New Way of Working
at ESCWA

VISION
ESCWA, an innovative catalyst for a stable, just and flourishing Arab region

MISSION
Committed to the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA's passionate team produces innovative knowledge, fosters regional consensus and delivers transformational policy advice. Together, we work for a sustainable future for all.

1 *New* Working Method

To remain relevant, deliver on the expectations of the Secretary-General, and effectively assist member States in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) must be agile, dynamic, effective, responsive and innovative.

The new way of working responds to the need to focus ESCWA work and resources on providing regional public goods, to keep pace with rapid regional and global developments, to become a catalyst for positive change in the Arab region, to build entrepreneurial knowledge societies, to transition towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and to foster stability, justice and prosperity.

The goal is to improve the standing of ESCWA and enhance its recognition in the region, by establishing it as a beacon of knowledge for the region and beyond, and as a harbour for stimulating and insightful debate. ESCWA aims to become a leading source of policy advice, a platform for discussion and consensus, a hub for cutting-edge research and knowledge, and an assembly for stakeholders of equitable and sustainable development.

The new way of working is premised on the following principles:

> "
> *The United Nations needs to be nimble, efficient and effective. It must focus more on delivery and less on process. More on people and less on bureaucracy.*
>
> **António Guterres**
> Secretary-General of the United Nations

Efficiency through effectiveness

> Efficiency entails a primary focus on inputs, use of resources and cost

> Effectiveness means focusing on deliverables (products and channels) and results

> To maximize the impact of limited resources, ESCWA must act strategically in allocating them and focus on areas where it has a unique role and added value

> Efficiency is possible only in predictable and stable environments; when environments are complex and fast-changing, effectiveness becomes the priority

Striking a balance between centralization and decentralization

> Centralized decisions are coordinated, limit waste, and lower average costs by managing the use of fixed resources

> Decentralized decisions are quicker, and based on local information that is more pertinent in ambiguous and fast-changing contexts

> It is possible to be both centralized and decentralized: centralized on common processes and support operations, and decentralized on business decisions

Innovation through cross-specialization

> Knowledge work requires specialization, but innovation requires generalization

> A hierarchical organization structure wherein people are grouped based on their area of specialization is not optimally conducive to innovation

> Innovation requires unprecedented undertakings, and thus necessitates a results-oriented organization that brings together various specializations across functional divisions

A. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ESCWA

The divisional structure of ESCWA is functionally organized and centralized. It is therefore not suited to optimizing effectiveness in the current context of the Arab region, which is complex and fast-changing, or to producing innovation and rapidly responding to changing needs.

The proposed new structure is built on teams empowered to make quick decisions on day-to-day implementation, thus enabling faster responsiveness to change by focusing on iterative results and regular assessment of a project's goal and value proposition.

Project teams are organized into key result areas and clusters, which are result-oriented thus fostering greater innovation.

ESCWA senior management will provide centralized leadership on the organization's vision and objectives, and ensure that the organization's projects are designed to advance its vision and objectives, so as to guarantee that project results are aligned and mutually reinforcing, thus fostering greater effectiveness while ensuring the most efficient allocation of resources.

As a result, a healthy balance will be struck between centralization and decentralization, ensuring that the ESCWA strategy is centrally defined and managed to provide consistency, while operational decisions are made at the project level to provide greater agility.

B. NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

Executive Action Team (EAT)

> Develops the organizational vision and objectives
> Ensures coherence and cross-fertilization among clusters
> Assigns resources to projects
> Comprises the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Executive Secretaries, and cluster leaders

Clusters

> Translate the organizational vision and objectives into strategic goals under the key result areas
> Ensure coherence and cross-fertilization among the key result areas for each cluster
> Promote and advance cross-cluster coordination and initiatives
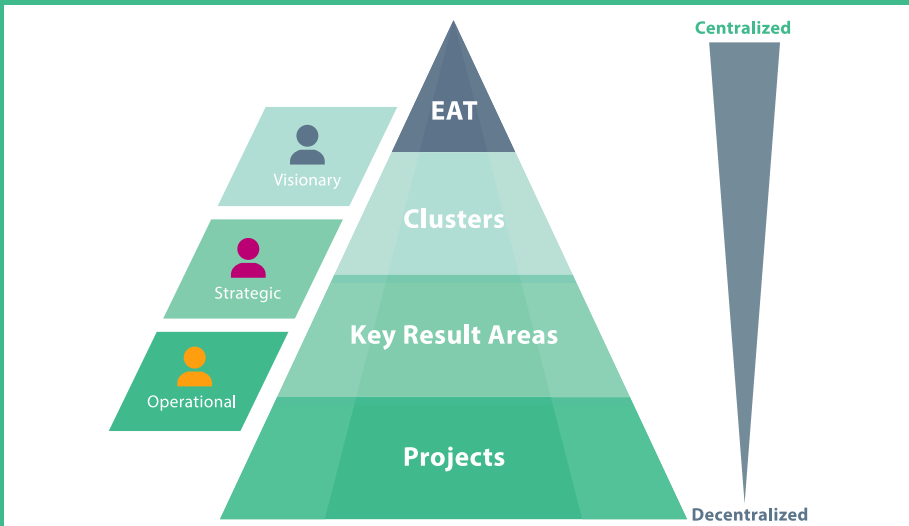> Cluster leaders and key result area coordinators supervise the fulfilment of cluster functions
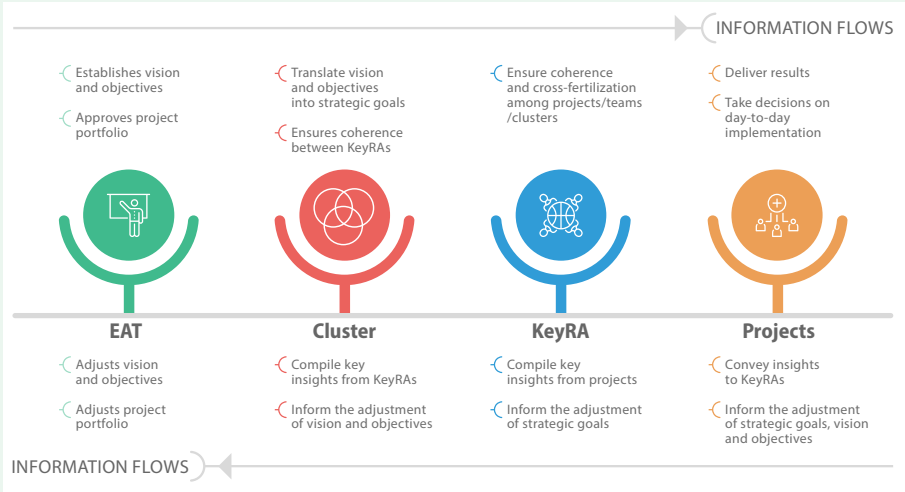
Key result areas (KeyRAs)

> Ensure coherence and cross-fertilization between the projects belonging to key results areas

> Identify key insights from projects to inform the development of strategic goals

> Develop projects to strengthen and enhance key results areas relationships across clusters

> Key result area coordinators and project coordinators ensure the fulfilment of these functions

Projects

> Deliver results that meet ESCWA goals and provide value to clients

> Create and make use of products and channels

> Take decisions on the day-to-day implementation of projects

> Convey insights to key result areas to inform the development of the organization's strategic goals and vision

> The project coordinator, the agile facilitator and team members ensure the fulfilment of these functions

Centralized

Visionary

EAT

Strategic

Clusters

Operational

Key Result Areas

Projects

Decentralized

INFORMATION FLOWS

EAT
- Establishes vision and objectives
- Approves project portfolio

Cluster
- Translate vision and objectives into strategic goals
- Ensures coherence between KeyRAs

KeyRA
- Ensure coherence and cross-fertilization among projects/teams /clusters

Projects
- Deliver results
- Take decisions on day-to-day implementation

EAT
- Adjusts vision and objectives
- Adjusts project portfolio

Cluster
- Compile key insights from KeyRAs
- Inform the adjustment of vision and objectives

KeyRA
- Compile key insights from projects
- Inform the adjustment of strategic goals

Projects
- Convey insights to KeyRAs
- Inform the adjustment of strategic goals, vision and objectives

INFORMATION FLOWS

C. OPERATIONAL CORE VALUES OF AN AGILE ESCWA

Individuals and interactions over **Processes and tools**
- Self-organizing teams that exemplify efficiency and agility
- Projects built around motivated individuals, who are supported and trusted to get the job done
- Staff members who are enabled to maintain a constant pace

Meaningful results over **Counting deliverables**
- Results are the measure of progress
- Projects that work together to deliver coherent organizational value
- Products and channels anchored in the results they contribute to

Meeting client needs over **Meeting procedural requirements**
- Early and continuous delivery of results
- Continuous attention to technical excellence
- Simplicity by minimizing the bureaucratic burden

Responding to change over **Following the plan**
- Welcome changing requirements
- Review portfolio of projects regularly to ensure its meaningfulness and feasibility
- Work closely with clients to respond to a changing situation and/or emerging need

2 *Key* Concepts

The new way or working at ESCWA introduces innovative concepts to organize the Commission's work and design its projects.

A. CLIENT

> A group or entity that utilizes the professional advice or services of ESCWA

> A group or entity whose behaviour ESCWA seeks to influence through its work

> An actor who makes choices and has needs and expectations

> Someone ESCWA has a direct relationship with

A client may be a ministry, a political decision maker, a parliament, a civil society organization or an activist, the League of Arab States or another United Nations agency – someone ESCWA has a direct relationship with. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or the Secretary-General can also be clients when they directly request that ESCWA undertake a particular kind of activity.

B. PRODUCT

> A tangible deliverable created through a structured process to bring value to a client or group of clients and to ESCWA

> Solves a problem or provides a benefit to a client

> Refined and used in the medium to long term by ESCWA to address client needs and further the achievement of the organization's goals

ESCWA products contribute to delivering solutions for identified problems, translate the ESCWA vision and goals into concrete deliverables, and create tangible goods that bring value to clients and are utilized in the medium to long term.

A product may be a publication, a training programme, a toolkit or a methodology that has life beyond the project that produced it. A product can be used by ESCWA or clients for many years, and new projects can be launched to build on existing products.

C. CHANNEL

> A way of communicating with people or getting something done

> A way of making a product or information available to clients

> A way of directing the organization's work and products towards a result

> Channels raise awareness of ESCWA products and allow clients to access them. They deliver a value proposition to clients and help them evaluate it, and support clients in making use of ESCWA products.

Examples of channels

> Technical advice: building capacity or providing advice on a technical solution that could be applied to a specific problem

> Policy advice: providing information and analysis on policy options to stakeholders

> Policy dialogue: facilitating information exchange on policy options between stakeholders

> Advocacy: promoting specific policy changes or norms at the global, regional or national levels

> Brokerage/coordination: acting as an impartial intermediary or an agent who makes arrangements, sometimes in sensitive areas, to achieve harmonious and effective results

A channel may be a website, an expert-group meeting, an intergovernmental meeting, or regional network. It can also be 'soft' assistance, such as policy or technical advice, dialogue, advocacy or brokerage/coordination services.

D. CLIENT − PRODUCT − CHANNEL INTERACTION

Solution
ESCWA communicates the solution back to the client through its channels
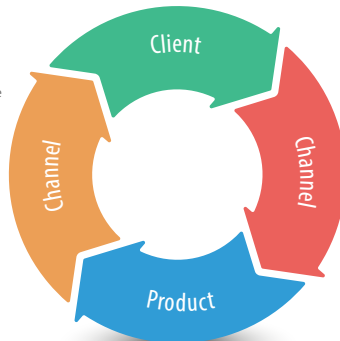
Need
The client has a need that ESCWA learns about through its channels

⚠ **ESCWA produces a possible solution for the need**

E. PORTFOLIO

> The portfolio is the totality of the organization's projects

> The portfolio of projects makes tangible contributions to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region, addresses member States development needs, and promotes regional collaboration, so as to realize the organization's vision and goals and bring about desired value and change

Project 3

Project 2

Achieve
ESCWA
vision and goals

Project 1

> The organization's portfolio should contain a balanced mix of projects aimed at different levels of results to ensure organization's impact while facilitating continuity and cumulative change

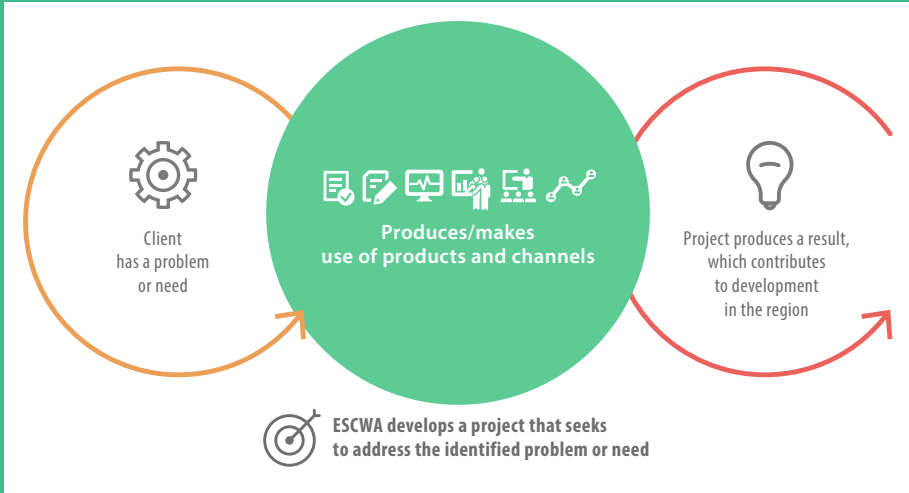> The portfolio is decided and managed by EAT, and is reviewed regularly to make necessary adjustments

F. PROJECT

> A project seeks to produce a result that helps address a client's problem or need by combining products and channels to bring about change in knowledge, skills, ways of working, policies or conditions

> A time-bound endeavour that creates a unique result and seeks to translate the organization's vision and objectives into concrete deliverables

> Can be developed and proposed by any staff member or team at ESCWA

Projects will be chosen based on their

Impact

> Relevance to the SDGs, clients' needs and/or the ESCWA vision and objectives

> Needs related to the vision and strategy of the key results

> Support to member States in achieving the SDGs and/or national development goals

> Strong measurable indicators and a clear baseline to measure impact

Client has a problem or need

Produces/makes use of products and channels

Project produces a result, which contributes to development in the region

ESCWA develops a project that seeks to address the identified problem or need

Return on investment

> Optimization of resource use
> Relevant to multiple key result areas (cross-KeyRAs)
> Demonstrates a clear regional dimension or scalability
> Leverages inhouse expertise and existing products

Time criticality

> Project responds to an urgent need
> Linked to other ongoing projects
> Needed to respond to a time-bound mandate
> Linked to upcoming/ongoing global or regional review/processes

Potential for new opportunities

> Involves new clients
> Brings new funding, or existing donor interest in funding
> Engages new partners
> Demonstrates innovation, exhibits strong partnerships, and/or advances the visibility/relevance of ESCWA

3 Change

The purpose of the new way of working at ESCWA is to effectively promote and guide efficient and innovative development in its member States, so as to achieve the 2030 Agenda. To do so, ESCWA projects must be transformative and their results must be cumulative.

A. TRANSFORMATIVE AND CUMULATIVE CHANGE

Transformative change

> Aims at visible and measurable results that empower the disadvantaged, increase equality and produce sustainable improvements in human welfare
> Impact should transcend the ESCWA sphere of intervention and reverse hierarchies of norms and values that subordinate social and environmental goals to economic objectives
> Interventions should catalyse behavioural and institutional reform and build capacity for change at the broader societal level

Cumulative change

> Individual results are reflected in a long-term plan and rationale for change
> Successive projects and interventions are designed to build on previous work and achievements
> Multiple interventions together lead to the desired change in the long term

B. TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Transformative change informs how projects are designed.

Context

> There is a need to analyse the context in which ESCWA works and revise assumptions regarding political will, the impact of conflict and instability, and weak participation, among other factors.
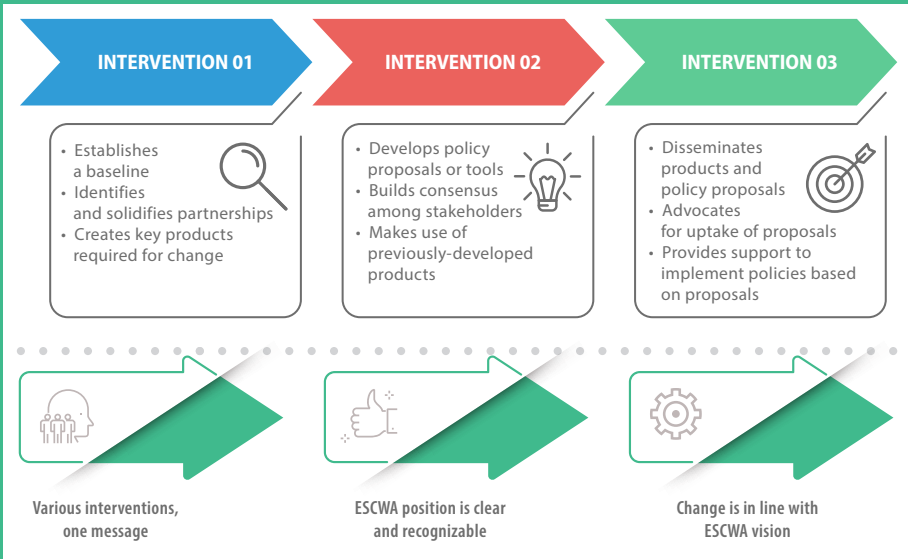
Root causes

> There is a need to analyse underlying structures, policies and norms to identify constraints at the structural level and the reasons for those constraints through consultations with stakeholders.

Partnerships

> There is a need to identify key actors working on the same issues at different levels, develop a common strategic approach, and design complementary interventions. Partnerships should be targeted, well planned and strategic.

C. CUMULATIVE CHANGE

Cumulative change informs how projects are planned and managed.

INTERVENTION 01

- Establishes a baseline
- Identifies and solidifies partnerships
- Creates key products required for change

INTERVENTION 02

- Develops policy proposals or tools
- Builds consensus among stakeholders
- Makes use of previously-developed products

INTERVENTION 03

- Disseminates products and policy proposals
- Advocates for uptake of proposals
- Provides support to implement policies based on proposals

Various interventions, one message

ESCWA position is clear and recognizable

Change is in line with ESCWA vision

Results
4 **and Milestones**

A. RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT

Results-based management is necessary for achieving change, and is based on the following:

> Defining realistic expected results

> Monitoring progress towards the achievement of those results

> Integrating lessons learned into future planning and reporting on results

In the new way of working:

> Products are not results – they emerge from processing inputs through programme or non-programme activities and therefore relate to the completion of activities

> Channels are also not results – they are the means by which ESCWA communicates with stakeholders to feed input into ESCWA planning and implementation, and by which products are communicated or services delivered to clients

> Results are designed to lead to actual or intended changes in conditions at the following three levels

B. RESULTS CATEGORIES

CUMULATIVE

Immediate results/outcomes

> Normally occur either during the project implementation or immediately after its completion

> Immediate results are usually changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and ways of working. An individual product or a channel can achieve an immediate result; however, the product/channel is the deliverable that influences the result but it is not the result in itself

This is the level of results that projects initiating a new area of work would generally aim for.

Intermediate results

> Normally occur after the project completion as they require clients or stakeholders to take independent action outside of ESCWA

control

> Intermediate results are usually changes in conditions, policies and structures (e.g. organizational structures)

A project can achieve intermediate results if it builds on immediate results already achieved through its deliverables, or on earlier work completed through previous projects

Developmental result/objective or impact

> Normally occurs after the project completion, as it is based on the effect of independent actions taken by stakeholders outside of ESCWA control

> Impacts people's lives, affects country development paths, promotes structural transformation, and/or adopts a new approach to development

Through its results, a project can contribute and support the achievement of developmental change and impact
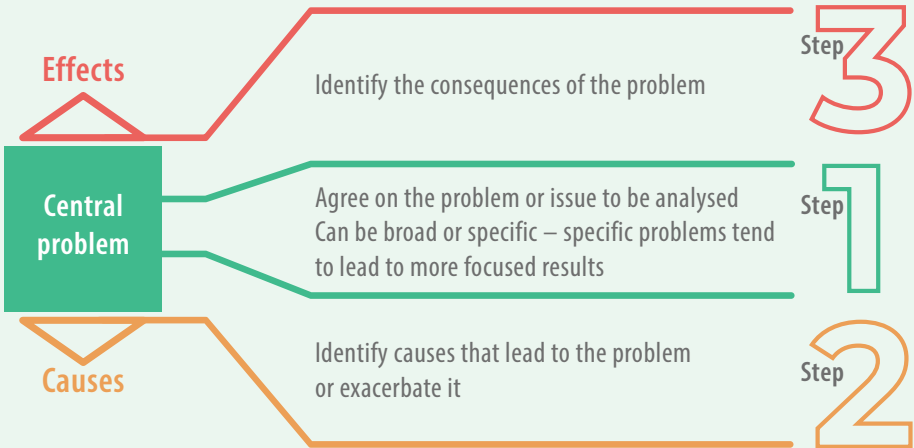
CUMULATIVE

Examples

> **Immediate result:** Ministry officials and parliamentarians have knowledge about best practices regarding shared water resource management.
> **Intermediate result:** Regional agreement on shared water resource management framework.
> **Impact:** Shared water resources in the region are more effectively managed, resulting in improved water sustainability.

C. TRANSLATING PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES INTO RESULTS: THE 'PROBLEM TREE' APPROACH

Problem tree analysis offers one approach to translating problems or challenges into results. It is the basis for a complete theory of change. It is a tool to break problems down into manageable and definable components, which enables clearer prioritization of factors and helps focus objectives. It can also improve the understanding of a problem and its often interconnected or even contradictory causes. It directs the focus to present issues, rather than apparent, past or future issues.

Sample problem tree

Effects — Identify the consequences of the problem — Step **3**

Central problem — Agree on the problem or issue to be analysed
Can be broad or specific – specific problems tend to lead to more focused results — Step **1**

Causes — Identify causes that lead to the problem or exacerbate it — Step **2**

A project should be designed to address the causes and/or mitigate the effects related to a problem. A problem tree can therefore be converted into an objectives tree by rephrasing each of the problems into positive desirable results – as if the problem had already been resolved.
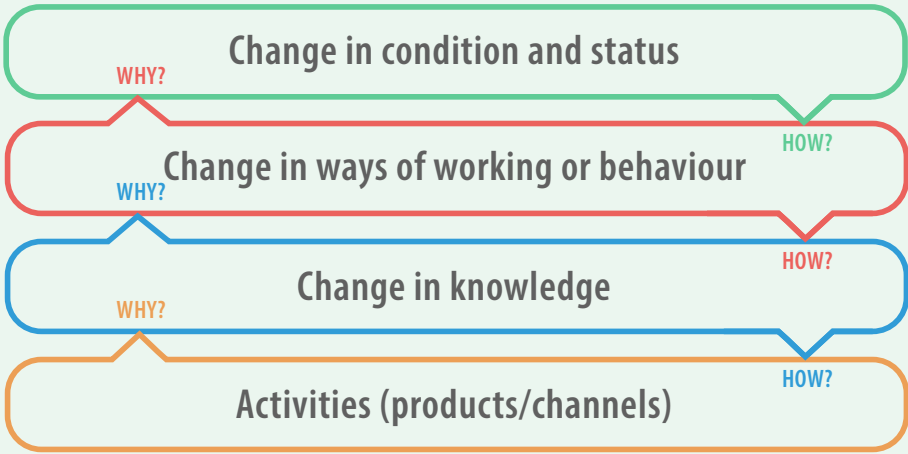
Root causes and consequences are turned into root solutions, and key projects or influencing entry points are quickly established. Planning a project should start by identifying the desired result, then working backwards to identify the products, channels and activities required to reach that result.

One way to check whether the logic of a project is sound is to organize the results, products and channels into a chain of influence that, when read top-down, answers the question 'how?' and, when read bottom-up, answers the question 'why?'.

It is important to check that your logic model or theory of change makes sense:

> Are your results really results? Do they describe changes or benefits in knowledge, attitudes, motivation, skills, ways of working, conditions or the status of your project's clients?

> Is the result meaningful for project clients? Will achieving this result really make a difference to them?

> Is your result reasonable? Is it plausible to think that your project can reasonably influence this result to a meaningful extent?

> Is your logic model logical? Is it convincing to think that your products and channels truly can lead to these results? Do the 'how/why' chains make sense?

Change in condition and status

WHY? HOW?

Change in ways of working or behaviour

WHY? HOW?

Change in knowledge

WHY? HOW?

Activities (products/channels)

D. MILESTONES

ESCWA milestones are indicative of the progress in implementation against planned timelines.

These point to proper planning for execution by the project team, and efforts to make implementation tracking reliable on both the deliverable and budgetary sides.

Milestones will be monitored through the ESCWA Monitoring Portal, and reports will be provided live through dedicated dashboards to cluster leaders, project coordinators and teams.

Reliability and timeliness of information in the portal will be the responsibility of project teams, and specifically project coordinators.

The Business Intelligence Team and SPARK will ensure the proper functioning of the system and the availability of reports and analysis, as needed.

Please refer to the Monitoring Portal Guidelines for information on its use and roles.

E. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

For the purposes of the new way of working at ESCWA, critical success factors are used to break down a

project's result into several points:

> Reference points that mark a major event or a branching decision

point within a project

> Specific points in time within a project life cycle, used to measure progress towards its result

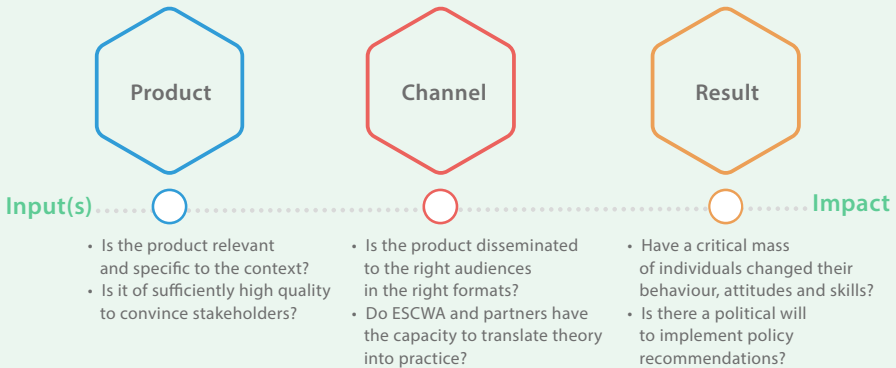> Points for external review, budget checks, and assessing new factors influencing the project, among others

The purpose of critical success factors is to:

> Help monitor progress towards substantive results instead of inputs or implementation processes

> Help continuously improve the project strategy and align or adjust activities

> Enable joint monitoring with development partners

Having a clear theory of change is essential for results-based management, and a key characteristic of any theory of change is the critical success factors that influence the success of a project but are not necessarily part of its direct implementation.

Examples of critical success factors throughout the project lifecycle

Product

Channel

Result

Input(s) ⚪ ⚪ ⚪ **Impact**

• Is the product relevant and specific to the context?
• Is it of sufficiently high quality to convince stakeholders?

• Is the product disseminated to the right audiences in the right formats?
• Do ESCWA and partners have the capacity to translate theory into practice?

• Have a critical mass of individuals changed their behaviour, attitudes and skills?
• Is there a political will to implement policy recommendations?

An assessment of these kinds of critical success factors should inform a project's sequencing and timeline.

5 Indicators

To remain relevant, deliver on the milestones and critical success factors need to be based on clear and measurable indicators that ensure the following:

> Present observable signals of status or change intended to provide a credible means of verifying results

> Facilitate the identification of information essential for decision-making on the progress and steering of a project

> Define indicators to help teams clarify the results they seek

> Provide approximate answers to a few important questions rather than exact answers to many less important ones

Milestones indicators refer to purely internal progress in project implementation of deliverables against programmatic and financial plans.

Indicators of critical success factors focus on measuring and verifying progress in changes in conditions relevant to the project that are not ESCWA deliverables, but are driven or influenced by ESCWA actions.

A. DESIGNING INDICATORS

Good indicators should be:

- **Valid** – does the indicator directly represent the result it is intended to measure?

- **Objective** – is the definition precise and unambiguous about what is to be measured?

- **Reliable** – is the data consistent or comparable over time?

- **Practical** – can data be collected easily, on a timely basis and at reasonable cost?

- **Useful** – will the data have utility for decision-making and learning?

- **Owned** – do partners and stakeholders agree that this indicator makes sense to use?

Often indicators will specify:

> The area/dimension where change is expected to happen

> How much something is expected to change

> In what manner will it change and how beneficial will that be

> Who will be able to detect the changes and where will they take place

B. MONITORING FOR INDICATORS

Indicators are only good if they can be measured and progress against them verified. Some simple means of verification that could be used are:

> Reporting/analysis, which entails obtaining and analysing documentation from the project that provides information on progress, e.g. progress report

> Participation, which entails obtaining feedback from partners and beneficiaries on progress and proposed actions, e.g. stakeholder consultation meeting

> Validation, which entails checking or verifying whether or not the reported progress is accurate, e.g. periodic review by EAT

6 Roles

A. CLUSTER LEADER

Contributing to the ESCWA vision, strategy and programme plan

> Drives transformational change within ESCWA

> Actively contributes to organization-wide strategic decisions through EAT

> Participates in the development of the ESCWA strategic plan and supports the preparation of the ESCWA annual programme plan

> Leads discussions within a cluster and between clusters, guides the formulation of strategic priorities and key result areas, and accordingly informs ESCWA-wide strategic directions

> Proactively ensures the smooth flow of communication and promotes the coherence of ESCWA messages, strategic outcomes and policy positions on key issues relevant to the cluster's projects and areas of work

> Provides ESCWA senior management with insight and creative approaches to fostering innovation, effectiveness and efficiency

Leading the Implementation of the cluster's vision and work plan

> Leads the overall implementation of the cluster's work plan

> Guides the conceptualization of projects and ensures a consultative process is in place for project development

> Supports project sponsors to ensure that the project canvases and products are aligned with the ESCWA vision and expected accomplishments

> Ensures alignment and coherence of the regional advisors' support to member States with the cluster's work programme, projects and deliverables

> Provides substantive feedback/ guidance to project teams to ensure the quality of the cluster's products; encourages and empowers staff members; provides technical and logistical support; resolves impediments; and establishes dialogue with other teams and/or resources

> Ensures harmony, alignment and coherence within and across clusters

> Identifies and manages risks within the cluster portfolio and takes appropriate action

Supporting the roll-out of ESCWA organizational reform and the Agile approach to management

> Fosters a work culture of communication, transparency, collaboration, and mutual support within the cluster and across project teams and clusters

> Promotes and facilitates teamwork, empowers staff, recognizes merit and operates with integrity, transparency and fairness

> Assesses needs in terms of competence and expertise, and oversees the recruitment of the cluster's middle-management staff

> Carries out, in collaboration with project coordinators, a review of project staff roles, assignments and time allocation prior to the project implementation

> Serves as first reporting officer to project coordinators in their clusters

Enhancing engagement, influence, outreach, resource mobilization and partnership-building

> Contributes to the development of ESCWA partnerships, resource mobilization and communication strategies

> Maintains continuous dialogue with member States at the substantive level through ESCWA committees and networks of specialists from government offices

> Leads the cluster's efforts to build a network of strategic partnerships

around key priority areas, helping with situational analysis, messaging, communication and problem-solving

> Engages in resource mobilization and funding for the cluster's projects

> Promotes and supports regular and effective engagement, dialogue and interaction with clients and with key traditional and non-traditional partners, including governments, United Nations and non-United Nations organizations, civil society, parliaments and academia

> Expends all necessary efforts to carry out senior-level representation and advocacy functions on behalf of the cluster and of ESCWA management, as required

> Promotes a culture of collaborative work with United Nations entities at the regional and national levels, going beyond traditional organizational boundaries, in line with the United Nations regional review and mechanisms for collaboration and joint accomplishments

> Ensures a swift, relevant and high-quality response to requests related to supporting member States, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams

> Ensures a renewed and up-to-date network of external top experts in the Cluster's areas of work to serve

as referees for knowledge products, partners in knowledge production, and overall inspiration for higher-quality products

> Develops and enhances partnerships with leading universities, research centres, and think tanks to identify exchange programmes, sabbatical leaves and other continuing education opportunities

> Supports the implementation of the ESCWA communication strategy in accordance with the cluster's priorities and areas of work

B. KEY RESULT AREA COORDINATOR

> Coordinates the establishment of priorities for their key result area, together with the project coordinators and the cluster leader

> Provides guidance on maximizing the value of products, channels and projects

> Protects projects from superfluous tasks and helps remove impediments to their work

C. PROJECT COORDINATOR

> Has the clearest idea why a project or product should exist

> Manages a project and works towards creating the most valuable results and products possible, identifying the most effective channels, and bettering the team in the process

> Defines end goals and tasks required to achieve them – makes objectives clear

> Creates backlogs and to-do lists, and reviews deliverables before delivery – sets expectations for quality

> Needs to be a clear communicator and create maximum transparency

D. AGILE FACILITATOR

> Ensures teams receive clear expectations from their project coordinators

> Knows the details of Agile workflow and is a guardian of the Agile methodology – oversees day-to-day functions and maintains the Scrum Board on a daily and task level

> Conducts analysis to reduce workflow friction

> Calls standup meetings and requires accountability from the project coordinator and individual team members

> Checks in with team members, gives feedback and ensures they meet deadlines

E. TEAM MEMBER

> Specialist who delivers on products, channels and projects

> Accepts assignments and works on them independently and collaboratively