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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT**EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
BEIRUT, 24-25 MARCH 2011****Summary**

The eighth session of the Committee on Social Development was held in Beirut on 24 and 25 March 2011.

Included on the agenda of the session were items related to the progress achieved in implementing social development-related activities and recommendations under the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) since the seventh session of the Committee as well as the proposed programme of work for the 2012-2013 biennium in the field of social development.

The agenda also included the review of a set of reports on priority issues in the field of social development in the ESCWA region, focusing on proposed methods to combat poverty among persons with disabilities, civil society participation in public policy processes and national youth policies in the ESCWA region.

This report contains a brief account of the main issues raised during the discussions and the measures recommended by the Committee in respect of each agenda item.

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Introduction

1. The eighth session of the Committee on Social Development was held pursuant to Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) resolution 198 (XVII) of 31 May 1994, concerning the establishment of a committee on social development in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which was endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1994/27 of 26 July 1994, and pursuant to the recommendations of the seventh session of the Committee on Social Development held in Beirut, from 26 to 27 October 2009, which were adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-sixth session held in Beirut from 17 to 20 May 2010.

2. This report outlines the main issues discussed and measures recommended by the Committee in respect of each agenda item. The Committee unanimously adopted the report at its final session, which was held on 25 March 2011.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT ITS EIGHTH SESSION

3. The Committee on Social Development recommended the capacity of member countries to design and implement social policies and institutional mechanisms to achieve equal and inclusive social development be enhanced through the following measures:

(a) Building active partnerships between Governments, civil society organizations, private sector and international organizations to devise policies, including developing capacity-building programmes, supporting knowledge-transfer networks, creating indicators to monitor and establish the mechanisms of partnerships, and building on civil society efforts and expertise to contribute to decision-making;

(b) Building the capacity of member countries to face urban social challenges by submitting policy proposals to meet the basic needs of vulnerable groups in urban areas, particularly those living in the informal settlements and labour force in the informal sector;

(c) Adopting an inclusive and integrated social policy to achieve social justice and integration of all vulnerable groups by analysing social conditions in ESCWA member countries, including the informal labour market, and establishing dialogue between Governments and relevant stakeholders to identify social policy options based on best practice;

(d) Supporting the programme on strengthening the national capacity of member countries to formulate an integrated and inclusive development policy for youth with a cross-sectoral perspective in accordance with the guidelines, objectives and targets endorsed by the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) to facilitate policymaking for the development and integration of youth in society and create better opportunities for the evaluation of national and regional progress;

(e) Following up on social movements in Arab countries, monitoring their outcomes and incorporating them into ESCWA programmes and activities related to civil society participation in policymaking as well as policy implementation and evaluation;

(f) Proposing that the Committee on Social Development maintains its two-day session, as currently applied, and submitting that proposal for approval by ESCWA at its twenty-seventh session to be held in 2012.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS UNDER ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK SINCE THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Item 4 of the agenda)

4. The Committee included the item of progress achieved in the implementation of activities related to social development on the agenda of its eighth session, to inform representatives of member countries of the work undertaken by ESCWA in this field, and to provide the opportunity to discuss these topics, express opinions on such issues and other matters related to social development. The Committee examined this item on the basis of document E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/3 which included an explanation of what has been implemented in the areas of social development since the seventh session of the Committee. The activities were divided into the following three sections:

(a) *Social Policy Section*

5. The work of the Social Policy Section focused on articulating a common understanding of integrated social policy, and providing support to Governments in developing social policy frameworks and instruments that promote social justice and pro-poor policies through the following: (a) urging Governments to adopt an integrated social policy ensuring social equity in decision-making; (b) assisting Governments in developing a national vision of social policy through an open dialogue with relevant stakeholders; (c) cooperating with member countries in analysing gaps and challenges of social policies and devising policies based on regional and international best practice; and (d) identifying appropriate instruments that allow for successful institutionalization and monitoring of social policy. The section's activities focused on achieving its targets as to holding national and regional conventions and expert group meetings, as well as preparing reports, studies and analytical and field researches.

(b) *Social Participatory Development Section*

6. The work of the Social Participatory Development Section was aimed at building and developing institutional and individual capacities, and enabling participation in policymaking, including social policy, according to the following themes: (a) developing an integrated approach for social participatory development, issuing practical guidelines for intervention initiatives and organizing related activities once they have been revised in the light of remarks made by users; (b) promoting those guidelines through capacity-building programmes and training modules that meet the needs of such participants as Government institutions, civil society organizations, private sector, and local leaders, and comply with the technical advice requirements; (c) organizing workshops and round tables at the national and regional levels aimed at promoting knowledge frameworks or supporting coordination mechanisms/networks, activate all dynamic levels and aspects of participation and launch serious interactive dialogue; (d) publishing studies, reports and publications that promote exchange of experience in order to support the integration of various levels of development, follow-up capabilities and possibilities of participation in policies and programmes, and assess the achievements; and (e) providing technical advice to Governments of member countries and civil society organizations to support local development programmes, and expand their contribution to public policies.

(c) *Population and Social Development Section*

7. The work of the Population and Social Development Section focused on: (a) promoting awareness of policies aiming at such specific population groups as youth, the elderly, working age population through conferences, seminars and expert meetings; (b) building capacities in the field of demographic analysis and formulation of integrated policies that link population dynamics to the development process, through capacity-building programmes in the field of demographic analysis and in response to WPAY; (c) strengthening national capacities in the management of international migration within the framework of

developmental policies, through issuance of studies, reports and publications; (d) monitoring the progress of Arab countries in the implementation of programmes of action adopted by international conventions including the WPAY to the Year 2000 and Beyond, Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, and United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000; and (e) disseminating knowledge and exchanging information related to population and development.

(d) *Office of the Director of Social Development Division (SDD)*

8. The Office of the Director of Social Development Division (SDD) continued to address emerging social issues in the ESCWA region through the following actions: (a) organizing the Arab Forum on Social Policy; and (b) convening an expert group meeting on the social impact of the global economic crisis, and another meeting on reducing the urban divide in the ESCWA Region.

9. A set of observations was submitted under this item, including the following:

(a) Follow up on the progress made in collaboration with the office of the eighth session of the Committee on Social Development;

(b) Acknowledge ESCWA efforts and actions undertaken in the field of social development;

(c) Collect reports and documents six weeks prior to the session as agreed to allow delegations enough time to review the topics for discussion.

B. FOLLOW-UP ON PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE ESCWA REGION
(Item 5 of the agenda)

1. *Proposed methods to combat poverty among persons
with disabilities in the ESCWA region*

10. The Committee on Social Development examined this item on the basis of report E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part I), which reviews the linkage between disability, social exclusion and poverty in the ESCWA region in the framework of the implementation of the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities 2004-2013. The report covers the main factors leading to disability, exclusion and deprivation, which require more attention from policymakers in the ESCWA region. Moreover, the report highlights the scarcity of data and information about this topic, and includes a set of recommendations to formulate policies on enhancing the integration of persons with disabilities as well as strengthening equality and social inclusion in the region.

11. Discussions covered the following issues:

(a) The need to learn about social conditions by conducting field work, identifying the real needs of poor people and persons with special needs, especially in light of the recent significant developments in the region, which will have an important impact on poverty, exclusion and civil society role;

(b) The need to analyse globalization effects, human rights, educational curricula and civil society role in addressing poverty and dealing with persons with disabilities by promoting social equality and creating a cultural environment conducive to resolving their aggravating problems;

(c) The need to activate the role of civil society as a State partner in the integrated design and implementation of policies, provide updated and integrated information on the real situation of persons with disabilities, particularly the poverty-disability nexus, and coordinate access to information, if any, by member countries;

developmental policies, through issuance of studies, reports and publications; (d) monitoring the progress of Arab countries in the implementation of programmes of action adopted by international conventions including the WPAY to the Year 2000 and Beyond, Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, and United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000; and (e) disseminating knowledge and exchanging information related to population and development.

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(c) Collect reports and documents six weeks prior to the session as agreed to allow delegations enough time to review the topics for discussion.

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(b) The need to analyse globalization effects, human rights, educational curricula and civil society role in addressing poverty and dealing with persons with disabilities by promoting social equality and creating a cultural environment conducive to resolving their aggravating problems;

(c) The need to activate the role of civil society as a State partner in the integrated design and implementation of policies, provide updated and integrated information on the real situation of persons with disabilities, particularly the poverty-disability nexus, and coordinate access to information, if any, by member countries;

(d) The need for Arab countries to monitor, follow up and ratify international agreements, notably those related to the rights of the disabled, in addition to promulgating and developing legislations in accordance with the provisions of international agreements.

2. Civil society participation in public policy processes

12. The Committee on Social Development examined this item on the basis of report E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part II), which highlights the reality of civil society in ESCWA countries, conditions influencing the performance of civil society organizations, factors contributing to their development and their modern trends of action. Besides, this report focuses on the main areas of intervention and role of civil society in influencing policies, obstacles to that intervention and outcomes of civil society action.

13. The discussion covered the following issues:

(a) The need to continue research, expand knowledge and provide information about civil society role and modern functions, including capacities needed to enable civil society to fulfil its functions;

(b) The need to develop guidelines, devise programmes and undertake activities to build the capacity of civil society organizations and strengthen their participation, along with Governments and private sector, in policymaking as well as policy implementation and evaluation;

(c) The need to support partnership initiatives strengthening the social responsibility of the private sector as they help to mobilize financial resources and influence decision-making.

3. National youth policies in the ESCWA region

14. The Committee examined this item on the basis of report E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part III), which highlights the need to reconsider planning methods by evaluating and reviewing the activities of member countries in designing inclusive cross-sectoral policies focusing on youth priorities. That evaluation is based on the conceptual framework adopted by ESCWA for its programme of action for youth.

15. The discussion covered the following issues:

(a) Disseminating the youth definition issued by the United Nations and already adopted by member countries, in addition to such other definitions as youth unemployment, poverty and education;

(b) Coordinating the formulation of national youth policies by engaging all service and production sectors in policymaking to gear their attention towards youth priorities, establish the mechanisms needed for the social integration and participation of youth in development and provide them with equal opportunities;

(c) Conducting research on youth priorities, collecting relevant information and data, and benefiting from previous research to guide policies and programmes in this field.

C. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2012-2013 IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Item 6 of the agenda)

16. The Committee on Social Development examined this item on the basis of document E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/5. The document presents proposed priorities for the programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of social development. These include the expected accomplishments from the secretariat and indicators of achievements relating to the objective of strengthening the capacity of member countries to adopt social policies and institutional mechanisms to achieve equal and inclusive social

development with due consideration to region-specific characteristics and cultural features. The document also covers the strategy of the programme, external factors affecting its implementation and outputs expected during the 2012-2013 biennium, divided as follows: services to intergovernmental and expert meetings; other substantive activities, including publications and technical materials; and technical cooperation activities, including advisory services, training courses, seminars, workshops, and field projects based on requests submitted by member countries.

17. The discussion covered the following issues:

(a) It is important to align ESCWA programmes with the needs and priorities identified by member countries through their joint committees with ESCWA, such as the Committee on Social Development, and endorsed in ministerial meetings;

(b) Pursuant to its mandate and functions as a regional organization, ESCWA develops programmes within a regional context in accordance with international trends but without overlooking country-specific characteristics and priorities in the implementation of programmes and activities, especially those related to technical advice services based on the requests of member countries.

**D. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
(Item 7 of the agenda)**

18. Under this item, the Committee decided to convene its ninth session at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut in March 2013; the exact date will be determined later.

**E. OTHER MATTERS
(Item 8 of the agenda)**

19. Under this item, participants suggested that the Committee on Social Development should maintain its two-day session, as currently applied, and therefore a recommendation should be submitted for approval by ESCWA at its twenty-seventh session.

**III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON ITS EIGHTH SESSION
(Item 9 of the agenda)**

20. At its final meeting held on 25 March 2011, the Committee on Social Development adopted the report presented at its eighth session in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/6.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE OF THE SESSION

21. The eighth session of the Committee on Social Development was held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut on 24 and 25 March 2011.

B. OPENING

22. Ms. Zein Soufan, representative of Jordan, opened the session in her capacity as vice Chairwoman of the seventh session. In her statement, she pointed to the useful outcome of activities and recommendations implemented since the seventh session of the Committee on Social Development. Ms. Soufan noted the importance of social development issues and policies in the region, especially in light of recent political developments and social movements, and their impact on the Committee discussions related to ESCWA

programme of action. Finally, Ms. Soufan expressed the wish that this session would produce guidelines and practical suggestions to manage the process of social development.

23. Ms. Anhar Hegazi, Deputy Executive-Secretary of ESCWA delivered a statement in which she reaffirmed the importance of the role assumed by the Committee on Social Development in discussing the proposed ESCWA programme of work in the field of social development, and presenting suggestions aimed at developing the programme and coordinating its activities. The statement underscored the interest ESCWA takes in motivating cooperation and partnership between social actors, in order to promote coherent policies to counter social problems, particularly poverty, unemployment and exclusion. Ms. Hegazi also pointed out that all Governments, civil society organizations, private sector institutions, media, and all international and regional organizations, are concerned with the social policy process in terms of enhancing empowerment and institutional capacities to carry out social functions emanating from this policy.

C. PARTICIPANTS

24. Representatives of the following ESCWA member countries participated in the session: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Representatives of various United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, international intergovernmental organizations and their associated agencies, international and regional non-governmental organizations, civil society organization and donor entities participated as well. The list of participants is included in annex I of this report.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

25. Rule 18 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ESCWA provides that "Member countries shall assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. Unless the Commission decides otherwise, those bodies shall elect all their other officers". Pursuant to that rule, Ms. Ferial Hamid, representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, took the Chair of the session. The Committee nominated Mr. Jamal Abdallah of the Sudan, and Ms. Nawal Al-Baghdadi of Iraq, as Vice-chairpersons, and Mr. Khalifa Abdullah Ben Hamad Al-Barwani of Oman as Rapporteur.

E. AGENDA

26. At its first meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda of its eighth session presented in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/L.1:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Progress achieved in implementing social development-related activities and recommendations under ESCWA programme of work since the seventh session of the Committee on Social Development.
5. Follow-up on priority issues in the field of social development in the ESCWA region:
 - (a) Report on proposed methods to combat poverty among persons with disabilities in the ESCWA region;
 - (b) Report on civil society participation in public policy processes;
 - (c) Report on national youth policies in the ESCWA region.
6. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of social development.

7. Date and venue of the ninth session of the Committee.
 8. Other matters.
 9. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its eighth session.
27. At that meeting, the Committee also adopted the proposed organization of work in the form in which it appears in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/L.2.

F. DOCUMENTS

28. Annex II of this report lists the documents submitted to the Committee at its eighth session.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Egypt

Ms. Fatima Abdelfattah Hassan
Under-secretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs
Head of the Central Board of the Minister's Office
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Expert
Ministry of Social Solidarity

Ms. Nadia Mohamad Ramadan
General Director of the Public Administration of
External Relations
Development and International Cooperation
Officer
Ministry of Social Solidarity

Iraq

Ms. Nawal Abbas Mehdi Al-Baghdadi
Director General of the Human Development
Service
Ministry of Planning

Jordan

Ms. Zein Ahmad Soufan
Head of Social Studies Department
Ministry of Planning and International
Cooperation

Mr. Mohammed Al-Omash
Chargé d'affaires of the Directorate of
Productivity Promotion
Ministry of Social Development

Lebanon

Ms. Corine Azar
Head of the Department of Handicapped Affairs
Ministry of Social Affairs

Ms. Mariana Al-Khayat Al-Sabouri
Head of Public Relations and Conferences
Secretary of the National Population Council
Coordinator of youth issues with ESCWA
Coordinator of ESCWA Project on Participatory
Human Development in Post-Conflict Countries
in the ESCWA region
Ministry of Social Affairs

Mr. Mohammad Kdouh
Director of the Volunteers Department
Ministry of Social Affairs

Oman

Mr. Khalifa Abdullah Al-Barwani
Director General of Social Statistics

Ms. Shamsa Hamed Al-Harhi
Director of the Department of Associations and
Community Clubs
Ministry of Social Development

Mr. Abdullah Moussa Ali Al-Hussaini
Social researcher
Ministry of National Economy

Palestine

Mr. Ayman Mahmoud Sawalha
Deputy General Director of Planning
Ministry of Social Affairs

Qatar

Ms. Johara Mohammed Al-Motawa
Senior Researcher of Family Policies
Department of Family Policies
Supreme Council for Family Affairs

Ms. Aayad Aman Al-Sulaiti
Statistics Researcher
Ministry of Social Affairs

The Sudan

Mr. Jamal Elneil Abdalla
Director General of the Poverty and Development
Center
Ministry of Social Welfare and Security

Syrian Arab Republic

Ms. Ferial Hamid
Director of Social Affairs and Labour
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

Syrian Arab Republic (continued)

Mr. Bashar M. Asaad
Third Secretary
Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Beirut

Mr. Nizar Kasem Sharaa
Administrative
Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Beirut

United Arab Emirates

Ms. Fawzya Taresh Rabee
Director of Family Development Department
Ministry of Social Affairs

Ms. Zainab Al-Mulla
Deputy Director of the Department of Welfare
and Rehabilitation of Handicapped
Ministry of Social Affairs

Yemen

Mr. Abdullah Al-Hamdani
Chief Executive Officer of Handicapped Welfare
and Rehabilitation Fund (HWRF)
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

B. UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Ms. Seiko Sugita
Programme Specialist
Social and Human Sciences
Beirut, Lebanon

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Ms. Annamaria Laurini
UNICEF Representative
Lebanon Country Office

United Nations Industrial Development
Organization (UNIDO)

Mr. Ziad Ifram
Chief, Arab Countries Programme
UNIDO Headquarters
Vienna, Austria

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Mr. Eric Mottu
IMF Resident Representative
Beirut, Lebanon

C. INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Development and Employment Fund

Mr. Omar Khalifeh Al-Omari
General Manager
Amman, Jordan

National Permanent Population Committee
(NPPC)

Mr. Toufic Osseiran
Head of Lebanon Family Planning Association
(LFPA)
Expert at the National Permanent Population
Committee (NPPC)
Head of the National Union of Civil Society
Organizations
Affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs
Beirut, Lebanon

D. REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the Gulf
Cooperation Council (GCC) States –
Executive Office

Mr. Mahmood Ali Hafez
Director of Social Affairs Department
Manama, Bahrain

Mr. Khalil Yaqoob Bohazza
Legal Researcher
Social Affairs Department
Manama, Bahrain

Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization (ISESCO)

Mr. Abdul Aziz H. Ali
Expert
Regional Office
Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific
Organization (ALECSO)

Mr. Ahmad Sayed Khalil
Minister Plenipotentiary and Director of
Education
Tunisia

E. RESEARCH CENTRES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Moussa Charafeddine
President of the National Union of Civil Society
Organizations and Mental Disabilities
Institutions
President of Friends of the Disabled Association
Honorary Life Member of Inclusion International
President of the Middle East and North Africa
(MENA) Region at Inclusion International
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Afifa Al-Sayed
Vice President
National Committee for the Follow-up of
Women's Issues
Beirut, Lebanon

Mr. Kamel Mohanna
President General Coordinator of the Arab NGOs
Network
Local Development Expert
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Abir Chebaro
Coordinator of Beirut Unit
National Committee for the Follow-up of
Women's Issues
Beirut, Lebanon

F. UNIVERSITIES

Mr. Hassan Hammoud
Professor
Lebanese American University (LAU)
Beirut, Lebanon

Mr. Najib Issa
Professor of Development Economics
Lebanese University
Beirut, Lebanon

G. EXPERTS

Mr. Hussein A. Shaban
General Manager
Documentary Center for Humanitarian
International Law
Beirut, Lebanon

Mr. Nabil Omar Kaissi
Civil Engineer
Beirut, Lebanon

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/INF.1		Information note
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/L.1	3	Provisional agenda and annotations
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/L.2	3	Organization of work
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/3	4	Progress achieved in implementing social development-related activities and recommendations under ESCWA programme of work since the seventh session of the Committee on Social Development
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4	5	Follow-up on priority issues in the field of social development in the ESCWA region
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part I)	5 (a)	Proposed methods to combat poverty among persons with disabilities
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part II)	5 (b)	Civil society participation in public policy processes
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/4(Part III)	5 (c)	National youth policies
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/IG.1/5	6	Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of social development
