Evaluation of the ESCAP Subprogramme on Social Development

July 2018

UNITED NATIONS
ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Evaluation of the
ESCAP Subprogramme
on Social Development

July 2018

Prepared by

Minoli de Bresser

Commissioned by

Social Development Division, ESCAP

UNITED NATIONS
ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DA	Development Account
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GA	General Assembly
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GESIS	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IMDIS	Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System
LDCs	Least Developing Countries
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MS	Member States
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RB	Regular Budget
RBM	Results Based Management
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
SDD	Social Development Division
SDTS	Sustainable Demographic Transitions Section
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SETS	Sustainable Economic Transformations Section
SIDS	Small Island Development States
TOR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN-SWAP	United Nations System Wide Action Plan to Implement the Chief Executives Board Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
XB	Extra-budgetary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals set an extremely ambitious yet achievable development agenda for the countries and their development partners in this region to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty and leave no one behind. The evaluation of the subprogramme on social development has taken place in the context of this development agenda which sets the vision and goals for the region up to 2030.

Institutional Context

In line with ESCAP Commission Resolution 66/15, the evaluation of the subprogramme on social development has been undertaken for the first time. It has also been conducted in the context of the UN Secretary General's ongoing reforms to implement the 2030 Agenda more effectively, in particular on how to improve the effectiveness of the UN development system at the regional level.

The subprogramme on social development comprises nine thematic areas: Ageing Societies; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; Disability-Inclusive Development; International Migration; Population and Development; Poverty and Inequality; Social Inclusion; Social Protection and Financing Social Development; and Youth Empowerment.

It is managed by ESCAP's Social Development Division (SDD) which has a total staff strength of 30 out of which 19 are professional staff with reasonable gender parity. In 2017 the SDD regrouped the themes of its work into three sections to align more closely with the SDGs, namely the Sustainable Socioeconomic Transformation Section, Sustainable Demographic Transitions Section, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section.

The Evaluation: Objectives, Approach and Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to support efforts to improve the overall effectiveness of SDD's subprogramme on social development and generate information on its achievements and results. The main objectives were:

- To assess development results at the *regional and national levels* in the following three key intervention areas across all the themes of the subprogramme on social development**: a) intergovernmental processes b) knowledge products and c) country support for capacity building**
- To recommend actions for improving the effectiveness of the above three intervention areas
- To assess the extent to which gender equality concerns had been mainstreamed into these intervention areas and make recommendations for improvement and;
- To define indicators for measuring development results in the SDD intervention areas

The approach of the evaluation was to be forward-looking, transparent, inclusive and evidence-based. The methodology consisted of the following elements: extensive desk review of ESCAP and non-ESCAP documents and reports; two online surveys, one for SDD professional staff and one for external stakeholders representing governments, civil society, academic partner institutions and independent experts. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were also conducted with ESCAP staff during an 8-day mission to Bangkok and these were followed up with skype and telephone interviews with external stakeholders. Combined together these sources of feedback provide a solid evidence base on which the findings and conclusions of this evaluation are based.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

Overall the thematic areas covered by the subprogramme on social development are very relevant to the *regional and subregional priorities* and needs of the Member States. Most of the themes are being raised within the framework of an international convention or regional agreement which Member States have committed to. In this way they also commit to pursing the international norms and standards set by these international frameworks. However, in terms of country level priorities, not all thematic areas have high or equal priority within the broader context of numerous, diverse and more pressing national development priorities.

Effectiveness of Intergovernmental Processes

SDD's support to intergovernmental processes (intergovernmental meetings, expert group meetings) is highly effective and appreciated by external stakeholders for several reasons. Firstly, they create a neutral space to discuss development issues, some of which can be sensitive, and this can lead to a regional consensus of priorities for common follow-up actions. Secondly, they maintain regional momentum on Member States to implement country-level actions in line with their international commitments. Thirdly, they enable the sharing of data/information on best practices among countries which also leads to further networking. Fourthly, policy-makers are exposed to the importance of taking into account gender equality, social inclusion and human rights into their policy-making and planning processes. Fifth, the inclusion of civil society in thematic consultations brings alternative voices into dialogues, which may not be heard at the country level. Finally, the importance of evidence-based social development policies is emphasised continuously.

Effectiveness of Analytical Research and Knowledge Products

Numerous knowledge products (flagship and thematic reports, journals, policy and operational guides, working papers, fact sheets) have been produced over the past four years and are of high quality and provide baseline information and policy options in the nine thematic areas. These are most useful to development practitioners, policy/programme implementers and technical experts who also use them for advocacy or policy development. Feedback from the interviews and external stakeholder survey did not provide sufficient evidence to determine the extent to which senior policy-makers are using these knowledge products for policy development and change. Initial feedback indicated that they seem to prefer face-to-face interactions, both formal and informal, and short policy briefs/technical papers for this purpose.

Besides an occasional launch event or newspaper articles and the emailing of publications to a list of SDD stakeholders, there is no systematic communications and dissemination strategy to promote the key findings of a regional study to a wider audience of Member States, UN and multilateral development agencies, civil society and possibly even to certain sections of the private sector.

Effectiveness of the Technical Cooperation Country Support

Most of the technical cooperation country support is provided within the framework of an international convention or regional agreement that is related to one of the thematic areas and it is demand-driven by Member States. In this way it responds to the countries' development needs. However, there are limitations in the country support mechanism which impact on its effectiveness and sustainability in the long-term.

Several factors from both the subprogramme and the Member States influence the effectiveness and sustainability of country support: the absorptive capacity and enabling environment of the recipient country and the duration and nature of the subprogramme support. In general, the country support is too short and limited in inputs to foster deep-seated country ownership and eventual sustainability of

the intervention. This is particularly true for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States in the region which require longer-term technical and capacity building support.

Effectiveness of Gender Mainstreaming in the Subprogramme on Social Development

The Social Development Division has been very effective in mainstreaming gender equality concerns throughout all the thematic areas and is consistently raising gender equality aspects in the intergovernmental meetings, the regional expert group meetings and in its knowledge products. There are two main factors that contribute to this achievement: firstly, mainstreaming gender into social development themes and sectors is perceived to be easier than in others, and secondly; the Division's professional staff have the necessary expertise to mainstream gender into their respective areas of work.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (for details see section 5)

Bearing in mind that ESCAP's programme of work for the period 2018-2019 is already in effect and therefore it will not be feasible to implement major changes or re-directions, the recommendations below can be implemented in a phased way beyond 2019. At that point the impacts of the Secretary General's reform of the regional commissions would also be clear. These recommendations will also need to be discussed with ESCAP's senior management and with the Committee on Social Development which guides the work of the subprogramme.

Component 1: Preparatory Work	Timing
• SDD should conduct an in-house stock-taking/mapping exercise to establish the following for the next programme biennium: its comparative advantages in light of emerging development issues; those thematic areas where intergovernmental processes will need to be supported and the level of effort needed; for the remaining thematic areas identify their *regional* implications and what support the MS will need; consider a reduction in the number of thematic areas towards more thematic focus • The results of this exercise should feed into the preparation of SDDs Programme of Work for 2020-2022	To be linked with the preparation of ESCAP's Strategic Framework for 2020-2022
Component 2: Analytical Knowledge Products	
• SDD should consider reducing the number of knowledge products per year to one annual flagship report and fewer in-depth studies across the thematic areas • SDD should develop a template for a short policy across the thematic areas SDD should develop and implement a clear communications and dissemination strategy	In the next programme biennium. Initial work being done
Component 3: Country Support	
• SDD should reconsider the country support *mechanism* to ensure that future activities not only support the implementation of regional agreements but also that results feedback into regional consensus building and to the UN Country Teams. • Work more closely with UNCTs and ESCAP Subregional Offices to identify partners on the ground that could take	In the current programme biennium

over after the SDD support to strengthen ownership and sustainability prospects	
• SDD should maintain its involvement with countries, including through development of its regional knowledge products (i.e. using them to conduct field research or pilot testing), or through its regional and sub-regional expert meetings	

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Development Context in the Asia Pacific Region

The Asia Pacific region is the largest regional economy in the world with a population of 4.1 billion people representing about 60% of the total world population. Over the past quarter century this region has witnessed impressive economic growth and significant progress in several key human and social development indicators.

The number of people living below the poverty line of 1.90$ per day[1] has fallen dramatically from 1.04 billion in 2002 to an estimated 400 million in 2017 with 1.2 billion people still living in a vulnerable situation (at 3.20 $ a day)[2]. There have also been significant improvements in a range of key social indicators such as the maternal mortality rate, under-five mortality rate, access to drinking water and sanitation services, increased enrolment rates for boys and girls in primary education etc.

However, development challenges in this region are as diverse and complex as the region itself and regional statistics mask wide differences within countries and between sub-regions. Most of the remaining poor in the region reside in least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), land-locked developing countries and in pockets of countries with medium to high GDP per capita. In particular vulnerable groups- the remaining poor, women and children, youth, the disabled and ageing and ethnic minorities- have not benefitted equally from globalisation and broad economic growth and from the increased opportunities that have been created. For example, in the Asia Pacific region there are about 690 million persons with disabilities who face numerous barriers to participating fully in society and a large proportion of them live in poverty. Similarly, the region's population is ageing rapidly with the proportion of older people expected to reach 25% of the region's total population by 2050; again a large proportion of this group live in poverty or do not have adequate access to income, welfare services and equal participation in society.

In terms of gender equality, the region has achieved significant success in gender parity in primary education and near parity at secondary and tertiary levels. Progress in other indicators such as health, labour market participation and women's political participation remains slow and varies greatly within and between countries. Women continue to face discriminatory policies, social and cultural barriers, limited economic opportunities and access to basic services and assets, and threats to their personal security (e.g. gender based violence).

Finally, this region is the most disaster-prone in the world with the SIDS in the Pacific sub-region bearing the brunt of the impacts of climate change. At the same time other countries also face the negative impacts of climate change such as flooding, deforestation and air and noise pollution.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeeded the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. With its 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 232 indicators, Agenda 2030 sets an extremely ambitious yet achievable development agenda for the

---

[1] At 2011 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)

[2] www.escap.org 2017

countries and their development partners in this region and the rest of the world to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, leaving no one behind.

1.2 Institutional Context for the Evaluation

1.2.1 UN Secretary General's Reform of the Regional Economic and Social Commissions

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been the basis for prompting action by the UN Secretary General to reposition the UN development system to be able to deliver more effectively and efficiently on this ambitious development vision. General Assembly Resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system asked for two sets of actions from the Secretary-General: firstly, to develop a strategic document reflecting collective action on how to implement the 2030 Agenda and secondly, a proposal on how to improve the Resident Coordinator system.

Following extensive and inclusive consultations with Member States and UN agencies complemented with in-depth studies, surveys and analyses, several proposals have been presented in two reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly during the course of 2017. As part of this process, the future role of the regional economic and social commissions is to be re-examined in the following aspects:[34]

➢ Re-profiling of the regional economic and social commissions and the regional teams of the UN Development Group (UNDG) to create better synergies and complementarity

➢ Progressive integration of the regional teams and the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) to result in coherent and integrated policy advice for the region

➢ Increasing in a systematic and structured way the engagement between the Secretariat entities and the UN Country Teams (UNCT) in the region

➢ Ensuring that the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) include more thorough analyses of regional and trans-boundary issues; it will also become a requirement that the country activities supported by regional commissions will be included in the UNDAF

➢ Improving the effectiveness and convening role of the regional commissions to act as a "policy think tank" for the region and to provide intellectual support on sustainable development

➢ Establishing a joint publications committee at regional level to reduce duplication of knowledge products

In response to the above reports of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly (GA) adopted resolution 72/279 (May 2018) endorsing a phased approach to revamp the UN development system at the regional level. The first phase will implement the proposed measures to optimise functions and enhance collaboration at the regional and subregional levels. For the longer-term, the GA requested the Secretary-General to provide options for re-profiling and re-structuring of the regional assets of the United Nations to the Economic and Social Council at the operational activities for development segment of its 2018 session.

---

[3] UNGA 72nd Session, Economic and Social Council Session 2018, Report of the UN Secretary-General, "Repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet", December 2017

[4] Report of the UN Secretary-General "Repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all", July 2017

This evaluation has been conducted within the context of the ongoing reform process and therefore some of its recommendations are likely to align with and even respond to the Secretary-General's proposals. Secondly, some of the recommendations are likely to be valid and/or have implications for the other ESCAP subprogrammes.

1.2.2 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional arm of the United Nations (UN) for the Asia and Pacific region. It currently serves 53 Member States (MS) and 9 associate members and territories, covering a vast geographical area stretching from Turkey in the west to Kiribati in the east and the Russian Federation in the north to New Zealand in the south. In addition to its regional headquarters in Bangkok, it has four sub-regional offices5 that serve as facilitators and focal points for its sub-regional work and activities.

ESCAP's mandate is to promote regional cooperation for social and economic development in the Asia and Pacific region by facilitating "concerted action for the balanced integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development" (often referred to as the three dimensions of sustainable development). It implements this mandate through the following interventions:[6]

- facilitating the negotiation of crucial inter-governmental and regional agreements
- undertaking high-quality normative and analytical research and action-oriented studies
- advocating policies and best practices to address critical and emerging development challenges, and
- supporting the development of country-level capacities to address such development challenges

ESCAP's overall programme consists of nine subprogrammes:
- Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development
- Trade, Investment and Innovation
- ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Energy
- Environment and Development
- Transport
- Subregional Activities for Development

These subprogrammes are guided by nine Committees which meet biennially[7]. The role of the Committee on Social Development is: to review the regional implementation of international goals and commitments in its thematic areas; to assess population, migration, poverty and inequality trends; to promote gender equality and women's empowerment; and to strengthen social protection and health systems in the region.

The social development subprogramme is managed by the Social Development Division (SDD). In 2017, the SDD was restructured to align itself more closely with the SDGs and incorporated poverty and inequality as a new theme of its work. It regrouped the themes of its work into three sections namely the Sustainable Socioeconomic Transformation Section (SETS), Sustainable Demographic Transitions Section (SDTS), and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section (GESIS).

---

[5] East and North-East Asia, South and South-West Asia, North and Central Asia, the Pacific
[6] Executive Secretary's Guidance Note, November 2014
[7] www.unescap/org/about/committees

This evaluation has focussed on the work of the subprogramme on social development which is comprised of support and interventions in the following nine thematic areas:

- Ageing Societies
- Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
- Disability-Inclusive Development
- International Migration
- Population and Development
- Poverty and Inequality
- Social Inclusion
- Social Protection and Financing Social development
- Youth Empowerment

1.3 Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

In line with the Terms of Reference (TOR-attached as **Annex 3),** this evaluation aimed to contribute to the overall effectiveness of ESCAP by examining the results and achievements under the subprogramme on social development from 2014- 2017 i.e. the past four years. As agreed during the inception phase, the evaluation was summative in that it focussed *on accumulated outcome-level results* at the end of the two programme biennia. It was also forward-looking by highlighting SDD's comparative advantages, positive results and factors that led to successes as well as those where counter-measures for improvements are needed. The evaluation also took into account the ongoing reforms within ESCAP (as mentioned above) and was conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines[8] which are in conformity with the norms and standards of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines for the wider UN system.

The specific objectives of this evaluation were:

1. To assess development results at the *regional and national levels* in the following three key intervention areas across all the themes of the social development subprogramme: **a) knowledge generation b) inter-governmental processes and c) country support for capacity building**

2. To define indicators/metrics for measuring development results in each of these intervention areas[9]
3. To recommend measures/actions for improving the subprogramme's knowledge products, inter-governmental processes and country support, and
4. To assess the extent to which gender equality concerns have been mainstreamed into these interventions and make recommendations for improvements.

1.4 Scope of the Evaluation

The broad scope of the evaluation was defined in the TOR and the social development subprogramme was evaluated against the criteria of *relevance, effectiveness and the extent of gender mainstreaming. An evaluation matrix with these criteria, tentative development results and indicators was developed by the evaluator in the inception phase, based on document review and substantial research.*

As can be deducted from section 1.2, the scope of this evaluation consisted of many "layers": two programme biennia, nine thematic areas within the social development subprogramme and supportive interventions from headquarters and four sub-regional offices.

---

[8] ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation-Policy Guidelines, August 2017
[9] This will be delivered as a separate deliverable, outside of this final report

Within the resources and time available it was unrealistic to examine the subprogramme in all these aspects and to evaluate development results separately in the nine thematic areas of the subprogramme. Still in line with the TOR, the following agreements were reached with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) during the inception phase:

- The evaluation would focus on the four intervention areas *i.e. knowledge generation, inter-governmental processes, country support and gender mainstreaming* and evaluate the development results that have been generated from these across the themes.
- The definition of a "development result" would reflect the *outcome level and these may be short, intermediate or long-term depending on data availability.* The focus would be to extract outcome level results of the social development subprogramme at the regional and national levels, with a special emphasis on policy impact. It was also beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess *transformative change* which also involves behavioural change over the long term.
- The issue of attribution versus contribution was also discussed. It was concluded that outcome-level development results that are directly within the purview and "control" of the SDD could be identified and assessed relatively easily. Those beyond were likely to be the result of combined actions by other actors and partners (governments, civil society, private sector, multilateral and bilateral organisations, the public) and therefore cannot be directly attributed to SDD support and interventions.

2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach

In line with ESCAP's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Guidelines[10], the evaluation was conducted in a transparent, participatory and forward-looking manner. Every effort was made to base findings and recommendations on comprehensive robust evidence, consisting of a mix of quantitative data and qualitative information. Wherever appropriate the analysis of data/information was triangulated with other sources to confirm common trends and findings. This report also highlights some key successes in the subprogramme that can be good "show case" examples for the SDD's future work.

In consultation with the ERG and the evaluator, the Evaluation Unit[11] prepared a **Workplan for the implementation of the evaluation from March to July 2018, which is attached as Annex 1.**

2.2 Methodology

As stated in the TOR, the evaluation used the following mixed methods to 1) collect quantitative data and qualitative information to support the findings and 2) collect good practice examples of public diplomacy processes and related indicators. Sex-disaggregated data was collected wherever appropriate e.g. during the interviews and in the two online surveys.

The **methodology** consisted of:
- Extensive home-based review and study of all relevant documents, reports etc. For this purpose the Evaluation Unit set up a Dropbox which worked very well.
- Online research of good examples of indicators to measure public diplomacy processes and knowledge products[12]
- An 8-day work mission to ESCAP regional headquarters to interview relevant stakeholders and partners (as individual key informants and in focus group discussions)[13]. This was followed up

---

[10] ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy-Guidelines, August 2017
[11] Represented by Mr. Edgar Dante, Chief
[12] So far little comprehensive work has been done on this by international development agencies; there are some examples by the US and UK governments, UN Women.
[13] Four sets of simple Interview guides were developed for the different groups

by long distance individual interviews with external stakeholders. During this period, a total of 52 persons were interviewed and a comprehensive list of all persons interviewed is attached as **Annex 2.**

- An online survey was sent out to about 600 SDD external stakeholders who represented government, non-government, civil society, academia and individual experts[14]
- An additional survey was sent to select SDD professional staff [15]
- A total of nearly 20 follow-up interviews were conducted with external stakeholders via telephone and skype calls

2.3 Consolidated Evidence Base and Constraints

As is common with most evaluations, this evaluation has faced constraints in terms of establishing a *comprehensive* robust foundation of quantitative and qualitative data that represents the entire Asia Pacific region. In particular the response rate to the survey of external stakeholders has been disappointingly low; out of the 600 emails sent out to stakeholders, 100 respondents started the survey but only 42 respondents completed it i.e. only 7%. The positive result is that 78% of the respondents represents national governments which are the main stakeholders and recipients of the social development subprogramme's support. 55% of respondents were female and 45% of respondent were male-a well-balanced representation given that traditionally more women work in the social development sectors.

FIGURE 1. External Stakeholder Survey Response
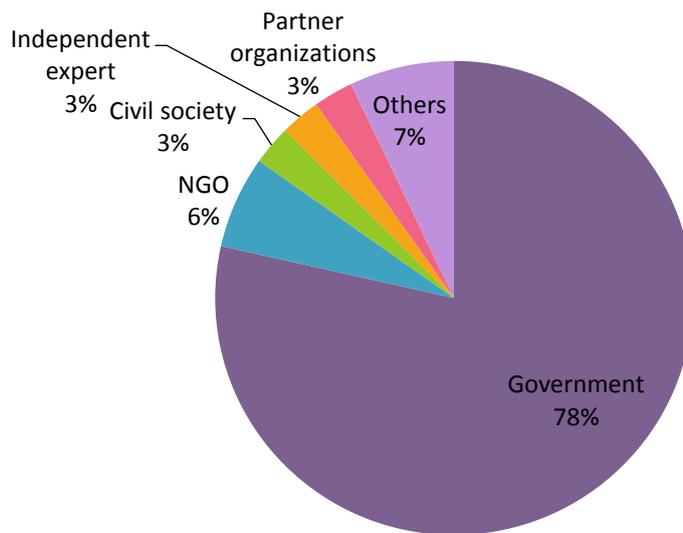
The SDD staff survey was sent to ten professionals in the SDD who all completed it i.e. 100% response rate. The responding team is also well balanced by gender with 6 female professionals and four male professionals. The information from this survey was treated in a different way because obviously it is more subjective, yet in general the response ratings matched with the response ratings of the external stakeholders.

---

[14] Survey questionnaire was designed by the evaluator with inputs from Edgar Dante; survey administered by the Evaluation Unit. Report available with the Evaluation Unit

[15] Survey questionnaire was designed by the evaluator with inputs from Therese Bjork and Edgar Dante; survey administered by the Evaluation Unit. Report available with the Evaluation Unit.

Two constraints were faced regarding the interviews. Firstly, there were limited respondents from the 2014-2015 biennium period and many more from the 2016-2017 biennium period. Therefore, the evaluation had to rely on internal performance monitoring reports and assessments and feedback from SDD staff for extracting outcome-level results, which are not completely impartial sources. Secondly, a large number of external interviewees had been involved with the subprogramme on social development around one discrete activity e.g. preparation of a background paper, participation in one regional experts group meeting, attendance at one intergovernmental meeting, participation in an experts panel or part-time support for one short-term project. It was therefore difficult for such interviewees to comment strategically and in terms of development results at outcome level.

Against these, it should be mentioned that the individual interviews allowed for in-depth discussion and probing questions that generated a rich body of qualitative feedback often supported by specific examples.

Despite these constraints, the evaluator is confident that the **combined body of data/information collected through the document review, two online surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups discussions has been sufficient to generate common trends in the feedback, on which the findings and conclusions in the following sections are based.**

3 MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings are presented in response to the key evaluation questions identified in the TOR and specified in more detail in the inception report (see Annex 2 Evaluation Matrix). Every effort has been made to avoid repetition but at the same time, feedback on results from stakeholders touches on both the relevance and effectiveness criteria. For this reason, results will be presented under the effectiveness section.

3.1 Relevance

> **Key Evaluation questions:**
> - **Is the social development subprogramme relevant to MS needs and priorities?**
> - **Is the social development subprogramme relevant to furthering international norms and standards in the thematic areas**

Finding #1: The nine thematic areas comprising the social development subprogramme are very relevant to the needs of the MS in helping them follow-up at the regional level on global commitments and agreements made in these thematic areas. Some thematic areas are more relevant than others to individual MS and therefore influence the level of *priority* that they accord to follow-up implementation at country level.

Finding #2: SDD's support in furthering knowledge and raising awareness of international norms and standards related to the nine thematic areas and to specific marginalised population groups is also very relevant to the needs and interests of the MS.

Lowest=1	2	3	4	5=Highest

Evidence: 65% of survey respondents (representing government and non-government external stakeholders) rated the relevance of SDD's thematic areas at 4 and 5 (high/highest) in responding to MS needs and 63% of survey respondents rated their relevance at 4 and 5 (high/highest) for the furthering of international norms and standards in these thematic areas. The majority of interviewees, both SDD staff and external stakeholders, also conveyed that the thematic areas covered by the

subprogramme were very relevant to the Asia and Pacific region. A smaller group of interviewees representing government and non-government, conveyed that the analytical knowledge products covered relevant topics and that in the case of new thematic areas e.g. persons with disabilities, elderly persons, they provided baseline data for the region.

This sample is complemented by information from the summary assessments completed by participants to four SDD-supported intergovernmental meetings held in the period 2014-2017 where scores of above 80 (out of 100 index points) were given to the relevance of the topics discussed. There has also been an increase in the range of index points given from the 3rd Session of the Committee on Social Development in 2014 to the 4th Session of the Committee on Social Development (from a range of 81-88 points in 2014 to a range of 86-92 points in 2016 out of 100 points) indicating a greater responsiveness of the subprogramme to the needs and priorities of MS[16].

Evidence of the relevance of thematic areas is also reflected by, for example, individual follow-up requests for technical support related to gender equality and women's empowerment, social protection, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, population data, youth and employment.

BOX 1. External Stakeholders Responses about the Relevance of the Social Development Subprogramme

> **"Social development is highly relevant to my country"**
> **"India has the second largest number of ageing in the world…we appreciate the pioneering role of ESCAP in this area"**
> **"MS are according high priority to gender equality and women's empowerment"**
> **"Rising inequality and poverty among marginalised people are of great concern to us"**
> **"It is relevant that SDD encourages us to move away from a charity-based approach to inclusive participation of vulnerable groups"**
> **"More and more development issues are becoming trans-border…ESCAP addresses this"**
> **"Before cyclone Nargis in May 2008 persons with disabilities were not a priority but after that happened, they are now"**
> **"SDD's focus on gender based budgeting is relevant because we cannot implement anything if we cannot get budget from the Ministries of Finance and Planning"**

Analysis: There is a clear convergence of opinion from the external stakeholders that the thematic areas constituting the social development subprogramme are all very relevant for the MS. Secondly, SDD's support for intergovernmental processes that focus on the "regionalisation" of global conventions and agreements is also highly relevant in ensuring that MS are kept aware of their global commitments and take follow-up actions to implement them.

Feedback from individual interviews with government representatives reflected a slightly more nuanced picture that not all thematic areas are of equal relevance or priority to all MS. For example, landlocked countries (e.g Laos, Mongolia) emphasised trade and regional connectivity and small island developing states (e.g. the Pacific) emphasised climate change and resilience to natural disasters. Additionally, at the country level MS governments are faced with numerous competing national priorities and a certain thematic area may not have high priority in this overall country scenario. For example, a study of the Account of Proceedings reports of the four annual ESCAP Commission meetings mention several other priority areas consistently: infrastructure development, transport connectivity, technology transfer, trade and investment, private sector investment and small and medium enterprise development, climate change and resilience to external crises etc. Economic development is still seen as the engine of growth but at the same time all interviewed MS government

---

[16] See Summary Assessments for Asia pacific Conference on GEWE Beijing+ Review, 2014; Asia-Pacific Conference on HIV and AIDS, 2015, Third Session CSD 2014 and Forth Session DCS 2016

representatives recognised that this is not enough to eliminate the remaining poverty in the region and to counter rising inequality within populations. They have now an increasing awareness and understanding that policies and programmes need to target vulnerable and excluded population groups and that "inclusiveness" is essential to sustainable development.

3.2 Effectiveness

3.2.1 Effectiveness of Intergovernmental Processes

As a point of clarification, it is necessary to specify what is meant by "intergovernmental processes". The evaluation has identified four types of intergovernmental meetings supported by SDD:

- the annual ESCAP Commission meeting attended by senior government representatives, usually at Ministerial level, UN agencies, civil society and other international institutions at the regional and subregional levels
- -the meeting of the Committee on Social Development every two years, attended by senior government representatives, UN agencies, civil society and other international institutions at the regional and subregional levels
- intergovernmental meetings under the framework of a global convention, compact or agreement, attended by senior government representatives, related UN agencies and civil society
- regional expert group meetings, attended by technical and programme level government representatives, civil society and individual experts including from academia.

Key Evaluation Questions:
-What were the overall development results of SDD support?
-To what extent did SDD contribute effectively to these results?
-What were the success factors?
-What aspects need further attention/different approaches?

Finding #3: SDD support to the intergovernmental processes in the thematic areas is very effective and much appreciated by the MS, UN agencies and civil society. This support reflects the broader unique role of ESCAP as being a neutral convenor of governments in the region and providing them with a regional platform to discuss development issues of common regional interest and to agree on common regional actions.

Finding #4: SDD's support is most effective when it is guided by a global convention, compact or agreement that gives it a mandate to follow-up implementation with MS at the regional level e.g. on gender equality and women's empowerment, elderly persons and active ageing, persons with disabilities (PWDs), population and development, HIV and AIDS.

Finding #5: SDD support for intergovernmental processes has had positive impacts in establishing regional consensus and joint positions on certain issues, in linking country needs with regional experiences, in raising awareness and enhancing knowledge on different policy options and programme approaches and in using up-to-date data/statistics as an evidence base on which to develop innovative policy approaches especially for marginalised population groups.

Finding #6: The link between intergovernmental processes and their impact on policy-making and/or policy reform at the country level is not apparent across *the majority* of MS in the region but there are several individual good examples (results) of where MS have used the regional framework/action plan process and knowledge on policy/programme options.

Finding #7: Linked to Finding #6, there is a "push-pull effect" between regional approaches advocated by SDD/ESCAP which cover an extremely wide and diverse range of countries and individual country needs. Some MS also wish to have a sub-regional approach that brings countries that have similar socio-cultural traditions and geographic similarities together to exchange experiences on common policy and programme options.

Finding #8: Intergovernmental processes have been instrumental in engaging MS governments and civil society in all the thematic areas and giving voice to civil society at the regional level. This role is much appreciated; there is still room for improvement in strengthening the participation of civil society representation by, for example, giving them more speaking time at these meetings and facilitating their contribution in the National Voluntary Reporting process.

Finding #9: Gender equality and women's empowerment, social inclusion and the rights-based approach are consistently raised and mainstreamed into all the discussions related to the SDD thematic areas at intergovernmental meetings. The majority of MS, civil society and UN agency stakeholders appreciate this contribution and most UN agency and civil society stakeholders even consider that this role could be expanded to a corporate ESCAP-wide coverage.

Finding #10: The regional expert meetings on specific topics are very well organised and very effective in raising awareness and enhancing knowledge and skills in the thematic areas, in the exchange of country experiences, in presenting the most recent data on specific issues on marginalised populations and in enabling networking among participants all working on the same development issue.

Finding #11: Where the social development programme in the Pacific is concerned, the sub-regional office focuses on supporting the SIDS on policy and legislation development or reform for the increased inclusion of PWDs. Some limited work on gender equality, social protection and migration has also been carried out. The two offices and programmes operate largely independently and there is limited linkage and substantive collaboration between them, with likely missed opportunities.

Lowest=1	2	3	4	Highest=5

Evidence: From the online survey of external stakeholders 56% of respondents rated effectiveness at 4 and 5 (high/highest) for facilitating regional consensus on thematic topics; 63% of respondents rated 4 and 5 (high/highest) for advancing international norms and standards; and 49% rated 4 and 5 (high/highest) on follow-up implementation at country level. (80% of SDD staff rated the effectiveness of intergovernmental meetings at 4 and 5 (high/highest).

37% of survey respondents rated the subprogramme's effectiveness in facilitating regional consensus at 3 (average); 30% rated its effectiveness in advancing international norms and standards at 3 (average) and 42% rated its effectiveness in follow-up implementation at 3 (average).

These figures are further complemented by a) information from the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) reports for 2014-2017, b) Commission reports from 2014-2016 and c) the assessment summaries of four inter-governmental meetings during the evaluation period. From the last source, MS scored the effectiveness of all these meetings at above 80 points on a scale of 1-100 points.

Regarding the effectiveness of regional expert meetings, the main source for assessment were the evaluation questionnaires sent to the participants: without exception all these were rated at above 90% (out of 100%) in raising awareness and enhancing knowledge and skills in social development,

social protection and social inclusion-related issues and the particular challenges facing vulnerable or marginalised population groups (women, PWDs, the elderly, youth and people living with HIV)

Qualitative feedback from interviewees, government and non-government representatives and UN agency representatives unanimously conveyed the view that SDD's (and ESCAP's) subprogramme was most effective in supporting intergovernmental processes to and using this mechanism for the purposes stated in Finding #5 above.

Analysis: A significant number of external stakeholders (56% survey respondents plus some 40 interviewees) positively assessed the effectiveness of SDD support in facilitating regional consensus building and advancing international norms and standards. Less than 50% of the survey respondents and a smaller number of interviewees were less positive about the subprogramme's ability to follow-up on country-level implementation. This will be no surprise to ESCAP's senior management and SDD staff and reflects the nature of ESCAP's mandate which is *focussed on normative work at the regional level.* Therefore follow-up implementation at country level is considered to be the responsibility of the country itself and SDD reports on results which are within its direct scope of support and influence. Secondly, *ownership* is a key factor for success if a Member State considers a particular development issue to be a priority; for example, after years of active policy advocacy and engagement by SDD in the Pacific region "disability has its own momentum"[17] with a proactive role being played by the civil society-led Pacific Disability Forum.

A noticeable percentage of survey respondents rated the effectiveness of intergovernmental meetings at 3 (average) and about 5% at 2 (low) but they do not clarify their ratings and the comments are mostly in support of intergovernmental meetings. Some reasons may be: some respondents have not attended such meetings or others may have a different expectation for such meetings.

BOX 2. Key Examples of Development Results Achieved in the Subprogramme's Thematic Areas

HIV and AIDS   ✓ **12 countries conducted national reviews of their HIV and AIDS programmes in preparation for an ESCAP Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental meeting on HIV and AIDS in January 2015. Attending MS committed to a "Regional Framework of Action on HIV and AIDS".**
Persons with Disabilities   ✓ **43 States Parties have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD) in the two programme biennia**   ✓ **All countries in the Pacific region-except the Solomon Islands and Tonga-have ratified the CPRD**   ✓ **MS have adopted the Incheon Strategy "To Make the Right Real" for PWDs**   ✓ **6 countries[18] have developed action plans to collect statistical data on disabilities**   ✓ **Several countries have adopted or revised national laws to align with the CPRD:**   ✓ **India amended its existing Disabilities Act in 2016 to include 21 disabilities**   ✓ **Mongolia passed a national law on the rights of PWDs in February 2016**   ✓ **Myanmar passed a Law on Disabilities in 2015 and adopted a National Strategy for the Development of PWDs 2016-2017 in July 2016; it has also set up a multi-stakeholder National Committee for PWDs which for the first time includes parents of children with disabilities**

---

[17] Quote from an SDD stakeholder
[18] Bhutan, Georgia, India, Indonesia, The Marshall Islands, Myanmar

- ✓ **Bangladesh and Bhutan co-organised an international conference to develop a multi-sectoral approach and plan to address the needs of people with autism and neuro-development disorders**
- ✓ **The Marshall Islands enacted a Rights of PWDs Bill in 2015**
- ✓ **The Solomon islands and Tonga are nearing completion of their reviews of their respective Rights of PWDs Bill**
- ✓ **Fiji's Parliament has passed a Rights of PWDs Act in 2018**

Elderly Persons/Active Ageing
- ✓ **Following up on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (MIPAA), and the third regional review of MIPAA in September 2017, several countries in the region have taken steps to adopt and implement more inclusive policies for their elderly populations**
- ✓ **Fiji and Myanmar organised national workshops on inclusion of the elderly involving civil society for the first time**
- ✓ **The Republic of Korea is implementing the 3rd Basic Plan on Low Fertility and Ageing (2016-2020)**
- ✓ **Macao China is formulating a new Elderly Law reflecting their rights and participation**

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)
- ✓ **An Asia Pacific regional preparatory meeting as input to the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW58), led to a regional consensus on recommending that the development agenda beyond 2015 should include a specific standalone goal on GEWE. This has been accepted and included in the 17 SDGs.**
- ✓ **The Asia Pacific Conference on GEWE, Beijing+20, co-organised by ESCAP/SDD and UN Women in November 2014 established regional consensus on the priority areas of action to accelerate the Beijing Platform of Action**
- ✓ **Some 50 member and associate member states adopted by consensus the Asia Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing GEWE reflecting high-level commitment by the Region to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment**
- ✓ **Thailand passed a Gender Equality Act in 2015 that is the first legal instrument to provide protection for all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity**

Population and Development
- ✓ **MS adoption of the Asia Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development in 2013 reflects continued high-level political commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)**
- ✓ **Awareness raised on social inclusion, rights (especially reproductive rights) and gender equality**
- ✓ **Civil society engagement has been continuously enhanced in all intergovernmental consultations**

International Migration
- ✓ **Being a relatively new area of engagement, SDD has supported analytical work to establish a database on international migration in the region and has undertaken regional consultations to gather regional inputs for the Global Compact on Migration that is currently being negotiated at UN headquarters**

Poverty, Inequality and Social Protection
- ✓ **At the 70th ESCAP Commission meeting 12 ESCAP MS and associate members made reference to the usefulness of social policy development options, strategies and good practices**
- ✓ **In response to the regional concern on rising inequality among countries and within countries, SDD undertook a series of studies and organised a "Strategic Dialogue on Poverty and Inequality" to bring together governments, civil society think tanks, academia and well-known individual experts to share ideas on how to address this development challenge. One interviewed expert who attended the Dialogue informed that she had met another expert from the World Inequality Lab in Paris and they are now planning a joint research collaboration**
- ✓ **MS understanding of the importance of universal social protection as part of a poverty reduction strategy has been enhanced with also financing models that indicate that countries do not have to be rich to implement affordable social protection programmes**

Youth and Employment
- ✓ **At the 70th Commission session held in May 2014 the MS adopted Resolution 70/14 "Enhancing the participation of youth in sustainable development in the Asia Pacific region"-the first such resolution in seventeen years**

BOX 3 Best Practice Example of Sub-Regional Experts Meeting on Social Security for Older Persons in South Asia, Sri Lanka, December 2017: Feedback from Pakistan[19]

---

[19] Source: Mr. Saquib Butt, Director of Finance, EOBI

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Country Context</td></tr>
</table>

> **Country Context**
>
> **The Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) was established under the Employees' Old Age Benefits Act 1976 and is an autonomous body functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource and Overseas Pakistan, Government of Pakistan. Its main objective is to provide security and financial benefit in terms of pensions to old age persons privately employed in industrial, commercial and other establishments.**
>
> **Collaboration with SDD/ESCAP**
>
> **EOBI was invited by SDD/ESCAP to participate in a training course on "Income Security for Older Persons in South Asia"" from 11-14 December 2017 in Sri Lanka. The training course was conducted by professional staff from SDD/ESCAP Bangkok and ILO New Delhi[20] with technical support from a specialist consultant[21].**
>
> **The training consisted of *both formal and interactive sessions* with a variety of distinct discussions on Old Age and Social Pension *including Gender and Social Protection,* Extension of Pension Coverage, Challenges & Opportunities of Pension Schemes and Financial Sustainability of Pension Schemes. The Training Course concluded with presentations from country representatives on their country plans for future pension systems.**
>
> **This collaboration with ESCAP and ILO not only provided EOBI with the platform to interact with the representatives from the region but also enabled EOBI to learn about *international best practices in the area of social security of older persons.***
>
> **"The lectures were articulately delivered and really enlightened our knowledge base in terms of best practices for improving the viability of pension schemes. We also learned about how pension funds are evaluated by *actuarial valuation.* We also highly appreciated the follow-up assistance extended by the external consultant in reviewing our Actuary Report even after we parted ways in Sri Lanka. He not only reviewed our Actuary Report but also highlighted important points that should be looked into. This has really helped us in shaping a very good Actuary Report for the EOBI fund and we proudly presented it as an Internationally Vetted Document in front of the stakeholders. I also travelled with a representative from the Ministry of Planning and Economy and by getting to know him I now have interaction with him. It was a wonderful and marvellous experience for me".**

3.2.2 Effectiveness of analytical research and knowledge products

The subprogramme on social development produces a significant number of numerous knowledge products every biennium which consist of flagship and thematic reports, booklets, working papers, fact and data sheets, policy briefs, guides and journals. Some are recurrent, and some are non-recurrent. These knowledge products are largely prepared by SDD professional staff who act as lead authors usually supported by teams of external consultants who prepare background papers and collect data. *A total of about 38 knowledge products were produced during the two programme biennia, most of them in print and electronic versions.*

This section also comments on the effectiveness of the Social Protection Toolbox and Youth Policy Toolbox since they are online knowledge exchange platforms.

TABLE 1. Number of Knowledge Products Produced in each Thematic Area

General	SDD Flagship report
Persons with Disabilities	**1 report,3 fact sheets, 2 operational guides, 2 easy-to-understand guides and a pocket version**
Elderly Persons	**1 report, 2 working papers, 2 abstracts, 1 country profile**

---

[20] Ms. V Steinmayer SDD/ESCAP and Mr. M Ruck, ILO

[21] Mr A. Bonella, Pensions Specialist

Gender Equality	4 reports, 1 booklet, 1 working paper
Population and Development	1 journal, 1 data sheet
International Migration	3 reports, 1 working paper, 1 situation report
Poverty, Inequality, Social Protection	4 working papers, 2 reports, 1 policy brief, 2 policy guides
Youth Employment	2 reports

Key evaluation questions:
- **How has the SDD subprogramme contributed to increased awareness and knowledge of MS and other stakeholders in addressing regional and sub-regional development challenges?**
- **To what extent has the subprogramme been effective in terms of policy impact?**
- **Has the SDD work contributed to new forms of knowledge exchange among MS and other stakeholders?**

Finding #12: There is unanimous feedback from external stakeholders that the analytical and research publications produced under the subprogramme are very useful in providing "baseline knowledge", including statistical data, situation analyses and evidence-based policy options on a certain topic or development issue. In general stakeholders considered the publications to be of high quality and reflecting a high level of analysis and professional expertise.

Finding #13: The majority of knowledge products are very useful for development practitioners, *technical experts and policy/programme implementation staff but in general, appear not being used by policy-makers to inform their policy development work at country level.*

Finding #14: The introduction of the social protection and youth policy toolboxes are innovative platforms for exchanging knowledge and best practices. Technical staff, civil society representatives, programme/project implementers and individual experts find these toolboxes very useful and interesting especially the information on best practices in the region. However, it is not clear to what extent policy-makers are accessing these platforms. Secondly, there are some technical challenges that hinder their utility e.g. lack of computers, poor internet access, not translated into local languages.

BOX 4. Survey Quotes from External Stakeholders on the Usefulness of Knowledge Products

- ✓ **The result of SDD's research work is useful as baseline knowledge as well as for awareness raising, especially on a topic that is new to us**
- ✓ **The Government of Japan used lessons learned on Women, Peace and Security to inform its national action plan on Women, Peace and Security**
- ✓ **It has strengthened our knowledge in gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) as part of the overall development planning process**
- ✓ **"From 2016 I have made many presentations on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and used the knowledge I got from SDD"[22]**
- ✓ **Gender concerns are mainstreamed throughout the publication which is important for us**

Lowest=1	2	3	4	Highest=5

---

[22] Quote from a survey respondent

Evidence: 71% of the online survey respondents rated the effectiveness of SDD's knowledge products at 4 and 5 (high/highest) in terms of awareness raising and knowledge enhancement; 65% rated the effectiveness of gaining knowledge about best practices at 4 and 5 (high/highest); 56% rated the effectiveness of informing policy development, training and advocacy purposes at 4 and 5 (high/highest); and 47% of respondents rated the effectiveness of regional/subregional online knowledge sharing platforms at 4 and 5 (high/highest). A relatively small percentage of respondents ranging from 11-13% rated the effectiveness of SDD's knowledge products in advancing these four purposes at 2 (low).

During the interviews some examples of the need for improvement in the content and generation of knowledge products were recorded. Eight external stakeholders representing international experts, UN agencies and civil society noted a) that SDD does not yet have the in-house capacity to be at the "forefront" of the poverty and inequality dialogue b) the report of "gender and environment" did not reflect the latest thinking in that it looked at the inter-linkage in a "one dimensional way", when gender equality involves the analysis of other parameters such as ethnicity, race and religion c) the publications could take a stronger stand on human rights and d) insufficient lead time is given to comment on reports, sometimes giving the impression that it is only to follow "bureaucratic requirements".

Some evidence was obtained on the usage of the online toolboxes[23]. Since it was launched in November 2017 the Youth Policy Toolbox has registered 30,000 users and between 200 and 300 hits a day. The Social Protection Toolbox was re-launched in April 2018 with new content, design and interface. As a result, it has experienced a major spike in user activity: it has been viewed 1,366 times by 440 viewers from 28 MS in the Asia and Pacific region. However, in both cases there is no information on the users. Both Toolboxes use google analytics to collect data on users and their activity but this does not include information on the identity of the users.

In response to a question on how policy-makers would like to obtain information and data, the majority at 66% rated "attendance at meetings and consultations" highest; second came "informal communications"; and third came technical papers and briefs. The lowest sources were from "traditional media", "social media", "online platforms" and "newsletters/emails" in descending order.

Analysis: The high ratings by a majority of survey respondents confirm that the knowledge products are very effective and particularly useful for certain groups of stakeholders (i.e. practitioners, experts, civil society groups). Government practitioners and technical staff could be using the knowledge gained to advocate with their seniors and in this sense, they could be part of a policy development process. However, there is not enough evidence to make this link nor to indicate the extent to which policy-makers (e.g. director, joint secretary levels) are using knowledge products and the two online regional platforms for policy advocacy, influence and change.[24]

3.2.3 Effectiveness of Country Support under the Subprogramme on Social Development

Country support refers to the technical cooperation support mechanism for capacity building in countries in the region. This is usually implemented within the framework of an international convention or agreement e.g. CEDAW, CPRD, ICPD, MIPAA etc. or within the framework of an inter-regional or regional programme. Activities consist of the provision of technical advice through SDD staff or external consultants, national workshops and training.

---

[23] Source: Relevant SDD staff
[24] This analysis is also supported by the World Bank's AidData Listening to Leaders Survey, 2017 which interviewed 3500 leaders and policy-makers world-wide. See www.blogs.worldbank.org

Funding for these technical cooperation activities comes from two sources, the regular budget (RB) and extra-budgetary (XB). The RB comprises a) The Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (Secti0n 23) and b) the Development Account (Section 35). The XB includes voluntary contributions provided by individual governments, entities of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organisations, the business sector and other organisations.

Section 23 amounts to about 3 million USD a year for ESCAP. This fund allows ESCAP to recruit regional advisers and undertake one-off, short-term training activities and advisory services as requested by MS. Section 35 (the Development Account) is managed by the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in New York. ESCAP has been allocated on average US$ 3.0 million per biennium from DA spread over 4 to 6 individual projects. A prioritised list of projects is submitted to DESA which makes the final choice of about 4-5 projects based on the original priority listing from ESCAP.

The main source of XB funds for capacity development results from SDD's resource mobilisation efforts. Over the past four years, 17 projects have been implemented ranging in funding levels from about 25,000 USD to nearly 1.5 million USD (this amount was exceptional and is for 6 years); with a few exceptions, project amounts average at about 250,000 USD for two years. In 2018 the SDD has received a significant amount of 10.4 million USD from the Government of Canada for a technical cooperation project on promoting women's entrepreneurship in six countries for five years.

The main bilateral donors who support the subprogramme on social development are: China, Japan, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. From the UN side, funding support has been given from UNFPA and UN Women, among other partners in the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Groups.

This context was necessary to preface the findings on effectiveness to give the reader an idea of the complexity of the funding sources and the related complexity regarding the monitoring and extraction of development results.

> **Key evaluation questions:**
> 1. **Is the country support relevant to meeting the MS needs and priorities?**
> 2. **Is the country support effective in helping MS to follow-up on the implementation of international norms and standards?**
> 3. *Is the support given sustainable in the long run?*

Finding #15: The majority of country support is implemented within the framework of a global convention, international agreement or regional resolution related to one of the nine thematic areas and is demand-driven by requests from MS. Therefore this support is relevant in supporting MS to follow-up on their international/regional commitments. However, the *mechanism of country support* is not consistently effective and there are only a few examples across the region where countries are i*mplementing follow-up actions on their own and with their own resources.*

Finding #16: Given that the subprogramme consists of nine thematic areas and that SDD support has to be spread among 53 MS and 9 associate members, from an external viewpoint the SDD country support seems to be somewhat unfocussed and piecemeal without a clear *strategic intent.* When an MS requests follow-up technical support in a particular area (even if is within the scope of an international convention or agreement), it is not clear what criteria have been set to determine whether SDD has a *comparative advantage* or is the right party to respond.

BOX 5. Examples of Development Results from SDD Country Support

✓ **In Laos the National Commission on the Advancement of Women has developed a training manual on GRB which is being used to raise awareness with other ministries especially planning and finance**				
✓ **In Cambodia the Government developed a road map for institutionalising the GRB, and selected the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport as a pilot to implement GRB with support from the Ministry of Women's Affairs.**				
✓ **A survey respondent informed that their country is implementing a payment of subsidies programme to children in poor families to be able to continue secondary education**				
✓ **National stakeholder consultations on the collection of data for the Incheon Strategy have been organised in 13 countries spanning five subregions in Asia Pacific**				

Lowest=1	2	3	4	5=Highest

Evidence: From the online survey of external stakeholders 45% of respondents rated the building up of ownership at 4 and 5 (high/highest); 50% of respondents rated the building of capacities to implement international agreements at 4 and 5 (high/highest); 47% of respondents rated follow-up on the implementation of norms and standards at 4 and 5 (high/highest); and 42% rated ensuring sustainability upon completion of the support at 4 and 5 (high/highest). The individual comments are also not very enlightening in that they mention only two examples of country support related to GEWE.

Only 33% of SDD staff rated the effectiveness of country support at 4 and 5 (high/highest) and feedback from the interviews was again more nuanced in that stakeholders also pointed out the main limitations of country support, which will be mentioned in the analysis section.

Analysis: There is a noticeable difference between the ratings given by external stakeholders and the SDD professional staff and it is significant to note that a majority of SDD staff also seem to question the effectiveness of country support. The fact that the evaluation was able to extract only a few examples of where the SDD country support has led to follow-up actions by MS governments also conveys a message about this type of intervention.

Feedback from the online survey and the individual interviews conveyed that while SDD's country level support was "helpful" and could be effective in the short run, it had the following limitations: too short in duration and too limited in inputs to build up ownership and fully complete the hand-over process, lack of integration and cohesion with the UN country team's programmes and the inadequacy of one-off awareness raising or training activities.

3.3 Mainstreaming of Gender Equality

ESCAP adopted a Gender Equality Policy on 7 March 2014 and subsequently a comprehensive Gender Equality Implementation Plan for the period 2015-2017. The overall objective of the GE Policy is to promote gender parity in staffing and gender-responsive programming in all the programmatic interventions of the Commission. ESCAP also participates in the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-SWAP)[25]. All these actions indicate a high level of commitment by ESCAP to gender equality and women's empowerment both within the Commission and outside of it.

This section examines the extent and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming both in terms of staff parity and capacity in the subprogramme on social development.

---

[25] UN-SWAP 2.0 came into operation on 1 January 2018

Finding #17: Gender equality and women's empowerment concerns are highly relevant to MS governments and non-government stakeholders in the region. The extent of priority and *how* governments address particular challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment reflect their geographical-economic-social-cultural situation and traditions.

Finding #18: The SDD subprogramme on social development has been very effective in mainstreaming gender concerns and collecting sex-disaggregated data in all of its thematic areas and in systematically raising gender equality concerns in all intergovernmental meetings, expert group meetings and in knowledge products.

Finding #19: The total staff strength of SDD is 30 out of which 21 are female and 9 are male; this gender imbalance is not surprising given that more women work tend to work in the social sectors. At the professional level there is more gender parity with 11 females and 7 males. 80% of the surveyed staff has received training in gender equality concepts and mainstreaming over the past four years[26]. In terms of capacity and expertise, all SDD staff have a very good understanding of gender equality concepts and how to mainstream them into their respective thematic areas. There is also strong gender expertise within the SDD team, with four dedicated professional staff.

Lowest=1	2	3	4	Highest=5

Evidence: From the online survey 68% of external stakeholders rated the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the thematic areas at 4 and 5 (high/highest); 66% rated the effectiveness of increased awareness and knowledge of GEWE and mainstreaming at 4 and 5 (high/highest); 61% rated the effectiveness of advocacy of GEWE in national development agendas at 4 and 5 (high/highest).
The feedback from Interviews with stakeholders representing government, UN agencies and civil society and academia also substantiated these findings.

Analysis: The majority of external stakeholders from both government and non-government sectors are positive about the effectiveness of the SDD subprogramme in awareness raising of GEWE concepts and how to mainstream them into thematic areas. Participants at intergovernmental and regional meetings also gained insight into how to consider gender concerns in other thematic areas such as population and development, PWDs and elderly persons. Key development results have already been described in sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 above and will therefore not be repeated here.

BOX 6 Best Practice Case: Progressing Towards Disability-Inclusive Development[27]

---

[26] One face-to-face training in 2014 and one online training in 2016
[27] Sources: Inputs from Section Head and Social Affairs Officer/PWDs, GESIS, SDD; Report on Building Disability-Inclusive Societies in Asia and the Pacific, 2018; and Notes of Interview with the Deputy Director, Korea Disabled Peoples Development Institute, Seoul

In Asia and the Pacific, there are an estimated 690 million persons with disabilities, constituting 15 percent of the entire population, facing significant barriers to full social, economic, political and cultural participation and, are often shunned and discriminated against in their societies. Larger proportions of persons with disabilities live in poverty than those without disabilities. At least one third of children with disabilities do not receive early intervention services and a disproportionate number do not even complete secondary school education. Persons with disabilities are extremely under-represented in political structures and decision-making processes; only 0.4 per cent of national parliamentarians across the region are persons with disabilities. Inaccessible built environment, transportation, information, communications and services limit persons with diverse disabilities from pursuing many forms of participation in society. While persons with disabilities are largely left behind from development processes, unprecedented population aging in the region is creating older persons with disabilities. Governments have recognised the importance to develop proper policy responses to address their concerns and needs.

ESCAP has been the "regional engine" to advocate for a rights-based approach on persons with disabilities and incorporation of their perspectives in development opportunities for nearly 30 years. ESCAP has done it so through establishing the world's first regional Decade of Disabled Persons from 1993 to 2003, followed by the second Decade from 2003-2012, during those two periods ESCAP promoted policy development and implementation on disability in the region, and played a key role in drafting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 December 2006 and laid out the foundation for the fundamental freedoms and rights of persons with disabilities. As of June 2018, there were 43 States Parties to this Convention in the region.

Building on the lesson learned from the previous two Decades, the third Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities 2013-2022 emphasises the importance of having reliable and comparable data to measure the extent of participation of persons with disabilities in development opportunities and to use the data for effective policy development. This evidence-based approach constitutes the foundation for the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted by all ESCAP member States, as the guiding document of the third Decade, by the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, held in 2012 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, and endorsed in 2013 through ESCAP resolution 69/13 of 27 April 2013. The Strategy provides the Asia and Pacific region, and the world, with the first set of regionally agreed disability-specific development goals. Developed over more than two years of consultations with governments and civil society stakeholders, the Incheon Strategy comprises 10 goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators, and supports effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Member States have been requesting ESCAP's technical support for developing disability policies and programmes. Most recently, SDD provided inputs to the Governments of Bhutan and Pakistan for the drafting of national laws and national plans on disability and human rights.

Technical cooperation projects for Advancing Disability-inclusive Development

Over the past eight years, ESCAP's Social Development Division has been implementing three capacity building projects, one on disability statistics funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea, one on accessibility funded by the Government of China, and the third one on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction (DRR) funded by the Government of Japan. All three Governments had been long-term supporter of projects on disability at ESCAP.

The project on disability statistics has been enhancing Member States' knowledge on the most up-to-date thinking on the definition and data collection methodology of disability, both of which are useful to implement the Incheon Strategy and the 2030 Agenda. By February 2018, national stakeholder consultations on data collection for Incheon Strategy indicators had been successfully conducted in 13 countries covering all five subregions: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

The project on accessibility supported South-South knowledge exchange by sharing experience and good practices to promote and improve the accessibility of the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication for persons with disabilities. Through seminars and field studies, it brought together participants from China, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand.   The good practices shared were compiled and published in the resource book titled '*Accessibility for All: Good Practices of Accessibility in Asia and the Pacific to promote Disability-inclusive Development.'* Following the project, the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has introduced a framework of accessibility standards for the built environment requiring universal design for all new construction in addition to mandating monitoring and evaluation throughout the design to post-construction phase.

The project on disaster risk reduction has been supporting Member States in mainstreaming disability perspectives in disaster risk reduction (DRR) management. Through the organisation of an expert group meeting on the subject, the project first advocated disability inclusion in the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. As a result, the Sendai Framework for DRR makes specific reference to persons with disabilities and other references to accessibility and universal design to be better prepared for disasters.
The project then developed an online e-learning tool on disability-inclusive DRR, in consultation with the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines and with persons with disabilities. The tool aims at building knowledge of disaster risk reduction policy makers on how to incorporate disability   perspectives   in   all   stages   of   DRR.   The   tool   is   available   at www.maketherightreal.net/learning, and open to the public. The tool is expected to be launched in Japan during the last quarter in collaboration with the Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture. Currently SDD is also in discussion with other governments to expand its application.

Lessons Learned
- ➢ Key Governments' proposals to establish a regional disability decade, and their sustained support for technical cooperation projects were instrumental for enhancing the impacts of ESCAP's work on disability.
- ➢ ESCAP was the ideal entity to lead and facilitate this process in the region because of its neutrality and intergovernmental nature which could bring extremely diverse countries and governments together to achieve regional consensus
- ➢ ESCAP's work on disability is comprehensive and multi-dimensional covering key development areas, not focussing on only one aspect. There is no other UN entity at the regional level doing the same kind of work that ESCAP does in this field.
- ➢ The development and adoption of a regional disability framework for each disability decade was instrumental to further implementation of actions at country levels.
- ➢ The active participation of civil society groups and persons with disabilities ensured incorporating real lived needs of persons with disabilities in designing the work of ESCAP on the subject.
- ➢ SDD's focus on building reliable and comprehensive data on persons with disabilities was very appropriate as this is essential for policy development and programme design, particularly in light of the need for effective monitoring and implementation of the SDGs.

3.4 Cross-Cutting Issues across the Thematic Areas

Although not strictly within the TOR, the interviews with ESCAP and UN agency staff in Bangkok and the follow-up interviews with external stakeholders generated the following findings which need to be highlighted as they affect *the future strategic direction and effectiveness* of the subprogramme on social development especially in light of the upcoming reforms of the Regional Commissions.

3.4.1 Prioritisation of Social and Economic Aspects of Sustainable development

Finding #20: Over the past four years, there has been a de-prioritisation of social development issues and a prioritisation of economic issues within the Commission. This has had a negative impact on both the funding base for the subprogramme and on staff motivation which in turn impacts on the effectiveness of the subprogramme.

Evidence: Besides significant anecdotal feedback from internal and external stakeholders (out of 7 UN agencies interviewed 5 made this point), there is other evidence to support this finding. From the Development Account 11th tranche for projects approved last year, no project was approved from SDD: ESCAP's senior management prioritised 8 projects, 1 from the SDD. DESA approved only 5 of these according to the prioritised listing by senior management and since the SDD project was ranked 6th it was not selected. Secondly, there has been a reduction in RPTC funding from 11.1 percentage share in 2014/2015 to 6.1 percentage share in 2016/2017.

Analysis: Several internal and external stakeholders both internally and externally expressed the view that the Asia Pacific region is regressing in many parts, in terms of governance, human rights and social inclusion aspects. Therefore, SDD's emphasis on social inclusion, marginalised groups and the rights-based approach remains critically important.

3.4.2 SDD Thematic Focus

Finding #21: There is an ongoing internal discussion on whether the subprogramme on social development should focus on fewer thematic areas or maintain a broad thematic coverage in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Currently the perception from this evaluation is that the subprogramme is somewhat unfocussed in that it covers nine thematic areas which are also multi-dimensional in nature.

Evidence: In the interviews some external stakeholders considered that a broad base of themes was more appropriate because there are constantly emerging development challenges which ESCAP/SDD will be called upon to respond to. Other external stakeholders believed that some focus around the regional normative and analytical work would be more effective and that country support interventions should be closely linked to this normative work.

Several interviewees gave examples of the multi-dimensional nature of SDD thematic areas: youth education linked to employment; the role of the informal economy; the many relate aspects to women's economic empowerment such as gender pay gaps, the care economy, women's land and asset ownership etc.; governance aspects such as taxation policies for social protection and the inter-linkages and connections are numerous.

3.4.3 Inter-Agency Collaboration

Finding #22: Given the SDG framework, a very high value is placed on inter-agency collaboration and partnerships and SDD is quite unique in actively pursuing such collaboration e.g. with UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-WOMEN, ILO, IOM etc.

At the working level relationships are very collegial; however joint collaboration is mostly based around one event or activity e.g. celebrating an International Day, co-organising an intergovernmental consultation, commenting on a draft report, information sharing in a Thematic Working Group. The level of structured *substantive collaboration* on a particular development issue is limited due to heavy workloads, insufficient lead time allocated and lack of clarity about what individual parties would like to jointly achieve.

Evidence: Interviews with seven UN agency representatives conveyed a mixed assessment of inter-agency collaboration.

4 CONCLUSIONS

These conclusions are presented following on from the findings identified in Section 3.

4.1 Relevance (Findings #1-#2)

Conclusion 1: Overall the thematic areas covered by the subprogramme on social development are very relevant to the *regional and subregional priorities* and needs of the MS. Most of the themes are being raised within the framework of an international convention or regional agreement which MS have committed to. In this way they also commit to pursuing the international norms and standards within these international frameworks. However, at country level not all thematic areas have high or equal priority within the broader context of numerous and diverse national development priorities.

4.2 Effectiveness

4.2.1 Intergovernmental Processes (Findings #3-#11)

Conclusion 2: SDD support to intergovernmental processes (intergovernmental meetings, expert group meetings) is highly effective for several reasons. Firstly, they create a neutral space to discuss development issues, some of which can be sensitive, and this can lead to a regional consensus of priorities for common follow-up actions. Secondly, they maintain regional momentum on MS to implement country actions in line with their international commitments. Thirdly, they enable the sharing of data/information on best practices among MS which also leads to further networking between individual MS. Fourthly, policy-makers are exposed to the importance of taking into account gender equality, social inclusion and human rights into their policy-making and planning processes. Fifth, the inclusion of civil society in thematic consultations brings alternative voices into dialogues, which may not be heard at the country level. Finally, the importance of evidence-based social development policies is emphasised continuously.

4.2.2 Analytical Research and Knowledge Products (Findings #12-#14)

Conclusion 3: The current knowledge products that have been produced over the past four years are of high quality and provide baseline information and policy options in the nine thematic areas. Different types of stakeholders use different avenues and sources of information/data for their respective work. These knowledge products and online platforms appear to be most useful to development practitioners, policy/programme implementers and technical experts who also may use them for advocacy or influencing policy development.

Conclusion 4: Besides an occasional launch event or newspaper articles and the emailing of publications to a list of SDD stakeholders, there is no *systematic communications and dissemination strategy* to promote the key findings of a regional study to a wider audience of MS, UN and multilateral development agencies, civil society and possibly even to certain sections of the private sector.

4.2.3 Technical Cooperation Country Support (Findings #15-#16)

Conclusion 5: Most of the technical cooperation country support is provided within the framework of an international convention or regional agreement that is related to one of the thematic areas and is therefore very relevant. However there are limitations in the country support *mechanism* which impact on its effectiveness and sustainability in the long-term.

Conclusion 6: Several factors from both the SDD and MS sides influence the effectiveness and sustainability of country support: the absorptive capacity and enabling environment of the recipient country and the duration and nature of the SDD support. In general, the country support is too short and limited in inputs to foster country ownership and eventual sustainability of the intervention. LDCs and the SIDs in particular require longer-term technical and capacity building support.

4.2.4 Mainstreaming of Gender Equality (Findings #17-#18)

Conclusion 7: SDD has been very effective in mainstreaming gender equality concerns throughout all the thematic areas and is consistently raising gender equality aspects in the intergovernmental meetings, the regional expert group meetings and in its knowledge products. There are two main factors that contribute to this achievement: firstly, mainstreaming gender into social development themes is perceived to be easier than into others and secondly; the SDD professional staff have the necessary expertise to mainstream gender into their respective areas of work.

4.2.5 Cross-Cutting Issues

Prioritisation of Social Economic Aspects of Sustainable Development (Finding #20)

Conclusion 8: While economic growth will continue to be the main engine of development in the Asia Pacific region, there is also a recognition that parts of the region are regressing in terms of equality, inclusion, governance and that the challenge for ESCAP (and the UN system in general) is how to reach the remaining 400 million people living in poverty. Investments in social development and inclusion targetted at this group will therefore also be essential. With this in mind the subprogramme on social development should continue to be given high priority within ESCAP's programme of work for the coming decades.

SDD Thematic Focus (Findings #21)

Conclusion 9: There will need to be further analysis and discussion within SDD and between SDD and senior management to reach a final decision on the thematic focus of the subprogramme. Tentatively, the SDD could maintain a broad base of themes (including emerging new regional issues) but focus support to these at the *regional and subregional levels* i.e. intergovernmental consultations and regional knowledge products. Countries should be involved in the work stream on regional knowledge products as a source of "field experience" and "pilot testing".

Inter-Agency Collaboration (Finding #22)

Conclusion 10: While there are some good examples of inter-agency collaboration usually around one event, activity or knowledge product, there is room for improvement in working together more substantively and more structurally. An "issues-based" approach to collaboration would also be appropriate to foster stronger inter-agency partnerships, in addition to existing collaboration.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be noted that the recommendations below stem from the conclusions and are generally in line with ongoing internal processes in ESCAP.

Bearing in mind that ESCAP's programme of work for the period 2018-2019 is already in effect and therefore it will not be feasible to implement major changes or re-directions, the recommendations can be implemented in a phased way in the next programme biennium 2020-2022. At that point the impacts of the Secretary General's reform of the regional commissions would also be clear. These recommendations will also need to be discussed with ESCAP's senior management and with the Committee on Social Development which guides the work of the subprogramme.

TABLE 2. Recommendations

Recommendations for SDD	Timing
Component 1: Preparatory Work SDD should conduct an in-house stock-taking/mapping exercise to establish the following for the next programme biennium: • Identify its comparative advantages especially in connection with emerging development issues in the region and assess the adequacy of existing in-house expertise • Identify which intergovernmental processes need to be supported in which thematic areas (CEDAW,CPRD, HIV and AIDS,ICPD, Global Compact on Migration) and level of effort that will be needed • For the others (poverty/inequality, social inclusion, youth, social protection), determine if they have *regional* implications and if yes, estimate the kind of support the MS would need e.g. sharing of best practices, new evidence for policy options • Consider a reduction in thematic areas e.g. social inclusion is a cross-cutting theme/approach and all the other themes reflect social inclusiveness • The results of the stock-taking/mapping exercise should guide the preparation of the strategic framework and work programme for the 2020-2021 biennium, presented to the MS for their approval	To be linked with the preparation of ESCAP's Strategic Framework 2020-2022
Component 2 Analytical Knowledge Products • SDD should consider to reduce the number of knowledge products per year; they should maintain an annual flagship report and aim to limit in-depth studies to 1-2 per year across the thematic areas • SDD should develop a common template for a short policy brief and every thematic area should produce at least one for every biennium (more is also possible) • SDD should develop and implement a clear communications and dissemination strategy to ensure that study results and policy options reach MS stakeholders more effectively. • SDD should consider the feasibility of establishing long-term institutional arrangements with a few leading research institutions or think-tanks in the region as sources of expertise	In the next programme biennium Initial work already being done In the current programme biennium

Recommendations for SDD	Timing
Component 3 Country Support • SDD should reconsider the country support mechanism to firstly, ensure that future activities not only support the implementation of regional agreements but also that results *feed back* into regional consensus building and to the UNCTs; • Work more closely with UNCTs and the Sub-regional Offices to identify partners on the ground that could take over after the SDD support is completed to promote long-term ownership and sustainability • SDD should maintain its involvement with countries including through its regional knowledge products i.e. using them to conduct field research or pilot testing and through its regional/subregional experts meetings. These can be conducted through the four sub-regional offices in addition to Bangkok.	In the current programme biennium
Component 4 Monitoring of Outcome Results • In line with ESCAP's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines 2017, SDD should take early simple steps to improve the quality of its outcome monitoring across *all* thematic areas. Some options are: • Conduct regular Interviews with MS representatives via phone or skype to obtain feedback about their follow-up country actions • Allow SDD professional staff to carry out monitoring missions 1-2 times a year per theme • When SDD staff are on a country mission allocate extra time for them to conduct focus group discussions 1) with government stakeholders from several ministries to extract outcome-level results, including policy changes and 2) non-government stakeholders to extract alternative policy options and views especially from civil society	In the current programme biennium and subject to the availability of budget
Component 5 Inter-Agency Collaboration at Regional and County Levels • SDD should strengthen its collaboration with Bangkok-based UN agencies by identifying specific issues within the broader thematic area which can be jointly addressed. This could be undertaken within the context of, for example, a joint study or regional meeting • SDD should ensure that future country activities are coordinated with or at least informed to the relevant UN Country Team • ESCAP, through its subregional offices, should aim to participate regularly in UNDAF formulations and reviews to ensure regional perspectives are taken into consideration.	To be linked with the ongoing discussions on the reform of the RCM and UNDG mechanisms In the current biennium
Step 6 Collaboration with the Subregional Offices • SDD should consider ways to strengthen the relationship between its Bangkok-based staff and those in the four sub-regional offices, beyond the existing arrangements. Some options are: • More regular exchanges of information and ideas via skype and telephone conference discussions • When staff from the subregional offices attend the annual ESCAP session, use this opportunity for more in-depth exchange of information and ideas	In the current programme biennium

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION OF ESCAP'S SUBPROGRAMME ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Final Workplan

Evaluation phase	Activities	Outputs	Tentative Dates
Phase 1: Planning and Preparation	• Review of relevant documents • Meet with evaluation reference group (virtual) • Draft inception report • Present & finalize inception report, including detailed evaluation framework and workplan, interview guides & **draft** survey questionnaire	• Inception report including: • Evaluation matrix and workplan • Interview guides • Draft survey questionnaire	26 March -6 April
Phase 2: Data collection and analysis	• Mission to ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok • Meet with evaluation reference group • Interviews at ESCAP and Bangkok-based stakeholders • Skype interviews with external SDD stakeholders • Conduct focus group discussions • Launch survey questionnaire • Debrief evaluation reference group on preliminary findings & recommendations • Follow-up Skype/telephone interview with stakeholders • Analyse data	• Survey questionnaire finalised and launched at end of mission • Preliminary findings & recommendations	22 April to 3 May (Mission to Bangkok) 30 April-30 May (Follow-up skype interviews)
Phase 3: Report Preparation	• Draft evaluation report • Obtain comments from evaluation reference group and other stakeholders • Present findings and recommendations to ESCAP senior management (virtual)	• Draft evaluation report • Incorporate feedback from stakeholders	First draft version to be submitted by 10 June
Phase 4: Finalisation of Report and follow-up action	• Draft final evaluation report • Facilitate a discussion on implementation of evaluation recommendations (virtual)	• Final evaluation report • Roadmap for implementing the evaluation recommendations	Final report to be submitted by mid-July Discussion paper on indicators by 2nd half July

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

NAME	DESIGNATION	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
ESCAP		
Mr. Kaveh Zahedi	Deputy Executive Secretary	Individual/Group
Mr. Mitch Hsieh	Secretary of the Commission, Office of the Executive Secretary	Individual
Mr. Nagesh Kumar	Director, Social Development Division, (SDD)	Individual/Group
Mr. Adnan Aliani	Director, Strategy and Programme Management Division (SPMD)	Individual
Mr. Srinivas Tata	Section Chief, SPMD,	Individual
Mr. Edgar Dante	Chief, Evaluation Unit	Individual/Group/Skype
Ms. Therese Bjork	Social Affairs Officer, SDD focal point for the evaluation	Individual/Group/Skype
Ms. Cai Cai	Chief, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, SDD	Individual/Group
Mr. Sture Patrik Andersson	Chief, Sustainable Socioeconomic Transformation Section, SDD	Individual/Group
Ms. Vanessa Steinmayer	Population Affairs Officer/OIC Sustainable Demographic Transitions Section, SDD	Individual/Group
Mr. Marco Roncarati	Social Affairs Officer/Youth Employment, SDD	Individual/Group
Mr. Paul Tacon	Social Affairs Officer/Migration, SDD	Individual/Group
Ms. Isadora Loreto Ms. Grace Puliyel Ms. Aiko Akiyama Mr. Predag Savic Ms. Li Stephanie Choo Ms. Ermioni Sokou	Professional staff, SDD	Focus Group Discussion
Ms. Katinka Weinberger	Chief, Environment and Policy Development Section	Individual
Ms. Rikke Munk Hansen	Chief, Economic and Environment Statistics Section	Individual
Mr. Josefa Maiava	Head, Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific	By telephone
Ms. Atu Emberson-Bain	Regional Adviser, Social Development, Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific	By telephone
UN AGENCIES		
Dr.Maria Nenette Motus	Regional Director, IOM, Bangkok	By skype
Ms. Anna-Karina Jatfors	Deputy Regional Director, UN Women, Bangkok	Individual
Ms. Ingrid Fitzgerald	Technical Adviser, Gender and Human Rights, UN Women	Individual
Mr. Eammon Murphy	Director, Asia Pacific Regional Support Team, UNAIDS, Bangkok	Individual

Mr. Stuart Watson	Senior Adviser, Community Support, UNAIDS, Bangkok	Individual
Dr. Maria Elena Elio-Borromeo	Regional Programme Adviser, UNAIDS	By telephone
Mr. Christopher Lefranc	Technical Adviser, Population and Development, UNFPA, Bangkok	Individual
Ms. Galanne Deressa	Programme Specialist, UNFPA	Individual
Ms. Susan Vize	Regional Adviser, UNESCO, Bangkok	By telephone
Mr. Nilim Baruah	Senior Migration Specialist, ILO, Bangkok	Individual
Mr. Nuno da Cunha	Senior Technical Adviser, Social Protection, ILO, Bangkok	Individual
Mr Beniam Gebrezghi	Progaramme Specialist, Civil Society and Youth, UNDP Bangkok	Individual
Ms. Koh Miyaoi	Regional Adviser, GEWE, UNDP, Bangkok	Individual/by email
EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS: GOVERNMENT		
Mr. Li Hong	Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP	Individual
Mr. Oleg Shamanov	Minister-Counsellor/Deputy Permanent Representative, Embassy of the Russian Federation	Individual
H.E Ms Saida Muna Tasneem	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bangladesh and Permanent Representative to ESCAP	Individual
Ms. T.C.A. Kalyani	Joint Secretary and Financial Adviser, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, India	By telephone
Mr. Hafiz Saqib Butt	Director of Finance, Employers Old-Age Benefits Institution, Ministry of Overseas Pakistani and HRD, Pakistan	By telephone
Mr. Wasantha K Bandarage	Assistant Director, Ministry of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs, Sri Lanka	By telephone
Mr. Swan Yi Ya	Deputy Director, Rehabilitation of PWDs, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Myanmar	By telephone
Ms. Chansoda Phonethip	Director General, National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Lao PDR	By telephone
Mr. S Ranugge	Chairman, Welfare Benefits Board, Sri Lanka	By skype
Mr. Kim Kwanghee	Deputy Director, Korea Disabled Peoples Development Institute, Republic of Korea	By telephone
Ms. Shijirtuya Munkbat	Member of Working Group, Mongolian National Youth Council	By skype
Ms. Diana Martirosa	National Statistical Office, Armenia	Emailed response

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS: NON-GOVERNMENT		
Ms. Ediola Pashollari	Secretary General, World Assembly of Youth (WAY) Malaysia	By skype
Dr.Celia Reyes	Head, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, Quezon City, Philippines	By skype
Dr. Babette Resurreccion	Senior Fellow, Gender, Environment and Development, Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok	By skype
Ms. Alexandra Johns	Executive Director, Asia-Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Bangkok	By skype
Ms. Rodora Babaran	Director, Human Development Directorate, ASEAN, Jakarta	By skype
Mr. Jerry Huguet	Former SDD staff member/independent consultant	By skype
Ms. Yuenwah San	Former SDD staff member	By WhatsApp
Professor John Piggott	Director ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research/Professor of Economics, Sydney, Australia	Emailed response
Mr. Wathsaridu Karunarathna	Founder-Green Troops	Emailed response
Mr. Dulanjana K Bandaralage Don	Representative, Sri Lankan Youth Parliament, Sri Lanka	Emailed response
Ms. Johanna Ella May Erroba	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, University of the Philippines/former project consultant	By skype

Evaluation of the
ESCAP subprogramme on social development

Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

Background of the evaluation

Evaluation at ESCAP is an important function that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of its subprogrammes, projects or initiatives. Recognizing the value of an independent evaluation in guiding efforts to improve ESCAP's overall performance and effectiveness, the Commission adopted resolution 66/15 on "Strengthening of the evaluation function of the secretariat of the Commission", which requested the secretariat to ensure that its programmatic work, including the work of divisions, subregional offices and regional institutions, is evaluated periodically.

In line with the above resolution, ESCAP has strengthened its evaluation function to promote accountability and foster institutional learning for improving the quality of ESCAP's work. As part of its evaluation function, the secretariat plans its evaluations by identifying the most useful and timely topics of evaluation so that they can inform decision-making with relevant and timely information. For the period from 2017 to 2019, ESCAP management identified the subprogramme on social development as a priority topic for strategic evaluation. There has been no systematic evaluation focusing on the entire work of the subprogramme conducted previously. The subprogramme will benefit from an evaluation by providing information on its key achievements and challenges and on how it can be further improved to support its member countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Under the present programme of work of ESCAP (2016-2017), the subprogramme on social development aims to strengthen regional cooperation in building a socially inclusive society that protects, empowers and ensures equality for all social groups in Asia and the Pacific through promoting change at the policy and institutional levels. The main target group of the subprogramme will be government officials and institutions, particularly those involved in the formulation, implementation and management of social development policies and programmes. Organizationally, the substantive responsibility for delivering the subprogramme work lies with the Social Development Division (SDD) of ESCAP.

Purpose and objectives

The evaluation aims to contribute to the overall effectiveness of ESCAP and generate information on its achievements and results under the subprogramme on social development. The evaluation is also forward looking, with a focus on providing recommendations to ESCAP's management on how to improve the overall performance and effectiveness of the subprogramme in the context of the ongoing reform process at ESCAP and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In order to maximize its usefulness, it is designed to contribute to ongoing reform initiatives of ESCAP generally and of the

social development subprogramme in particular and conducted in line with the ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines[28].

The specific objectives are:

(i) To assess the development results of the subprogramme in three key areas: (1) knowledge generation, (2) intergovernmental processes and (3) country support;

(ii) To define metrics/indicators for measuring development results in each of the above areas;

(iii) To propose/recommend measures/actions for improving the subprogramme's knowledge products, intergovernmental processes, country support and gender mainstreaming.

Scope of the evaluation

The specific focus and scope of the evaluation will be further refined in consultation with ESCAP management and staff and other stakeholders during an inception phase of the evaluation. The following tentative questions to be answered by the evaluation under each evaluation criteria are proposed.

Evaluation criteria	Tentative evaluation questions
Relevance *Assesses the usefulness of subprogramme outputs to the member States.*	• How is the relevance of the subprogramme outputs perceived by the member States? • How could the subprogramme make its work more relevant to the needs and priorities of the member States including through UN Country Teams?

Effectiveness
Assesses the development results of the subprogramme?
	• What were the overall development results of the subprogramme in three key areas: (1) knowledge generation, (2) intergovernmental processes and (3) country support?
	• What specific indicators could be used for measuring the development results of the subprogramme in the three key areas?
	• What can be done better to improve the effectiveness of the subprogramme in the three key areas and to support delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically in relation to:
	   o knowledge generation to achieve status as a think tank for Asia Pacific;
	   o intergovernmental processes;
	   o country support including mechanisms for supporting member states and UN Country teams.

Gender mainstreaming *The extent to which gender considerations have been incorporated in the subprogramme design and implementation.*	• To what extent have gender consideration been mainstreamed into the design and implementation of the work of the subprogramme? • What were the development results of the subprogramme's work to support gender mainstreaming in ESCAP as a whole? • What can be done to improve gender mainstreaming within the programmes and operations of the ESCAP secretariat?

---

[28] Available on the ESCAP webpage at http://www.unescap.org/partners/monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluation

METHODOLOGY

An evaluation consultant will be recruited to undertake a rigorous evaluation. The evaluation shall yield useful information and result in action-oriented, relevant, and useful recommendations. The evaluator is expected to produce evidence-based data and utilize appropriate and best-practice data collection methods and analysis. He/she will undertake a transparent and participatory evaluation process in consultation with the evaluation reference group, involving staff and, where possible, partners at all stages of the evaluation. The evaluation will be conducted in line with the ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines.

The evaluation methodology will cover but not be limited to the following actions:

1. A desk review of relevant documents, including the ESCAP's programme of work, relevant project documents and progress reports, relevant ESCAP evaluation reports (to be provided by the Evaluation Manager);
2. One mission to ESCAP in Bangkok to conduct face-to–face key informant interviews/focus group discussions with ESCAP staff, partner institutions and member States;
3. An on-line survey to relevant stakeholders in the member States;
4. Follow-up telephone/Skype interviews as may be required to ensure that data collection is as comprehensive as possible.

Data will be disaggregated by sex and other relevant social categories, if it is available. The interviews and stakeholder analysis will involve and reflect the views of both male and female stakeholders as appropriate including: the reference group, development partners and target beneficiaries in all key evaluation tasks.

In analyzing the data, the evaluation will use and triangulate qualitative and quantitative approaches, provide charts and direct quotations and highlight good practices examples.

The following outputs will be delivered to ESCAP's management and the Reference Group through the Strategy and Programme Management Division:

1. Inception report, including an evaluation work plan and framework detailing the methodology and approach for the evaluation
2. On-line survey
3. First draft and final evaluation reports
4. Presentation (ppt) on the findings, conclusions and recommendations
5. Facilitation at ESCAP on how to operationalize the evaluation recommendations

The draft evaluation report, including preliminary findings and recommendations, will be shared with key stakeholders prior to finalization for their review and suggestions. The final report, which will include a management response from the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, will be shared with the member States, circulated within the ESCAP secretariat, and posted on the ESCAP's public and internal websites.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Reference group

ESCAP uses an evaluation reference group to enhance stakeholder participation and provide oversight and substantive support to the evaluation. The evaluation will be managed by an evaluation reference group comprising the Deputy Executive Secretary responsible for the subprogramme (Chair), Director of Strategy and Programme Management Division (SPMD), Director of Social Development Division, appointed professional staff(s) of SDD and Chief of Evaluation Unit, SPMD (secretariat). The reference

group should be gender balanced and have an appropriate mix of skills and perspectives. It provides technical and methodological guidance to the evaluation process; reviews and agrees on the evaluation terms of reference and inception report; reviews and agrees on a short-list of qualified evaluation consultants for selection and approval by the ES; provides quality assurance support to the preparation of the evaluation report and validation of recommendations; ensures adherence to ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines; and support the dissemination of the evaluation results and the formulation of the evaluation management response and follow-up action plan.

Evaluator

The evaluator will assume overall responsibility for carrying out the evaluation in an objective and independent manner. This includes, among other activities, managing the work, ensuring the quality of interviews and data collection, preparing the draft report, presenting the draft report and producing the final report after comments have been received in line with standard templates provided by ESCAP. The evaluator must have:

- Knowledge of the United Nations System; principles, values, goals and approaches, including human rights, gender equality, cultural values, the Sustainable Development Goals and familiarity with the operations of United Nations Country Teams;
- Knowledge of results-based management and the formulation of indicators for measuring development results, as well as familiarity with the planning and monitoring framework of the UN Secretariat;
- Professional and technical experience in evaluation (application of evaluation norms, standards and ethical guidelines and the relevant organizational evaluation policy and promotion of evaluation and evidence based learning).[29]
- Good technical knowledge and experience on social issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

ESCAP adheres to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct in evaluation and all staff and consultants engaged in evaluation are required to uphold these standards. To this end, ESCAP has developed a Consultants Agreement form that evaluators are required to sign as part of the contracting process.
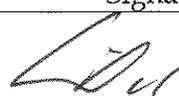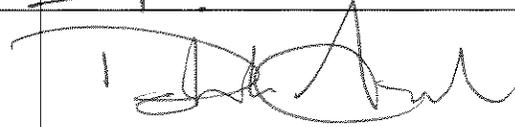
Evaluation Unit

The evaluation will be guided generally by ESCAP's Evaluation Unit, Strategy and Programme Management Division which will also be the first "port of call" for the evaluator. This Unit will be responsible, in consultation with the staff of the SD subprogramme, for managing the implementation of the evaluation, including identifying the relevant specific stakeholders, arranging the mission consultations in Bangkok and allocating a research assistant to launch and manage the implementation of the online survey until its closure.

---

[29] See Standard 3.1. Competencies, UNEG. 2016. *Norms and standards for evaluation.*

ANNEX 4: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Management Response and follow-up Action Plan

Title of Evaluation: Evaluation of the ESCAP subprogramme on social development		
	Signature	Date
Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana Executive Secretary ESCAP		23 January 2019
Mr. Kaveh Zahedi Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development Office of the Executive Secretary		22. 01. 2019
Mr. Adnan Aliani Director Strategy and Programme Management Division		22/01/19
Patrik Andersson Acting Director Social Development Division		18 Jan./2019

General Remarks by Management

The evaluation of the subprogramme on Social Development comes at a critical juncture for the Social Development Division (SDD), with a new ESCAP leadership, just ahead of a new planning cycle for the United Nations secretariat and in the midst of the United Nations Development System reform. At the time of the management response, SDD is also awaiting a new Director. Furthermore, ESCAP will, in early 2019, start developing a medium-term plan which will contain ESCAP-wide guidance on various areas of relevance for the evaluation. In this context, the evaluation provides valuable guidance on how SDD can initiate a process to increase the focus, relevance and impact of the subprogramme.

Management welcomes the evaluation's overall positive assessment of the subprogramme's relevance and effectiveness, in particular to support intergovernmental processes, as well as the high-quality knowledge products developed over the past four years. Management fully supports suggestions to further dissemination of these products, as well as recommendations to continue strengthening United Nations inter-agency collaboration.

In general, management supports the recommendations to implement follow-up actions focusing on supporting intergovernmental processes, analytical work and capacity-development. Management agrees on the importance of ensuring that these areas of work complement each other, respond to global and regional mandates, and are aligned with other ESCAP and United Nations Secretariat-wide reform processes. ESCAP senior management therefore fully supports the follow-up actions identified below.

Report Recommendation	Management Response	Follow-up Action	Lead Unit/Collaborating Units	Expected completion date	Indicator of completion of follow-up action[1]
1: Preparatory Work SDD should conduct an in-house stock-taking/mapping exercise to establish the following for the next programme biennium: • Identify its comparative advantages especially in connection with emerging development issues in the region and assess the adequacy of existing in-house expertise • Identify which intergovernmental processes need to be supported in which thematic areas (CEDAW, CPRD, HIV and AIDS, ICPD, Global Compact on Migration) and level of effort that will be needed • For the others (poverty/inequality, social inclusion, youth, social protection), determine if they have regional implications and if yes, estimate the support needed by MS, e.g. sharing of best practices, new evidence for policy options • Consider a reduction in thematic areas e.g. social inclusion is a cross-cutting theme/approach and all the other themes reflect social inclusiveness • The results of the stock-taking/mapping exercise should guide the preparation of the strategic framework and work programme for 2020-, presented to MS for their approval	Management agrees with the recommendation. Discussions to reduce the number of thematic focus areas have been held with ESCAP senior management, resulting in streamlining to increase effectiveness. Starting in 2019, reflected in the programme planning for 2020 and in the context of the 2030 Agenda, the focus will be on: ageing; disability; gender equality and women's economic empowerment; inequality; migration; population and development; and social protection. Management notes that the ESCAP three pillars of work - supporting intergovernmental processes, analytical work and capacity-development - will continue to form the basis of SDD work in all thematic areas. Further efforts will be made to ensure complementarity between areas.	Discussions will be held with senior management and SDD staff to review the thematic areas of SDD's work and identify priority areas for future programming, in line with ESCAP's mandates and comparative strength.	SDD/ESCAP senior management	1 June 2019	Approval of the 2020 work programme and budget by management.

---

[1] * This information provides evidence of completed action. Examples include issuance of an official memo, completion of a study or report, launching of a website, etc.

2: Analytical Knowledge Products					
2: Analytical Knowledge Products • SDD should consider reducing the number of knowledge products per year; they should maintain an annual flagship report and aim to limit in-depth studies to 1-2 per year across the thematic areas • SDD should develop a common template for a short policy brief and every thematic area should produce at least one for every biennium • SDD should develop and implement a clear communications and dissemination strategy to ensure that study results and policy options reach MS stakeholders more effectively. • SDD should consider the feasibility of establishing long-term institutional arrangements with a few leading research institutions or think-tanks in the region as sources of expertise	Management agrees with the recommendation. Accordingly, the SDD submission to the publications programme for 2020 included 5 publications compared to 22 in 2018-2019. Common templates for SDD working papers and policy briefs have been developed. The templates have been in use since 1 October 2018. Management also agrees with the recommendation to develop and implement a communications and dissemination strategy, which could be part of a wider outreach strategy for SDD. Such as strategy would relate to both better dissemination (such as or publications and online training modules) and how to strengthen our engagement with member States and other stakeholders. Collaboration with research institutes already exist and will be strengthened, including by the establishment of medium and long-term institutional arrangements with such entities in the future.	An outreach strategy for stakeholder engagement and for improving the dissemination of SDDs deliverables, including knowledge products, will be developed. ESCAP will develop a medium-term plan to guide the annual planning cycle, ESCAP work at the country level and cooperation with other organizations, including United Nations entities, regional development partnerships, research institutions and civil societies.	SDD SPMD/ ESCAP senior management	1 August 2019 December 2019	• SDD submission to ESCAP publications programme 2020; • New templates for SDD knowledge products developed and circulated to SDD staff; • SDD outreach strategy approved by SDD Director; • Increased allocation of budget for communication and outreach of SDD knowledge work in the 2020 work programme and budget • ESCAP medium-term plan issued.

3: Country Support	Management partially agrees with the recommendation. In line with the ESCAP mandate, ESCAP provides technical assistance to member States in implementing global and regional intergovernmental outcomes, commitments and frameworks. Accordingly, ESCAP has no country support mechanism per se but will better coordinate/align with UNCT work in all relevant thematic areas, and vice versa. This will be made possible by the creation of independent Resident Coordinators, opening space for Regional Commissions to shape UNDAFs to boost regional and transboundary elements in particular, while enhancing the capacity to share experiences and strengthening the regional voice in global processes. SDD future engagement with UNCTs will follow ESCAP-wide guidance on country engagement in ESCAP's medium-term plan to be developed in 2019. SDD will continue to engage with countries as part of its regional and subregional activities and through regional presences of United	ESCAP medium term plan to be developed in early 2019 will include guidance on ESCAP engagement at the country level.	SPMD/ ESCAP senior management SDD	December 2019 Tentative strategy June 2019; to be revised by February 2020.	• ESCAP medium-term plan issued with clear indication of the linkages between national interventions and regional frameworks; • System for communication and coordination of all national work with relevant Resident Coordinators (included as part of performance plan of Division Director).

Row content:

3: Country Support
• SDD should reconsider the country support mechanism to firstly, ensure that future activities not only support the implementation of regional agreements but also that results feed back into regional consensus building and to the UNCTs;
• Work more closely with UNCTs and the sub-regional offices to identify partners on the ground that could take over after the SDD support is completed to promote long-term ownership and sustainability
• SDD should maintain its involvement with countries including through its regional knowledge products i.e. using them to conduct field research or pilot testing and through its regional/subregional experts meetings. These can be conducted through the four sub-regional offices in addition to Bangkok.

	Nations partners, as well as ESCAP subregional offices (see further below).					
4: Monitoring of Outcome Results • In line with ESCAP's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines 2017, SDD should take early simple steps to improve the quality of its outcome monitoring across all thematic areas. Some options are: • Conduct regular Interviews with MS representatives via phone or skype to obtain feedback about their follow-up country actions • Allow SDD professional staff to carry out monitoring missions 1-2 times a year per theme • When SDD staff are on a country mission allocate extra time for them to conduct focus group discussions 1) with government stakeholders from several ministries to extract outcome-level results, including policy changes and 2) non-government stakeholders to extract alternative policy options and views especially from civil society	Management partially agrees with the recommendation and notes the importance of strengthening monitoring of SDD work. Closer engagement with member States, including to monitor the results of SDD interventions can be part of the future SDD outreach strategy which would be developed to address such issues. Country level missions for monitoring purposes would depend on availability of funds and need to be built into project proposals for larger projects.	The SDD outreach strategy will include guidance on how to strengthen relationships at the country level to collect information in order to monitor the results of SDD' work. All projects (with $250,000 budget and above) will require an outcome-based evaluation. Where feasible, missions for other purposes could be extended to undertake required follow up and exchange information with country level stakeholders to monitor the results of SDD work. This could be demonstrated through mission reports.	SDD		Tentative strategy June 2019; to be revised by February 2020.	• SDD outreach strategy approved by SDD Director; • Project proposals; • Mission reports.
5: Inter-Agency Collaboration at Regional and County Levels • SDD should strengthen its collaboration with Bangkok-based UN agencies by identifying specific issues within the broader thematic area which can be jointly addressed. This could be undertaken within the context of, for example, a joint study or regional meeting	Management agrees with the recommendation and notes SDD existing strong collaboration both through the Thematic Working Groups under the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM-TWG), as well as the formal and informal United	SDD will continue to collaborate with Bangkok-based United Nations agencies, including in the development of joint activities, and inform/propose collaboration with UNCTs in relation to	SDD		Ongoing	• Minutes from RCM-TWG; • Information about joint meetings and other activities posted on the

• SDD should ensure that future country activities are coordinated with or at least informed to the relevant UN Country Team • ESCAP, through its subregional offices, should aim to participate regularly in UNDAF formulations and reviews to ensure regional perspectives are taken into consideration.	Nations collaboration in all SDD thematic areas, in particular through United Nations entities' regional offices in Bangkok. The latter also often facilitate country level contacts with United Nations and national partners. Under the RCM-TWG, joint studies and regional meetings have been developed. Joint meetings and trainings are also organized outside the RCM-TWG, such as with ILO in the area of social protection. SDD will continue to inform and seek possible collaboration with UNCTs in relation to missions and country level activities. SDD will also consider how to strengthen collaboration with other regional commissions and DESA. Future arrangements for inter-agency collaboration at regional and country levels, including ESCAP engagement in UNDAFs, will be informed by the forthcoming ESCAP medium-term plan and regional and global mandates.	missions and country-level activities. ESCAP will develop a medium-term plan to guide the annual planning cycle, ESCAP work at the country level and cooperation with other organizations, including United Nations entities, regional development partnerships, research institutions and civil societies	SPMD/ ESCAP senior management	December 2019	ESCAP website; • Explicit reference to inter-agency collaboration in the 2020 work programme and budget.

| 6: Collaboration with the Subregional Offices | Management agrees with the recommendation and notes that, while this focuses on measures to increase communication, it would be important to first identify areas of common interest, linked to concrete initiatives for collaboration.

SDD would welcome further support from SROs in identifying national experts, information on key national policy developments, support with country-level follow-up ahead of intergovernmental meetings and in disseminating SDD knowledge products in the respective subregions.

The SPMD-led semi-annual planning and monitoring discussions could be further used as a mechanism to facilitate regular dialogue around joint planning. | List and mutually share tentative opportunities for collaboration with SROs ahead of the SPMD-led semi-annual planning and monitoring discussions.

Meetings between SDD and SROs to be organized during the Commission session. | SDD and SROs

SROs and SDD | March 2019

May 2019 | Joint activities and projects developed and implemented with SROs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • SDD should consider ways to strengthen the relationship between its Bangkok-based staff and those in the four sub-regional offices, beyond the existing arrangements. Some options are:
• More regular exchanges of information and ideas via skype and telephone conference discussions
• When staff from the subregional offices attend the annual ESCAP session, use this opportunity for more in-depth exchange of information and ideas. | | | | | |