



Successful Projects!

The "Thousand Mile" Journey Starts with an Idea



The Digital Arabic Content (DAC) Competitions launched by UN-ESCWA during June-July 2008 laid a foundation for innovation and unlocked an opportunity for university graduates and young entrepreneurs to realize their ideas in the DAC domain. The competitions drew in over 55 participating parties from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen.

"Alf Mile" project (A Thousand Miles) was selected as winner of the incubation award in Lebanon. The project aims to develop a regional, interactive educational game on the countries and cultures of the Arab world. It will be incubated at Berytech.

In Jordan, the Jordan Innovation Centre at Philadelphia University will incubate two projects: the "Arab Entrepreneur" website (first winner) and "Itqan" (second place): a tool for automatic generation of cases in software testing.

In Palestine, the "Arabic Optical Character Recognition System" project was found to be the best participating project and was selected for incubation at the Palestine Information and Communication Technology Incubator (PICTI).

In Syria, two projects were selected as winners for incubation at the Syrian Computer Society - Information and Communication Technology Incubator: an "Automatic Text-to-Speech Engine"; which will recognize Arabic text for conversion into speech and "academia.sy" - an interactive portal providing educational services and media information for students and institutions of higher education.

Witnessing the largest number of applications, the competition in Yemen concluded with three winners: "Aden Tourism Portal" providing a range of tourism services on Aden, the "Electronic Mediator" which acts as an online mediator for services such as employment, project funding and real estate, and the "E-Learning" project, which provides comprehensive educational management services. All three projects will be incubated at the Aden ICT Incubator.

Public Procurement and Strategic Planning



The UN-ESCWA Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division (ECRI), in cooperation with the Bassel Fleihan Institute of Finance in Lebanon, organized a training of trainers on public procurement and strategic planning on

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Successful Projects!
- What is Integrated Social Policy?
- Facts and Figures

25 November and 5 December 2008. Participants in the project were representatives of the Iraq Ministry of Construction & Housing. The project is held in the context of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), which aims at developing the capacities of the Iraqi housing sector (stage 2).

The project included a workshop to train trainers on training skills, in addition to two others on public procurement and strategic planning. It aimed at developing the participants' skills and enabling them to draw up and implement training programs in Iraq on the said subjects. It contributed to enabling participants to apply adult training skills; manage participating groups; draft training goals and others. Participants were also empowered in the fields of creative and strategic thinking among other issues. On public procurement, they were introduced to the different bases of public procurement and the modern trends on the matter. ■

What is Integrated Social Policy?

The “Integrated Social Policy II: From Concept to Practice” report, that UN-ESCWA launched on 18 December 2008, reveals that social policy embodies the totality of interventions designed to change social welfare, social relations and social institutions by expanding choices and opportunities for people throughout the development process. It simultaneously addresses all aspects of social production, reproduction, protection and redistribution, as well as issues of equity, inclusion and rights. Social policy integrates and connects the economic and social dimensions of development into a coherent whole. Integrated social policy is about fairness. It is about creating the right conditions- such as equal opportunities and equal responsibilities- to ensure social justice. It is about creating regulatory mechanisms to guarantee equity is perpetuated. Integrated social policy ensures fair play.

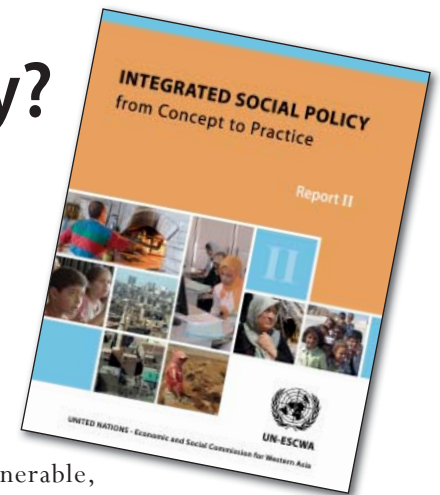
The report gives the example of a 100-metre race. In a fair race, all contestants line up at the starting line. During their sprint, they encounter identical obstacles, and have equal access to support and opportunities. In short, their success depends solely upon their ability and dedication. When applied to real life, unfortunately, this fair race rarely exists. All societies are burdened by disparity: the poor, disadvan-

taged and disenfranchised all too often are forced to start their race far back from the starting line, face a disproportionately high number of obstacles and can rarely access opportunities to improve their quality of life. In countries with high socio-economic disparities, moreover, the inequity is deepened such that a privileged few, due to wealth and access to decision-makers, start their race considerably ahead of the starting line, face few if any obstacles and can access more than their fair share of opportunities.

Well designed and implemented social policy provides a corrective mechanism to these inequities, ensuring that everyone is provided equal access to equal opportunities. Social policy also ensures that regulatory mechanisms and checks are in place to address failures and abuse. In essence, integrated social policy creates a level playing field

Government action or inaction regarding Social Rights, Social Regulation and Social Redistribution (the three R's) determine the fairness, legitimacy and outcome of the race. Social Respect, Social Responsibility, and Social Representation can guide the government's application of the three R's.

Social policy builds societies for all citizens; attends to the needs of the poor and



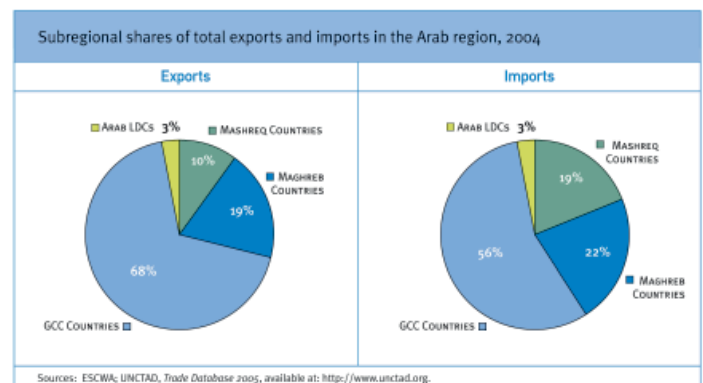
vulnerable, ensuring that people have access to social services that promote their health and well-being and thereby enhance their ability to contribute to society; ensures that people have equal access to opportunities and participation in society and the economy; and empowers the necessary regulations and institutional mechanisms to remove any barriers to inclusion and participation.

The report is comprised of four chapters: the first provides an overview of social policy, the second defines UN-ESCWA's three-tiered framework to social policy, while the third provides starting points for designing and implementing the processes, mechanisms and tools needed for social policy, and the fourth concludes with UN-ESCWA's next steps to further entrench integrated social policymaking across the region. ■

Facts and Figures: The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Subregional shares of total exports and imports in the Arab region 2004



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