Concept note

Regional Collaboration on Social and Economic Indicators

Rationale

Statistical indicators are critical tools to better understand poverty, education, health and a host of other factors that determine a country's level of human development. Aggregated statistical data can often be misleading, however, covering up regional variations, differences between ethnic groups, or discrepancies between sexes. This is particularly important for a region such as South Eastern Europe and CIS and Central Asia that is undergoing transition. The rate of transition, however, varies widely amongst different socio-economic groups, with some vulnerable populations in danger of being left behind.

Disaggregated data will give a better, more complete picture of the statistical indicators. It will show where development is lagging, and allow for improved policy prescriptions, as well as more efficient use of resources.

It is critical that statistical data be disaggregated in the categories of ethnicity, sex, age, religion, regional areas, and urban/rural divisions. Consolidating the existing disaggregated data and building national statistical offices capacities to generate such data will be one of the components of the project.

In the recent period, the number of organizations that are gathering data relevant to human development across the region has grown significantly. Although the source of data is often the same national statistical organizations, each organization has developed its own database. Many of the indicators overlap, and there is a need for consistency, especially in supporting countries in reporting on the Millennium Development Goals.

Project Description

This project will cover the countries in Southeast Europe and Central Europe , CIS and Central Asia.

Project objectives

The general objective of the project is to systematize the existing socioeconomic information at sub-national (NUTS 2 and 3) levels in SEE ,CEE ,CIS and Central Asia and provide the necessary data background for improvement of regional policy in the region. This would allow for monitoring of MDGs at a sub-national level. It also aims to improve co-ordination between external agencies supporting data monitoring analysis at the regional and national level.

The project will pass several phases, including milestones to evaluate the outcome of each phase

The **first phase** includes mapping of the data gathering on human development by different agencies in the region with the objective of developing a common approach to regional data collection, identifying gaps and minimizing overlap (who's doing what, where and is it available).

The **second phase** may include mapping of disaggregated data available at national level. This implies an agreement with the national statistical offices to collect MDG indicators of their country at the national and sub-national level. The second milestone will consist of a first comprehensive set of disaggregated data with a sufficient coverage of countries.

The **third** phase moves from the initial data collection to an on-going regular activity with a clear updating strategy.

Scope of work and organization

A kick-off meeting will be organized in May 2005 to discuss and map out existing data collection initiatives with UNICEF, UNECE and other partners in the UN system including the World Bank who plays a key role in the regional implementation of MDG monitoring.

On the basis of the findings and recommendations emerging from this meeting, a strategy for the subsequent phases will be articulated for discussion among interested agencies in the Region.