

SESRIC'S SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME (SD-CaB)

Concept Note

1. Introduction

Background

Social development refers to addressing long lasting barriers to development, strengthening the focus on people who have been excluded from economic and social opportunities, and increasing investment in inclusive growth (World Bank, 2020).¹ As the end goal is to leave no one behind in the course of social development, a particular emphasis is attributed to some groups of society that experience certain disadvantages or face barriers in access to public and social services.

Over the last two decades, a set of factors such as rapid urbanization, fast-paced globalization, multidimensional poverty, reduced job opportunities due to digitalization, social transformation towards more individualism, increased life expectancy, ageing population, increased pressure on natural resources, conflicts and disasters have led to an immense pressure on people in both developed and developing countries, including the OIC Member States. As a result, a growing number of people are facing an increasing number of challenges in accessing labour and financial markets, education institutions, housing and transportation, health and social protection systems, and cultural life that inhibits them from reaching their full potential and making desired contribution to the social development of their respective societies (SESRIC, 2020 and 2019).² Such longstanding barriers and difficulties exacerbate existing inequalities, trigger poverty, and deepen social exclusion by preventing some members of the society from fully benefiting from economic growth and inclusive development.

Amongst others, increasing poverty, lack of equal access to education, high unemployment rates, limited access to health care, legal services, and social protection, and widespread discrimination are some of the common challenges experienced by a growing number of people in their socio-economic lives both in OIC Member States and beyond (SESRIC, 2018).³ Sustainable and inclusive social development can help prevent these challenges from influencing especially vulnerable and disadvantaged segments of the society by breaking the vicious cycle of social exclusion and poverty. The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), held in March 1995 in Copenhagen, stressed on the urgent need for addressing profound social problems especially poverty, unemployment, social exclusion.⁴ In a similar vein, the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda (2015) identified a number of objectives and targets under the Sustainable

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/overview>

² SESRIC (2020), State of Youth in the OIC Member States 2020.

SESRIC (2019), People with Disabilities and Special Needs in OIC Countries.

³ SESRIC (2018), OIC Women and Development Report 2018.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-summit-for-social-development-1995.html>

Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve sustainable development without leaving no one behind by paying utmost attention to the core values of the social development like eliminating inequalities, achieving inclusiveness and sustainability.⁵ In this context, achieving full and inclusive social development has become an important policy issue worldwide.

Efforts of the OIC on Social Development

In line with the spiritual and cultural values of Islam and the universal principles of human rights, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has acknowledged the importance of developing common policy actions towards achieving social development such as through eliminating poverty, addressing unemployment, and achieving social justice and social inclusion for all in OIC Member States. In this context, the OIC Ten Year Programme of Action (TYPOA) (2005-2015) and the OIC 2025 Programme of Action (2016-2025) include several goals and objectives on the socio-economic empowerment of people including some disadvantaged groups to achieve both social and economic development in OIC Member States without leaving any members of the society behind. In particular, the OIC has so far exerted significant efforts towards the achievement of sustainable social development in the member countries to attain goals and objectives set in the OIC's visionary documents like the TYPOA and OIC 2025 Programme of Action. These efforts include, but are not limited to, sectoral ministerial level conferences that have reviewed and adopted a number of resolutions, plans of actions and strategic documents, which are summarized as follows:

- The organization of seven ministerial conferences on the *Role of Women in the Development in the OIC Member States* and the adoption of the *OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)* in 2008 and its amended version in 2016.
- For the first time, the OIC organized in 2017 a dedicated ministerial conference on *Strengthening Marriage and Family Institution and Preserving its Values in Member States*. The Conference was a milestone in the history of the OIC efforts towards achieving social development in the member countries through highlighting the importance and the role of marriage and family institution in this domain.
- The OIC held four ministerial conferences in the domain of *youth and sports* between 2005 and 2018 where during the last conference in 2018, the *OIC Youth Strategy* was adopted to address common challenges faced by youth in the Islamic world and develop joint policy actions at the OIC level.
- The OIC organized five conferences of *Ministers in charge of childhood* between 2005 and 2018 in order to identify common obstacles and challenges faced by children in the Islamic world as well as identify joint policies on how to improve the state of children.
- The OIC first ministerial conference on *social development*, which was held in December 2019, discussed and adopted four important documents, namely the "*OIC Strategy on the*

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

Elderly”, “*OIC Plan of Action on People with Disabilities*”, “*OIC Strategy for Empowering the Marriage and Family Institution, and Preserving its Values in the Muslim World*” and “*OIC Strategy for the Well-being of Children in the Islamic World*”.⁶ The call for conducting a ministerial level conference in the domain of social development for the first time in the history of the OIC and the inclusion of four important key OIC level strategy documents in its agenda reflect the importance of social development issues at the agenda of the OIC. The Ministerial Conference on Social Development also presented new venues to enhance cooperation amongst the OIC Member States and institutions in this important domain in the near future.

- In order to achieve targets and objectives set by the various sectoral OIC’s Ministerial Conferences and adopted visionary documents of the OIC on the cause of social development, over time a group of specialized OIC institutions were established and the existing OIC institutions included the social development related issues into their areas of services for the benefit of OIC Member States. In this direction, for instance, the Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB) in the field of development, the OIC Women Development Organisation (WDO) in the field of women, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) in the field of education, science and culture, and the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) in the field of food security are tasked with undertaking initiatives and implementing activities towards achieving social development and addressing persistent challenges in this important domain in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat. All those relevant institutions of the OIC have contributed significantly to achieving social development in the Islamic world in their fields of specialization and they have capacities and capabilities to design and provide new programmes and initiatives in meeting changing needs of the OIC Member States through enhancing intra-OIC cooperation.

Rationale for a New Capacity Building Programme on Social Development-related Issues

Achieving social development is a strategic objective for the OIC Member States, which is evident from the adopted resolutions and policy documents by the series of the OIC ministerial sectoral conferences. To achieve this strategic objective, many OIC Member States need to further their efforts to address the growing needs of vulnerable groups, as well as improving their well-being across all walks of life. This can be made possible, among others, by improving the institutional and human capacities of the national institutions working in the domain of social development through the sharing and exchanging of knowledge, experiences, and best practices. This becomes more necessary than ever before, particularly considering the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its severe impact on some groups of societies in many parts of the world. The

⁶ “OIC Strategy on the Elderly” and “OIC Strategy for Empowering the Marriage and Family Institution, and Preserving its Values in the Muslim World” were adopted during the Ministerial Conference. The frameworks of the “OIC Strategy for the Well-being of Children in the Islamic World” and “OIC Plan of Action on People with Disabilities” were also adopted.

devastating effects of the COVID-19 are particularly more visible in the developing world including several OIC Member States stemming from ineffectiveness of public services, human capital shortages, and inadequate capacities. Consequently, the socio-economic well-being of various segments of the society such as elderly, children, women, and persons with disabilities has regressed in many parts of the world as a direct consequence of the pandemic.⁷

The pandemic has created additional challenges for some segments such as the elderly and people with disabilities caused by the increased pressure on social security and health systems as well as reduced economic activities that will undoubtedly affect social development adversely both in the short and long-term. The outbreak of the pandemic has also highlighted the importance of building national capacities to improve resilience and preparedness for crises with a view to providing uninterrupted and quality public services for all. Yet, the intensity of local problems, national experiences and policy priorities, and responses vary from one country to another. In this respect, social policy responses in OIC Member States have differed in terms of scope and delivery during the pandemic.

As a subsidiary organ of the OIC, one of the mandates of SESRIC is to organize capacity building training activities for the benefit of the OIC Member States in various socio-economic fields and areas with a view to supporting and contributing to their efforts towards enhancing the institutional and human capacities of their national institutions. In doing so, SESRIC gives special attention to matching the needs and capacities of these institutions through different modalities of facilitating the transfer and exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices among the member countries in all the geographical regions.

Against this background, and considering the agenda of the OIC in the domain of social development, SESRIC plans to initiate a new capacity building programme with the aim of, supporting and contributing to the efforts of the OIC member countries towards enhancing the institutional and human capacities of their national institutions working in the field of social development. This capacity building programme, which is titled “***Social Development Capacity Building Programme (SD-CaB)***” aims to facilitate the transferring, sharing and exchanging of knowledge, experiences and best practices among the member countries in these important domains through various modalities such as training courses, training workshops and technical study visits.

2. Target Group

The main target group of the programme will be the staff of national institutions at all levels working in the domain of social development. Below is a list of potential national institutions that could benefit from SESRIC’s Social Development Capacity Building Programme (SD-CaB):

- Ministries responsible for Social Development, Family, Women’s Affairs, Children, Youth, Community Development, and Social Affairs and Services.

⁷ SESRIC (2020), Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic in OIC Member Countries.

- National Social Security and Social Welfare Institutions

While implementing the Programme, the Centre can partner with relevant international and OIC institutions such as the OIC General Secretariat, the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) that is active in the field of youth related issues and the OIC Women Development Organization (WDO) that deals with women’s topics, issues, and rights within the OIC according to its Statute, which has attained ratification quorum as of August 2020. Such partnerships can allow SESRIC to increase the effectiveness and maximize the impact of its activities within the framework of this programme.

3. Methodology

SESRIC initiates and implements various capacity building programmes on a wide range of socio-economic issues of interest to the OIC Member States with a view to enhancing the capacities of their human resources through different modalities including training courses, training workshops, and study visits. Through these programmes, the Centre facilitates the transfer and exchange of know-how, knowledge, and experience among the national institutions of the OIC Member States by matching the needs and capacities of these institutions.

To match the needs and capacities of relevant national institutions within the framework of the “*Social Development Capacity Building Programme (SD-CaB)*”, the Centre will design and circulate a questionnaire to analyze the needs and capacities on various fields of social development. Subsequently, the Centre will match these needs and capacities by facilitating sending experts from the countries that have the capacities to provide the needed training to those countries that need it.

4. Expected Results

SESRIC’s new Social Development Capacity Building Programme (SD-CaB) is expected to:

- Provide a distinct opportunity to discuss the state of social development and its implications for OIC Member States as well as deliberate on common challenges and obstacles observed in this field within the OIC Member States;
- Identify major shortcomings and public capacity related problems in the OIC Member States in the domain of social development;
- Facilitate the exchange of views, knowledge, and expertise with a view to formulate concrete recommendations and policy suggestions for addressing common challenges and specific needs of all with particular attention on some vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
- Offer a platform for evaluating and exchanging the effectiveness of policies and services of the national institutions of the OIC Member States towards achieving social development;
- Identify successful modalities and best practices of the relevant public national institutions of the OIC Member States for improving the well-being of all including men and women,

children, youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities and strengthening family institution as a means of achieving social inclusion and cohesion.

- Improve capacities and resilience of the relevant public national institutions of the OIC Member States active in the domain of social development in coping with crises like pandemics and shocks through bettering the knowledge and experience of policy makers and experts;
- Assist in identifying and proposing ways and means for enhancing intra-OIC cooperation in this area;
- Facilitate the networking of participants from various relevant national public institutions active in the domain of social development for future cooperation and exchange of expertise;
- Assist relevant national institutions of the OIC Member States active in the domain of social development in concentrating their efforts towards reaching the objectives and goals of international and regional strategy documents such as the Sustainable Development Agenda, OIC 2025 Programme of Action, OIC Youth Strategy, OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW), OIC Strategy on the Elderly, and OIC Strategy for Empowering the Marriage and Family Institution, and Preserving its Values in the Muslim World;
- Increase the knowledge and awareness of policy makers and experts of the OIC Member States on specific activities and programmes of the relevant OIC institutions offered in the domain of social development; and
- Assist the OIC Member States in achieving social development and addressing common challenges in this domain over time by improving capacities of relevant national institutions active in the field of social development and raising awareness among policy makers and experts.