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Regional Consultation on the Formulation of the Regional Programme for Arab States (2018-2021)

May 22-23, Amman, Jordan

Introduction

UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) is in the process of formulation its next Regional Programme (2018-2021), in line with the development of the new UNDP Strategic Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The new Regional Programme Document (RPD 2018-2021) will focus on selected outcome areas based on a process of extensive consultations with regional and national stakeholders. The content will also be informed by research and evidence that identify key regional development trends and challenges. The new programme will build on best practices and lessons learned from the current phase.

As a key milestone in the formulation process, **a regional consultation will be held in Amman on 22-23 May 2017**. The consultation will bring together regional counterparts and stakeholders, including representatives from national and regional institutions, donors, experts, and UN representatives.

The objective of the consultation is to discuss the regional development challenges and solicit feedback from the participants on possible entry points for development assistance that could be provided by UNDP. The recommendations of the consultation will inform the drafting process of the regional programme document, which is expected to be finalized in October 2017.

Background on the current regional programme

The current Regional Programme for Arab States (2014-2017) was endorsed by the UNDP Executive Board at the end of January 2014. It represents 4 out of 7 outcome areas of the UNDP Strategic Plan, namely:

- Inclusive growth: Growth is inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded (Outcome#1)

- Inclusive governance: Citizen expectations for voice, effective development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance (Outcome #2)
- Gender: Faster progress is achieved in reducing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment (Outcome #3)
- Social cohesion and resilience: Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster settings (SP Outcome #4)

The regional programme's work is delivered through the following types of work to contribute to the regional results through advocacy on key development issues and country results to complement the country programmes and link them to the work in other countries in the region.

- building a regional knowledge base to support an evidence based regional development agenda
- solidifying partnerships with key regional institutions to support their role in delivering development results;
- fostering networks of exchange among key stakeholders with focus on key development issues;
- supporting and complementing country results through the regional work and facilitating catalytic as well as innovative pilots at country level.

The formulation process

The regional consultation is part of a broader formulation process that spans around one year. The consultation marks a milestone in this process, building on an internal preparatory phase that has been supported by research and analysis conducted by internal and external experts.

The preparatory phase so far has produced the following:

- 1) A draft situation analysis, reviewing key regional development challenges and trends
- 2) A theory of change document, outlining the dynamic relationships and causal relationships among the identified development challenges and trends
- 3) Background research materials, with focus on data, and statistics, including the following:
 - a. "Governance, Integrity and Public Sector Effectiveness in Arab Countries"
 - b. "Regional Economic Integration and Trade in the Arab Region"
 - c. "Climate Change, Energy and Environment in the Arab Region"
 - d. "Conflict and Crisis in The Arab States"
 - e. "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities";

The preparatory phase also benefited from the "[Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality](#)" and from a number of other UN and non-UN analysis and reports.

These documents will be made available to participants ahead of the consultation through a shared folder.

Objectives of the regional consultation

The main purpose of the consultation is to engage with key government and non-government stakeholders in an open discussion on the design of the new UNDP Regional Programme for Arab States (2018-2021). Such discussions will validate the initial findings of the preparatory phase for the regional programme formulation regarding challenges and opportunities in the Arab region. They will also guide the process of identifying programmatic entry points for possible regional initiatives. The regional consultation is also an opportunity to discuss potential new partnerships and stakeholder networks and ways of strengthening existing ones.

The outcomes of the discussion will be captured in a consultation report to inform the development of the new regional programme document.

Methodology

The regional consultation will be a 2-day process, bringing together regional stakeholders, including representatives from national and regional government as well as non-government institutions, donors, experts, and UN representatives, including the UNDP regional as well as country office colleagues.

The participants will engage in discussions through sessions that will be informed by expert presentations. They may also separate into working groups to have deeper exchange on selected topics.

Each session will explore the key challenges and trends of the specific thematic area. The discussion will also aim at identifying additional entry points, possibilities to scale up and improve the current work, as well as potential partnership opportunities.

During the discussion, and especially for the identification of entry points, the participants are expected to consider:

- a) Taking into account the draft situation analysis as well as the background and research materials that will be shared in advance;
- b) Applying the “vulnerability, fragility, and exclusion” lenses to have a risk informed discussions during the sessions about the needs of the various stakeholders, especially of youth as well as women;
- c) Critically thinking of UNDP’s comparative advantage and the role of partners and other UN agencies;
- d) Reviewing the regionality principles (to be shared separately) to best identify the comparative advantage of having a regional programme versus country level initiatives in responding to the identified challenges and opportunities;

The participants will also be provided with guiding questions to feed into the discussions during each session to have a more structured discussion around various topics.

Agenda

Based on the guidance emerging from the preparatory phase of the regional programme formulation, the agenda of the consultation is proposed to be shaped around understanding of “vulnerabilities, fragilities, and exclusion” that relate to two main interrelated focus areas, including;

- Inclusive and sustainable growth and development: This area of focus recognizes the risks and vulnerabilities that are related to economy, environment, and energy, both internal and external to the region. The focus area pays attention to the processes that may exclude or marginalize certain groups, e.g. women and youth, from economic opportunities and access to natural resources, increasing their exposure to those risks related to economic shocks and climate change related disasters.
- Inclusive governance and sustaining peace: This area of focus acknowledges the fragilities due to possible governance failures as well as conflicts, resulting in various forms of crises, humanitarian as well as development, including large displacements they lead to- and vice versa. The governance failures often lead to elite capture, corruption, and other forms of exclusionary decision making processes (the opposite effect also being true), resulting in mistrust in government and fractures in social fabric.

Taking into account those above, the proposed sessions in the regional consultation will be organized along the following lines as possible useful building blocks of a regional programme that will be further refined based on the feedback during the consultation.

- Deepened thinking on sustainable job-rich growth
- Redefining climate resilience
- Renewed focus on governance
- Emphasis on sustaining peace
- Strengthened focus on gender and youth
- Knowledge for transformational change

These topics will be guided by the overall framework of Sustainable Goals and 2030 Agenda, with a perspective of what can be done under each through increased regional collaboration. They will be covered in various sessions where experts from and outside the region will present key facts and trends to guide the discussions.

The detailed agenda will be shared separately.