



Spotlight on ESCWA Region:
Combating Killer Maladies and Road Accidents



ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader Omar AlDafa cautioned against the spread of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and injuries caused by road traffic in countries of the region, which are among the world's most affected countries by both afflictions be it in human losses or material ones. The high injury toll prompted the Western Asia Regional Ministerial Meeting on non-communicable diseases and injuries to call for immediate action to reduce the devastating health and socio-economic impacts of both afflictions, and raise priority accorded to NCDs and injury prevention on the agenda of international forums and meeting.

Held under the theme of "Addressing Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries: Major Challenges to Sustainable Development in

the 21st Century", the Ministerial Meeting was organized on 10-11 May 2009 in Doha, and was a close cooperation effort between ESCWA, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The meeting gathered a crowd of regional and international experts who addressed the main risk factors for NCDs including cardiovascular diseases, cancers and diabetes, as well as new initiatives and strategies to combat these diseases and interventions for prevention of traffic injuries. The meeting came in support of the ECOSOC 2009 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), to be held this coming July in Geneva, under the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health".

ESCWA Region at High Risk

Like other world regions, ESCWA countries witness a surge in NCDs, with particularly high rates of cardiovascular disease, accounting for 27% of all deaths in the region. The Eastern Mediterranean region is also set to be the world's most NCD-afflicted region after the African region in the coming period, since it is expected that both regions record a 27 and 25% rise in NCDs, according to WHO's Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health Assistant Director-General Dr Ala Alwan. The ESCWA region also registers the highest toll globally in road traffic injuries and fatalities.

Participants in the Doha meeting recommended raising priority accorded to NCDs and injury prevention on the agenda of high-level forums and meetings of national, regional and international leaders. Recommendations urged member states to develop national and regional multi-sectoral action plans guided by existing frameworks,

such as the action plan for the global strategy for prevention and control of NCDs, endorsed by the WHO assembly in 2008. Recommendations also extended to the inclusion of NCD and injury monitoring in national processes for monitoring the MDGs, and strengthening data collection on this level.



A Stitch in Time Saves Nine

ESCWA Executive Secretary noted that such losses of life and disabilities leave deep psychological and economic repercussions on the individual, the family and the society. As AIDafa explained “at the individual and family level, premature death and disability brings not only emotional pain and suffering, but can also push families below the poverty line. The sick and disabled often lose their jobs and livelihoods, and family spending on healthcare becomes the priority. At the national and regional level, premature death, disability, and the burden on health systems undermine development efforts and impact economic growth”.

With over half of the population in the ESCWA region living in urban areas today,

promoting healthy urban environments should become a priority, AIDafa said. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially in the health sector, cooperation is necessary between governmental institutions, civil society and the private sector. The UN Undersecretary-General called in this context for regional cooperation in combating pandemics, such as the swine flu, and in coordinating initiatives to address key regional health risks. He asserted that the challenge before the ESCWA region was great, warning against the impacts of the economic crisis facing the world on public health.





Measuring ICT Indicators

ESCWA held a training workshop on “**Measuring ICT Indicators**” from 29 March to 2 April 2009 in Kuwait City in collaboration with the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT). The workshop highlighted the status of ICT indicators, and trained participants on the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) to facilitate work on data and statistics.

The workshop agenda was based on the “Core ICT Indicators” publication issued by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development¹.

The meeting explored the definitions of ICT indicators with emphasis on the core list of indicators and the methods of measurement in addition to specifying the extended list of indicators at the national level and potential sources for data collection. It also highlighted the status of ICT indicators data collection and the statistical methodologies used including the households and business surveys. It concluded by providing practical training on the different modules of the ESIS namely: administration, data management and dissemination of the core set of ICT indicators. This intensive hands-on 5-day training workshop was attended by 21 participants from the Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) countries namely: Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait.



The workshop, which was of sub-regional nature, provided a theoretical as well as hands-on training to participants on data collection of the core list of ICT indicators. The latter included indicators on ICT infrastructure and access, indicators on access to and use of ICT by households and individuals, indicators on use of ICT by businesses, indicators on ICT sector and trade in ICT goods and indicators on ICT in education.

¹ <http://measuring-ict.unctad.org>

WSIS Follow-Up

ESCWA will hold the "Regional Follow-up to the Outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society" conference between 16 and 18 June 2009, in Damascus. The meeting seeks to keep the momentum of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) going and to accelerate the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action (PoA), the Tunis Agenda and the Regional Plan of Action (RPoA). It will offer a forum for various WSIS stakeholders in the ESCWA region to present, discuss and review the progress made towards the implementation of the PoA, as well as of the execution of the RPoA for building the Information Society and of similar regional strategies and plans of action; identify new projects for inclusion in the RPoA and in other plans of action, including the updated Arab ICT Strategy; update the RPoA and make recommendations for the enhancement of ICT strategies and plans of action, in light of accumulated experiences.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNUM=850e>

