

(h) The importance of the participation of civil society organizations, Government and private bodies, institutions and research centres in providing a structure for consciousness-raising and education as one of the core determinants and components for guaranteeing the activation of the social policy programme, should be emphasized while the current level of social welfare is strengthened on the basis of productivity and self-reliance;

(i) A system of social indicator assessment and follow-up must be instituted by establishing and supporting the idea of a social observatory in Bahrain;

(j) A mechanism for cooperation and information networks should be established between the Ministry of Social Development and ESCWA in order to follow up implementation of social policy;

(k) ESCWA should be invited to organize an Arab forum on social policy, with the goal of strengthening interest in integrated and effective social policy and creating dialogue and an exchange of views in that field, in order to strengthen cooperation mechanisms and support for social policy in the Arab region.

#### B. SECOND STAGE: ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOCIAL POLICY UNIT IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A social policy unit is being set up within the Ministry of Social Development which will be responsible for implementing a guidance project for social policy in Bahrain that will entail the gathering of statistical data, the analysis of reports and coordination with various Government departments and civil society organizations.

The tasks of the unit will include the gathering of information and reports on social policy, the strengthening of coordination between all institutions and ministries and other persons involved in social policy, in addition to the submission of periodic reports on the implementation of social policy to the Council of Ministers and the presentation of proposals aimed at providing better living conditions for all citizens.

**Accurate and precise databases are a basic requirement for development activities and is essential if any Government institution is to become familiar with its fundamental tasks in creating and implementing social policy and providing services to users, and then carrying out follow-up and evaluation. The unit will therefore require an information system on social development, including a**

**database of statistical information on all aspects of the work and activities of the unit to be established, in addition to field studies on the various issues and problems that enter into the scope of the unit's tasks, the delineation of performance indicators and the necessary development of the post-implementation follow-up and evaluation of achievements. The information and reports will also be used in the establishment of an early warning system for the supervision of social issues.**

**C. THIRD STAGE: ESTABLISHING A CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME  
FOR INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED WITH SOCIAL POLICY**

The process of building the capacities of institutions involved in the implementation of the proposed social policy is one of the most important factors for successful application of the policy. A basic training programme will therefore be put in place at this stage, with the cooperation of a board of local experts and training institutes, in order to evaluate and develop the training needs required by various Government and non-governmental partners in the field of social policy. In December 2006, ESCWA ran a training course on social policy concepts which was attended by those persons who will be assuming responsibility for the Social Policies Unit in the Ministry of Social Development, in addition to a number of representatives of other ministries which are involved in social matters, and representatives of other official sectors and the community sector.

**II. THE INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICY PROJECT IN EGYPT**

Pursuant to the report sent to ESCWA by the Ministry of Social Solidarity of Egypt requesting technical support in the formulation and implementation of integrated social policy in Egypt, ESCWA has begun, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, to prepare an integrated social policy project for Egypt. The first stage of the programme will commence at the beginning of January 2007, with the covering of a national conference on integrated social policy in Egypt to be held under the auspices of the Prime Minister. During this stage a social case study on Egypt will be undertaken, and success factors in the five above-mentioned sets of experiences in the field (Canada, Korea, Norway, Malaysia and Tunisia), will be presented and analysed and compared with the Egyptian situation, in order to set out the positive and negative factors for the formulation of integrated social policy in Egypt. Some 300 participants will attend the conference from all ministries and Government and civil society institutions, NGOs, United Nations organizations and agencies, experts, communicators and specialists in social policy issues in the Arab region.

It is expected that a memorandum of understanding will be signed by ESCWA and the Ministry of Social Solidarity on the setting up of a social policy unit in the Ministry with the technical support of ESCWA.