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Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of subprogramme 1 of the Economic Commission for Africa, on macroeconomic policy and governance

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) assessed the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of subprogramme 1 of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), on macroeconomic policy and governance, which is implemented by the Macroeconomics and Governance Division. The evaluation was aimed primarily at supporting accountability to key stakeholders and providing the Commission with actionable information for learning and improvement. It was conducted using interviews, document reviews and secondary data analyses.

The Division leveraged its comparative advantage as a vital source of knowledge and expertise to respond to requests from member States through a wide range of capacity development activities in the areas of macroeconomic analysis, development planning and economic governance. In doing so, the subprogramme optimized interlinkages between its convening, think tank and operational functions. Partnerships were effectively leveraged within ECA, with other United Nations entities and externally to deliver on capacity development interventions. The nascent Regional Collaborative Platform presents an opportunity to further foster collaboration and information-sharing with United Nations development system entities at the country level.

Despite being engaged in a robust capacity development programme, the Division did not systematically gather or report on the outcomes of its activities. This was due in part to a high vacancy rate in the Division during the period under review and a lack of follow-up and adequate long-term support to countries. Similarly, while the subprogramme successfully supported the mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals by member States, considerations of gender, disability inclusion and human rights were not as explicit.

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

** E/AC.51/2022/1.



OIOS makes four important recommendations to ECA:

- Strengthen subprogramme-wide performance monitoring
- Strengthen and formalize information-sharing and collaboration efforts with the resident coordinator system
- Address the high vacancy rate in the Division and explore strategies for streamlining recruitment in the future to ensure adequate staffing levels
- Develop, disseminate and implement guidance on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues in the areas of gender, disability inclusion and human rights

I. Introduction and objective

1. The overall objective of the evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of subprogramme 1 of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), on macroeconomic policy and governance, which is implemented by the Macroeconomics and Governance Division. The evaluation topic was focused on the extent to which member State capacity was strengthened in the areas of macroeconomic analysis, development planning and economic governance, as demonstrated by participation in capacity development interventions and by the utilization of tools and knowledge products produced by the Division. The evaluation topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.

2. The evaluation conforms with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system. Comments on the draft report were sought from ECA management and considered in the preparation of the final report. They are provided in full in the annex.

II. Background

A. Mandate

3. ECA was established by the Economic and Social Council in 1958 as one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. The mandate of ECA is to promote the economic and social development of its member States, foster intraregional integration and promote international cooperation for the development of Africa. The mandate derives from the priorities established in Council resolution [671 A \(XXV\)](#).

4. The Commission supports 54 member States in Africa in creating prosperous and inclusive societies in which most citizens are free from want and deprivation. The work programme of ECA is focused on the desired outcomes contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution [70/1](#)) and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, with integrated policy and capacity support centred on accelerating the structural transformation and diversification of African economies.

5. ECA has a key role to play in providing dedicated regional platforms, undertaking cutting-edge policy research and providing responsive capacity development support and policy advice at the country level. Its support is aimed at developing the capacity of Governments to formulate and implement policies for sustainable development.

6. Subprogramme 1 of the Commission, on macroeconomic policy and governance, was selected for the present outcome evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS based on a risk assessment. In summary, it was determined that the work of the subprogramme was at the crux of the ECA mandate, with activities spanning the Commission's overarching mandate to support economic growth and governance across the African continent. In addition, its mandate and current focus were directly related to the development challenges resulting from the worldwide coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including the financial recovery and economic growth that member States have needed.

7. The work of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division was guided by mandates derived from resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The main mandates entrusted to the Division by the Assembly are:

action against corruption (resolution [54/128](#)); a stable international financial system, responsive to the challenges of development, especially in the developing countries (resolution [54/197](#)); implementing the smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries (resolution [65/286](#)); and external debt sustainability and development (resolution [71/216](#)). The key Council resolution relating to the mandate of the Division is resolution [2008/18](#), on promoting full employment and decent work for all.

B. Organizational structure of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Macroeconomics and Governance Division

8. The structure of ECA comprised 13 interdependent subprogrammes implemented through the Commission's multidisciplinary strategic directions. Subprogramme 1 is implemented by the Macroeconomics and Governance Division. The Commission has its headquarters office in Addis Ababa, with five subregional offices for North Africa (Rabat), Southern Africa (Lusaka), East Africa (Kigali), West Africa (Niamey) and Central Africa (Yaoundé). The Division works in conjunction with other headquarters-based subprogrammes, as well as with ECA subregional offices.

C. Economic Commission for Africa resources, distribution across subprogrammes and macroeconomic policy and governance resources

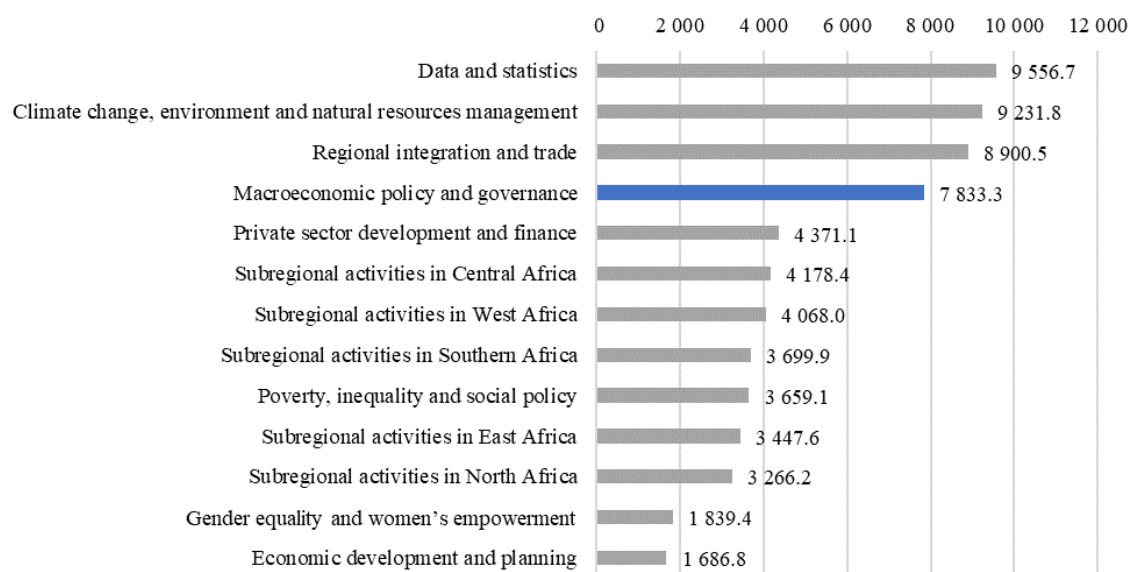
9. The ECA budget was resourced through three main funding streams: the regular budget, extrabudgetary resources and the regular programme of technical cooperation.

10. In addition to regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, the ECA regular programme of technical cooperation funded work aimed at supporting developing countries, least developed countries, countries with economies in transition and countries emerging from conflict in their capacity development efforts, with an emphasis on implementing the 2030 Agenda and other key internationally agreed goals. The defining feature of the regular programme of technical cooperation was that it must be demand-driven, responding to an expressed need requested by a member State for capacity development support.

11. Between 2018 and 2021, the Commission's total financial resources averaged \$113 million per year and remained consistent, averaging \$81 million for the regular budget component, \$24 million for extrabudgetary funds and \$8 million in technical cooperation funds. The Division's total combined resources amounted to an average of \$7.8 million, or 14 per cent of the Commission's total budget. The Division was the fourth largest resourced of the 13 ECA subprogrammes, as shown in figure I.

Figure I
Distribution of Economic Commission for Africa resources by subprogramme, 2020

(Thousands of United States dollars)

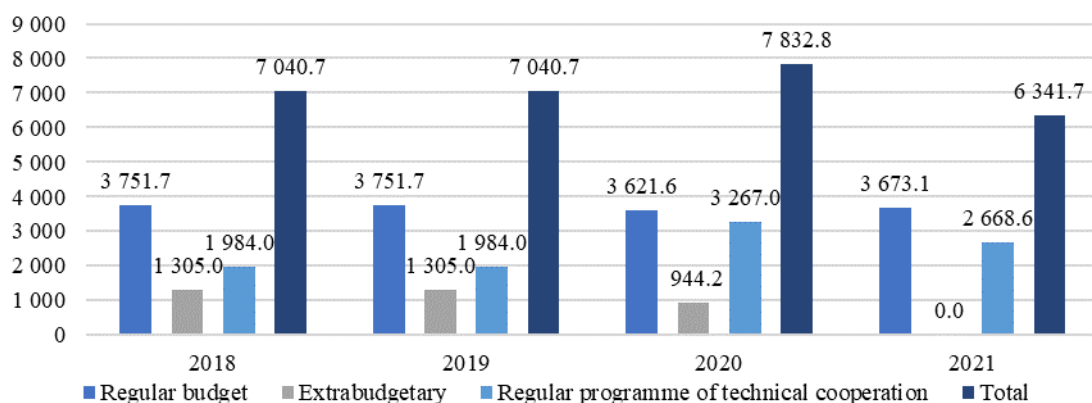


Source: A/74/6 (Sect. 18) and A/74/6 (Sect. 23).

12. Figure II provides a trend analysis of the Division's resources over the four-year period from 2018 to 2021, including regular budget, extrabudgetary and technical cooperation funding.

Figure II
Distribution of Macroeconomics and Governance Division resources by funding source, 2018–2021¹

(Thousands of United States dollars)



Source: A/72/6 (Sect. 18), A/74/6 (Sect. 18), A/72/6 (Sect. 23), A/74/6 (Sect. 23), A/75/6 (Sect. 23).

13. In addition, the Division received financial resources from the United Nations Development Account to support the needs of member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda. For the period covered by the evaluation (2018–2021), the Division implemented four projects in collaboration with other United Nations partners totalling over \$4.5 million in funding.

¹ 2018–2019 biennial budget data are presented by year for consistency.

14. With regard to human resources, ECA had 535 regularly funded posts approved for 2021. The Division had the second largest subprogramme post allocation in the Commission, with 25 regular posts and 5 additional staff funded through extrabudgetary and technical cooperation resources, totalling 30 posts (see table 1). The Division was headed by a Director and reported to the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme).

Table 1
Total post allocation for the Macroeconomics and Governance Division, 2018–2021

<i>Category</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
Professional and higher	16	17	18	18
General Service and related	11	12	12	12
Total	27	29	30	30

III. Scope and methodology

15. The subprogramme activities of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division were centred around three key thematic areas of work – macroeconomic analysis, development planning and economic governance – and were implemented by way of its three core functions, namely:

(a) **Convening function:** provision of multilateral and multi-stakeholder platforms, helping to reinforce multilateralism regionally and globally;

(b) **Operational function:** provision of direct policy advice and support to member States, including through cooperation with other United Nations system entities;

(c) **Think tank function:** interdisciplinary research and analysis of key challenges facing member States and Africa as a whole, as well as the promotion of peer learning and development.

16. The evaluation covered the time period between January 2018 and September 2021. To determine the outcomes that the subprogramme achieved, the evaluation used the planned results identified by the subprogramme and approved by member States across the three main areas of work (see table 5). Given the emphasis of planned results on enhancing the capacity of member States, the evaluation was focused primarily on the operational function of the subprogramme. The convening and think tank functions were covered through the lens of their contribution to and influence on the operational function. Substantive contributions to other ECA subprogrammes and cooperation with United Nations system entities were also covered by the evaluation.

17. The evaluation adopted a mixed-method approach incorporating the following qualitative and quantitative sources:

(a) Document and programme data reviews of mission reports, project workplans, organization charts, budgets, annual business plans, programme performance, self-evaluations, oversight reports, intergovernmental reports, appreciation letters, meeting minutes and travel data;

(b) Analysis of available requests made by member States for the capacity development services of the subprogramme, including an assessment of geographical coverage and priority country groupings across core thematic areas of work;

(c) Literature review of available documentation and information on providers of similar capacity development services and strategic partners such as the

African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes;

(d) Semi-structured interviews: 20 interviews of member State officials; 55 interviews of partners and other stakeholders of the Division, including ECA staff at headquarters in Addis Ababa and at the five subregional offices, United Nations system resident coordinators, other United Nations entities and external stakeholders; and 13 interviews of Division staff;

(e) Case study analysis of six countries covering the five ECA subregions;

(f) Review of knowledge products for flagship and major ECA publications, including the subprogramme outputs for the United Nations system response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

(g) Human resources analysis of Division staffing and vacancy rates.

18. The evaluation had the following limitations:

(a) Key informant interviews and focus group discussions had to be conducted virtually owing to COVID-19-related restrictions on travel. Some potential informants, especially government officials in resource-limited areas, were not reached;

(b) There was a high level of turnover within the Division preceding the start of the evaluation, which may have affected institutional knowledge of some of the capacity development interventions. Where possible, the team engaged with former Division staff;

(c) There was an absence of sufficient outcome data pertaining to the Division's capacity development interventions.

IV. Evaluation results

A. **Relevance: the Macroeconomics and Governance Division responded to the capacity development needs of member States while operating in a field with other providers of similar services**

The Macroeconomics and Governance Division was overwhelmingly responsive to the requests of member States and their priorities, ensuring broad geographical coverage, including servicing of priority country groups

19. The capacity development activities of the Division in the areas of macroeconomic analysis, development planning and economic governance were undertaken throughout the continent. Activities consisted of interventions implemented in multiple countries and advisory services. The primary intervention in the area of macroeconomic analysis assisted countries in building customized macroeconomic models and training modellers from member States to use the models. In the development planning area, the subprogramme focused on strengthening capacities for the design, implementation and tracking of development plans aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, including through the roll-out of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit. The toolkit was developed to facilitate the integration of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into national development plans and the priorities of member States. In the economic governance area, two complementary interventions by the subprogramme sought to address the issue of illicit financial flows, namely by piloting methodological guidelines for the measurement of such flows and strengthening the capacities of selected African countries to prevent trade misinvoicing.

20. The capacity development work of the Division was effectively prioritized to meet the needs of member States. An analysis of available direct requests for capacity development services from member States to the Division was undertaken for the period covered by the evaluation. A mapping of these requests illustrated a high demand for services from across the continent, to which the Division responded effectively by engaging countries in each of the five ECA subregions. Requests for capacity development services were received and fulfilled for 23 of the 54 member States of the region, including all of the Commission's 22 priority countries (see table 2).²

Table 2
Economic Commission for Africa countries of focus

<i>Central Africa</i>	<i>East Africa</i>	<i>North Africa</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>	<i>West Africa</i>
Cameroon	Eritrea	Egypt	Malawi	Burkina Faso
Chad	Ethiopia	Mauritania	Namibia	Côte d'Ivoire
Congo	Kenya	Sudan	South Africa	Ghana
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Rwanda		Zambia	Guinea
	Seychelles		Zimbabwe	Liberia

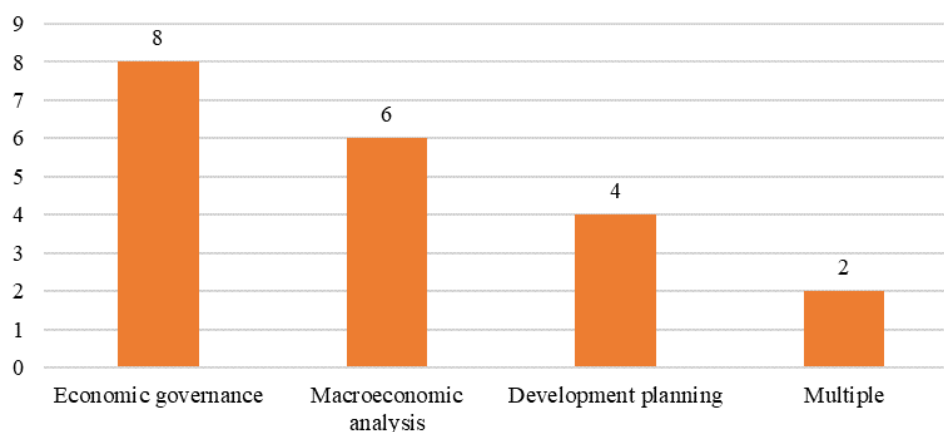
21. Member countries requested capacity development services through the five ECA subregional offices, the Office of the Executive Secretary or directly from the Division. However, there was no centralized mechanism or repository to manage information related to those requests. The absence of a comprehensive management system limited knowledge-sharing across the subprogramme and hindered the Division's use of member State data for strategic planning or to build upon its services with additional or complementary interventions. The lack of historical data also presented challenges to effective follow-up, as the Division experienced a high level of staff turnover and lacked mechanisms to ensure the retention of institutional knowledge once staff departed (result D).

The Macroeconomics and Governance Division optimized interlinkages between its convening, think tank and operational functions in responding to the needs of member States

22. The capacity development activities of the Division were also directly linked to collective requests by member States for support when convening activities, including the annual Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. An analysis of the outcome documents of the Conferences for 2018, 2019 and 2021 identified 20 references related to the areas of focus of the subprogramme (see figure III). The most common type of reference related to calls or requests to ECA for specific action, usually in the form of capacity development (see figure IV). Feedback from member States and experts was generally positive, noting the Commission's contribution to supporting evidence-based policymaking and implementation across Africa through its work on macroeconomic modelling, forecasting and scenario-building, and commending the Commission for its record of achievements to date, including its promotion of Agenda 2063 and its efforts to combat illicit financial flows.

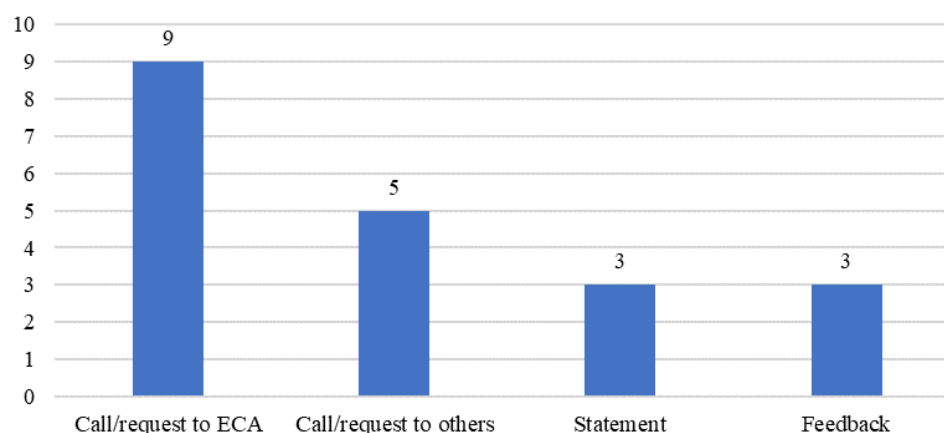
² The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) adopted a country of focus approach in mid-2019 to ensure more coherent, focused and impactful delivery of its services to a select group of countries.

Figure III
Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development references, by Macroeconomics and Governance Division area of focus



Source: OIOS analysis of Conference of Ministers outcome documents.

Figure IV
Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development references, by type



Source: OIOS analysis of Conference of Ministers outcome documents.

23. The Division's operational activities benefited from and contributed to ECA publications. An analysis of the Commission's publications covered by the scope of the evaluation indicated that capacity development activities built on this knowledge base, specifically on the topics of national resource mobilization, trade misinvoicing and illicit financial flows. The macroeconomic model developed as part of the capacity development activities was leveraged to produce estimates and forecasts for publications including "Africa's quarterly economic performance and outlook", the *Economic Report on Africa* and reports that analysed the impact of COVID-19.

24. The following examples of subprogramme interventions best illustrate the responsiveness of the Division to the needs of member States, as well as the interlinkages:

(a) **Subprogramme support in addressing the issue of illicit financial flows.** In 2011, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development mandated ECA to establish the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, for which the Division provided secretariat support. In

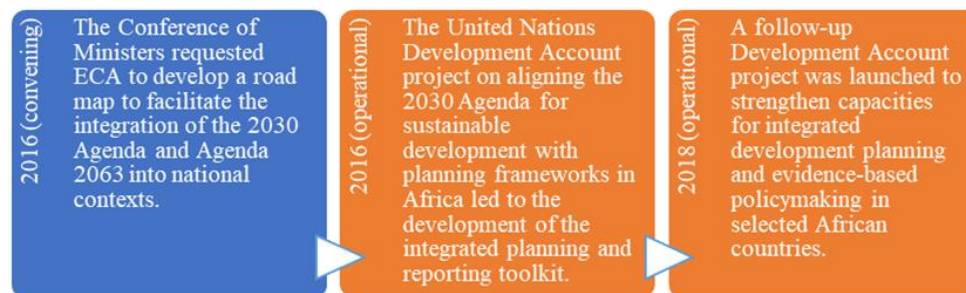
2015, the Panel published its report, which contained 21 recommendations, including specific recommendations on the study of potential methodologies for addressing illicit financial flows and on the development by the Commission of operational measures against such flows. In line with these recommendations, the Commission initiated two United Nations Development Account projects in 2018, on defining, estimating and disseminating statistics on illicit financial flows in Africa and on preventing trade misinvoicing in selected African countries;

(b) **Integrated planning and reporting toolkit.** The toolkit was the result of a request by the Conference of Ministers in 2016 for ECA to develop a road map to facilitate the integration of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in national contexts.³ Two United Nations Development Account projects were subsequently launched, in 2016 and 2018, to operationalize this request by developing, enhancing and rolling out the toolkit in various countries.

Figure V

Illicit financial flow interlinkages

Figure VI

Integrated planning and reporting toolkit interlinkages

The comparative advantage of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division was its regional expertise, sharing of best practices across the countries of the region and crafting of contextually appropriate solutions with countries

25. The Division operated in a complex field with other providers of similar capacity development services, including policy think tanks, international financial institutions, not-for-profit organizations and private sector entities. In the area of macroeconomic analysis, international financial institutions and private sector organizations were providing modelling services to countries in Africa. Countries typically avoided relying on a single model and regularly used multiple models designed to meet the various forecasting and policy analysis needs of different institutions in the country. Few players supported the integration and mainstreaming

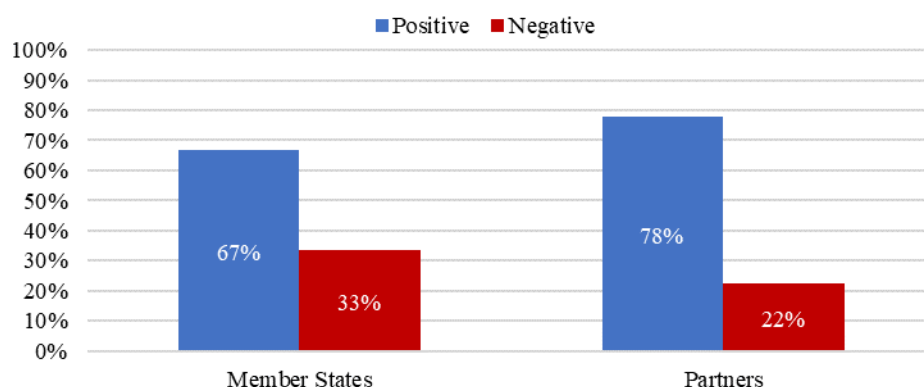
³ E/ECA/CM/49/2, paras. 37 and 39.

of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans on the continent, with the United Nations Development Programme being the most visible through its mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support approach and rapid integrated assessment tool. In the area of economic governance, ECA partnered with key players in the area of illicit financial flows, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as well as the African Union and civil society organizations through the Consortium to Stem Illicit Financial Flows from Africa.

26. The Division demonstrated its added value in the provision of capacity development services compared with other providers. Interview data supported the Division's comparative advantage in the region, with most interviewees reporting positive views. The Division's partners provided a more favourable perception of its added value in the area of capacity development, with 78 per cent reporting positively, compared with 67 per cent of member States (see figure VII).

Figure VII

Views on the comparative advantage of the capacity development activities of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division



Source: Interviews of member States and partners.

27. Three key attributes were highlighted as driving the Division's comparative advantage. Interviewees mentioned the following aspects most frequently when asked about the benefit that the Division's capacity development interventions provided compared with other providers of similar services:

(a) **Offering regional expertise:** a broad understanding of the diverse economies, social and political contexts and key challenges to the economic development of the African continent offered stakeholders leveraged expertise in a range of economic policy areas;

(b) **Sharing best practices:** dedicated platforms such as the network of modellers and forecasters for bringing together key government officials and experts in the region, convening dialogues and sharing knowledge enabled countries to learn from the experiences of other countries;

(c) **Crafting contextually appropriate solutions:** Division experts worked with and alongside government officials to customize tools and develop targeted approaches that took into account the specific needs of beneficiaries and the local context and environment.

B. Effectiveness: member States provided positive feedback on the delivery of capacity development interventions, but the Macroeconomics and Governance Division was not fully oriented towards assessing effective knowledge transfer and the use of tools

The Macroeconomics and Governance Division was engaged in a robust capacity development programme, with activities at different stages of implementation across its three main thematic areas

28. A multi-stage process was developed for implementing and reporting on the main capacity development interventions in member States:

(a) Macroeconomic modelling activities were initiated in 2015, starting with the development of a prototype model that was completed the same year. The first stage in the capacity development intervention process was to develop a generic model for a country based on the prototype model, using data from secondary sources. This was followed by calibrating and customizing the model using data from official country sources. Finally, the model was delivered to the country following training sessions for a cohort of experts. Table 3 provides a summary of these steps at the time of writing. A total of 31 countries were engaged in the development of a country-specific macroeconomic model with the support of the subprogramme, and the macroeconomic model was marked as delivered in 8 countries;

(b) The integrated planning and reporting toolkit, which was initiated in 2018, included in-country roll-out with three stages: an introductory stage to familiarize participants with the concepts and dashboard; a deployment stage that included training officials on the use of the toolkit; and an adoption stage in which data entry was completed, national development plans were uploaded and national officials committed to using the toolkit to align and track the plans. A total of 23 countries were engaged in training and roll-out of the toolkit with the support of the subprogramme, and it was adopted in 5 countries (see table 4);

(c) For interventions relating to illicit financial flows, activities begun in 2018 were at a nascent stage compared with interventions in the other two focus areas. A conceptual framework for the statistical measurement of illicit financial flows was published in October 2020 and draft methodological guidelines on the measurement of tax and commercial flows for pilot testing were published in July 2021. By the end of 2021, in addition to data collection for the estimation of bilateral trade asymmetries for the whole continent, work on building capacity to implement methodologies for the measurement of such flows had begun in eight countries.

Table 3
Status of macroeconomic modelling interventions

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Number of countries</i>
Generic model under development	Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Togo	6
Model developed	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	17
Model customized and delivered	Algeria, Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania	8

Source: Macroeconomics and Governance Division documentation.

Table 4
Status of intervention of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Number of countries</i>
Introductory stage	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Senegal, Zimbabwe	10
Deployment stage	Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia	8
Adoption stage	Benin, Egypt, Liberia, Morocco, Niger	5

Source: Macroeconomics and Governance Division documentation.

The Macroeconomics and Governance Division did not systematically assess effective knowledge transfer to member States or their leveraging of capacity development tools in line with performance measures

29. Despite reporting on capacity development activities as indicated above, the Division stopped short of consistently tracking and reporting on the outcomes of these activities. As indicated in table 5, the subprogramme developed outcome-oriented performance measures focused on the use by member States of the tools and knowledge that it generated. However, the subprogramme did not systematically gather data on the use of tools and knowledge by member States despite being required to do so to report on subprogramme performance measures. Furthermore, there was no evidence that assessments of knowledge transfer, in the form of surveys or otherwise, were systematically conducted following interventions.

Table 5
Planned results of the subprogramme on macroeconomic policy and governance⁴

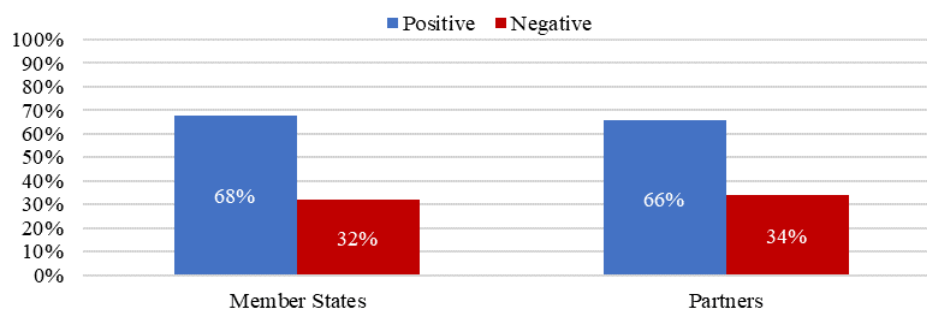
<i>Area of work</i>	<i>Expected accomplishment</i>	<i>Indicators of achievement</i>
Macroeconomic analysis	Enhanced capacity of member States in macroeconomic policy analysis and advice that promotes inclusive growth, sustainable development and structural transformation	Increased number of member States leveraging the macroeconomic model for policy analysis and advice
Development planning	Enhanced capacity of member States in the design, implementation and monitoring of development plans and strategies that promote sustainable development and structural transformation	Increased number of countries deploying ECA capacities and tools for the design, implementation and monitoring of planning frameworks and voluntary national reviews
Economic governance	Enhanced capacity of member States to mobilize both national and international public resources and adopt improved economic governance, public sector management and service delivery strategies for sustainable development	Increased number of member States using policies and strategies recommended by ECA to strengthen national and international public resource mobilization for sustainable development Increased number of member States using policies and strategies recommended by ECA to enhance economic governance to deliver services for sustainable development

⁴ 2020 annual business plan for subprogramme 1, on macroeconomic policy and governance.

30. Case studies revealed a fragmented picture of outcomes achieved among the sample of countries analysed. Overall, member States and partners interviewed had positive views on the effectiveness of the subprogramme interventions in transferring knowledge (see figure VIII). However, across the six countries covered by the case studies, capacity development activities in the areas of macroeconomic analysis, development planning and economic governance were at different stages of implementation, and outcomes for completed interventions were mixed.

Figure VIII

Effectiveness of the capacity development interventions of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division in transferring knowledge



Source: Interviews of member States and partners.

Macroeconomic analysis

31. In the area of macroeconomic modelling, the modelling work, which had been expanded from an initial 5 pilot countries to more than 30, was marked as delivered in 8 countries, 2 of which were covered by the case studies. In one of the case study countries, authorities reported that the model had been launched and used for projections and analyses. In the other, however, despite the subprogramme considering the model delivered, data availability issues had prevented it from being used for policy projection and decision-making.

32. Previous independent assessments of macroeconomic modelling activities reflect these mixed outcomes,⁵ noting in 2019 that beneficiary countries were unable to undertake new or faster forecasts after the project and that sufficient capacity within ECA had not been built to fast-track customization. This left at the time only one staff member to carry out the activities associated with the work programme, thereby delaying their implementation and leading to insufficient follow-up with recipient countries. These challenges are further discussed under result D.

Development planning

33. In the area of development planning, the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, initially conceived as a piece of stand-alone software, had gone through several iterations to become a web-based application and expanded to more than 20 countries from the initial 5 pilot countries. Training on the toolkit was ongoing in four of the case study countries and had not yet led to outcomes in those countries. Internal reporting from ECA indicated that data on performance indicators focused on outcomes such as the percentage of line ministries in countries using the toolkit for integration was not systematically being gathered.⁶

⁵ ECA, "Evaluation of the Development Account project 'Strengthening capacity for policy analysis, forecasting and development planning in selected African countries'", 2019.

⁶ EAC "Final report for Development Account project 'Aligning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with planning frameworks in Africa'", 2021.

34. Two case study countries were recipients of a United Nations Development Account project aimed at integrating accountability into development planning. Despite appreciation by member States for the training and the user toolkit produced for use by countries, these had not been formally taken up owing to what interviewees perceived as a lack of follow-up from the Division on the appropriation of the tools and knowledge from the intervention. Activities from that project had not been scaled up in the initial pilot countries nor replicated in other countries.

Economic governance

35. In the area of economic governance, activities relating to illicit financial flows were at a relatively early stage of implementation. The Huduma Halisi project in Kenya was a tangible example of achieved outcomes. The subprogramme had provided financial and technical support to Kenya to pilot the initiative, which sought to promote a culture of transparency, accountability and integrity in the delivery of public services in countries in Africa. The project led to the development and successful implementation of a citizen feedback management system in Kenya. The platform proved successful as a way for citizens to provide feedback on public services that they had accessed and had also been used for tracking COVID-19 funds. In addition, efforts by the Division and other ECA divisions were under way to adapt and scale up the platform to other countries on the continent.

C. Coherence: the Macroeconomics and Governance Division established strategic partnerships with a wide range of internal and external collaborators to enhance the capacity of member States

The Macroeconomics and Governance Division mobilized support and leveraged partnerships to strategically deliver capacity development activities despite scarce resources

36. The Division established partnerships and collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders within ECA, in other United Nations entities and externally to deliver its capacity development interventions (see figure IX).

Figure IX

Key partners of the Economic Commission for Africa



Economic Commission for Africa collaboration

37. The Division effectively leveraged the capacities of subprogrammes within ECA to deliver interventions despite operating in an environment with scarce resources (result D). The subprogramme collaborated with other subprogrammes within the Commission to develop and deliver its capacity development interventions. The subregional offices in particular served as a base for the roll-out in each subregion of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit and the macroeconomic model. The use of toolkit project managers embedded in the subregional offices was an effective approach to ensure the delivery of services in the context of a severely short-staffed Division (result D). In 2018, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the Commission's new strategic directions and an associated restructuring (Council resolution [2018/23](#)). The capacity development work of ECA was substantively mainstreamed as a core function across all subprogrammes with the elimination of the Capacity Development Division as part of the restructuring. The capacity and resources of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, a capacity development institution within ECA, were also strengthened in order to provide the training and policy support necessary for member States to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The subprogramme collaborated with the Institute to develop courses in all three areas of focus. However, ECA staff believed that the roles and responsibilities of both the Institute and the subprogramme could be further clarified to enhance collaboration and coherence.

Collaboration with other United Nations entities

38. The Division established strategic partnerships with key United Nations partners to tackle some of the critical issues facing the continent. In the area of illicit financial flows, the subprogramme strategically partnered with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which were named as the custodians of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.1, on illicit financial flows, by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators established by the Statistical Commission. In addition, the Economic Analysis and Policy Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs collaborated closely in the development of the ECA macroeconomic model, which was partially based on the Department's World Economic Forecasting Model. Representatives of the Economic Analysis and Policy Division served in an advisory capacity to guide the development of the model.

External collaboration

39. The Division sought and leveraged external partners with mixed results. The subprogramme effectively supported the African Peer Review Mechanism as a strategic partner, providing support to examine governance issues, participating in the strategic planning process of the Mechanism, as well as country review missions, and providing advisory services. The Division was also an active member of the Consortium to Stem Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, along with a broad range of organizations active in the field of illicit financial flows on the continent. The Consortium was established to implement the recommendations of the report of the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa and to ensure more streamlined collaboration on the anti-illicit financial flows agenda while leveraging partnerships. Finally, the subprogramme leveraged knowledge and tools from private sector entities, working closely with Oxford Economics in developing the macroeconomic model, and rolling out the Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) model for policy simulation by the Millennium Institute. As discussed in result B, macroeconomic modelling activities were undertaken in 31 countries, but few countries requested subprogramme support for implementing the iSDG model.

Although coordination improved, collaboration challenges at times limited awareness of the offerings of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division, as well as the overall coherence of in-country United Nations activities

40. Internal coordination improvements were noted following the restructuring of ECA. Across the Commission, staff noted some improvements in coordination, including highlighting the quarterly meetings led by the Executive Secretary as a vehicle for coordination and joint planning across the Commission. Within the subprogramme, staff recognized that there was little integration at the design stage and few synergies between the different sections to deliver their capacity development activities. Although the Division had taken preliminary steps to integrate the work of the sections and leverage synergies in countries where the activities of different sections overlapped, this had not been formalized.

41. Coordination with the resident coordinator system had improved since the establishment of an independent resident coordinator. Staff at ECA and at resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams indicated that the Division had notified the offices when conducting in-country activities, which was highlighted as an improvement compared with previous practice. The COVID-19 pandemic had provided further opportunities for collaboration with the United Nations development system. The development system response to the pandemic included supporting countries through socioeconomic impact assessments led by the country teams and United Nations regional offices, operationalizing assessments and impact studies of COVID-19 on various sectors, scenario modelling, and recommendations and strategies for action. The subprogramme supported and contributed to socioeconomic impact assessments in Namibia⁷ and Ethiopia,⁸ leveraging its macroeconomic model to produce the forecasts and estimates used in the studies.

42. Despite these positive examples, overall strategic collaboration with the resident coordinator system at the national level was lacking. Member States and partners highlighted several missed opportunities to fully leverage the in-country knowledge and presence of United Nations entities. These included instances of the subprogramme failing to target the most relevant stakeholders for its interventions, or not engaging in a timely manner with stakeholders in the country. Furthermore, both member States and United Nations country team members indicated that they were not cognizant of the activities that the subprogramme, and ECA more broadly, was implementing in their respective countries. In addition, they were not aware of the full range of capacity development activities that the Commission could offer. It was indicated in the “Africa regional United Nations development system report 2020” that the nascent Regional Collaborative Platform had been operationalized. The mechanism, which is co-chaired by ECA and the United Nations Development Programme, has the potential to further improve coherence in the United Nations development system and can be leveraged by the Commission to foster collaboration and information-sharing with entities of the development system.

D. Sustainability: the Macroeconomics and Governance Division took positive steps to ensure the sustainability of its interventions, but gaps and challenges remain

43. The sustainability of the Division’s work was measured in relation to the extent to which the subprogramme had considered the medium- and long-term needs of its stakeholders in the design and implementation of its capacity development interventions. Feedback from member States and partners provided mixed views on the sustainability of the Division. Figure X shows that both member States and

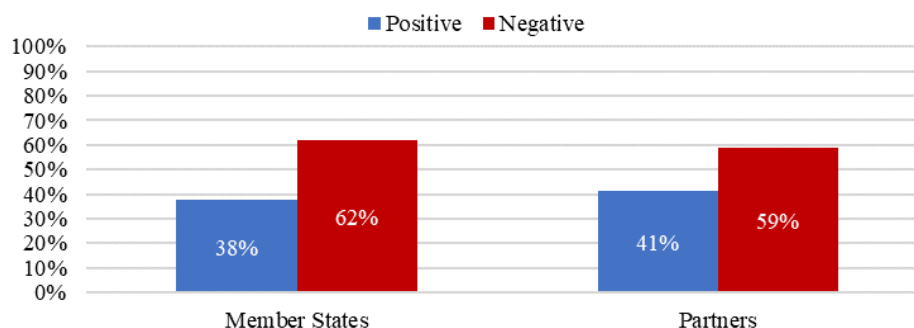
⁷ United Nations system in Namibia, *Socio-economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Namibia* (2020).

⁸ United Nations country team in Ethiopia, *Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19 in Ethiopia* (2020).

partners mentioned challenges to the achievement of sustainability with a high level of frequency (62 per cent of member States and 59 per cent of partners).

Figure X

Views on the consideration by the Macroeconomics and Governance Division of medium- and long-term needs of member States



Source: Interviews of member States and partners.

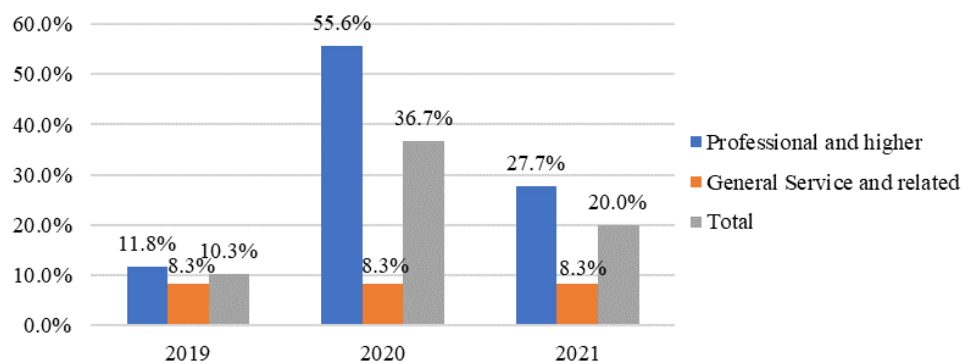
44. Interview responses demonstrated the complex internal and external factors related to imparting a lasting impact in building the capacity of beneficiaries. In many cases, respondents provided feedback on both the successes and challenges faced by the Division in achieving sustainability. Factors that hindered the achievement of sustainability as well as those associated with enabling sustainability are described below.

There were significant challenges to sustainability, such as a lack of resources and follow-up, as well as a high level of turnover among government staff

45. At the forefront of the challenges related to sustainability was the severe lack of human resources to implement the activities of the subprogramme. Over the period covered by the evaluation, the Division experienced high vacancy rates in the Professional and higher categories. In 2020, the subprogramme had 10 of its 18 Professional posts unencumbered, which accounted for a 55.6 per cent vacancy rate (see figure XI). Similarly, staff shortages were reported in the first half of 2021, with 8 of 18 Professional posts not staffed, or a 44.4 per cent vacancy rate. However, the vacancy rate in the Division had improved by the end of 2021, with 5 of 18 professional posts vacant. These shortages in staff contributed to the Division's sustainability challenges, as adequate numbers of staff were not available to continue ongoing capacity development efforts while also attending to new requests from member States.

Figure XI

Macroeconomics and Governance Division vacancies, 2019–2021



Source: OIOS analysis of human resources.

46. In addition to the Division's internal resource challenges, interview data pointed to two other critical factors that hindered its efforts to deliver a sustainable capacity development programme: the lack of follow-up and the high level of turnover of government staff.

47. The lack of long-term engagement by the Division with the countries that it served was a significant limiting factor to sustained progress in its capacity development interventions. Many interviewees expressed that, upon completion of a capacity development intervention, there was little communication or follow-up from the Division. It was stated that further dialogue, guidance or additional capacity development services were needed in order to build lasting capacity and ensure lasting uptake of tools and knowledge from the interventions.

48. Interviewees also noted the inherent issue of government staff turnover owing to staff either moving within their own national government architecture or leaving government service altogether. The capacity built from interventions within a country was therefore not retained because of the high levels of movement by government staff. In connection with government staff turnover, changes in the administration of a country and related shifts in political priorities were also mentioned as hindrances to the sustainability of some interventions.

Factors that enabled sustainability were identified in some capacity development interventions

49. Interview data highlighted some specific elements of the Division's capacity development interventions, which were correlated with longer-term success. Five of the main factors mentioned consistently exemplified the positive elements of sustainable interventions: government buy-in, setting up of institutional systems, the train-the-trainer modality, targeting relevant and multiple officials and the scaling up of funds of successful pilot projects.

Government buy-in

50. Working alongside government officials in order to support their medium- and longer-term goals was critical to ensuring sustainability. Leadership involvement and engagement with the intervention at the highest level was noted as a key method to ensure accountability, continued visibility, interest and engagement. In addition, getting officials to commit resources and support the vision of the interventions were mentioned by a few respondents as being positive for the longer-term success of the programmes.

Setting up of institutional systems

51. It was reported that working with beneficiaries to develop a mechanism, formal process or structure for Government to convene around an issue was helpful for its longer-term consideration and potential policy uptake. A structured mechanism for the capacity development intervention to stay relevant among stakeholders was positively correlated with sustainability.

Train-the-trainer modality

52. The approach of training a cohort of officials in a dedicated trainer role to transfer knowledge to others within relevant ministries facilitated the transfer of knowledge and expertise to a larger number of beneficiaries than would otherwise have been possible. In cases in which beneficiaries were targeted with a train-the-trainer approach, there were more instances of sustainability. It was also important to ensure that trainers were supported in transferring knowledge within Government through planning and follow-up support.

Targeting relevant and multiple officials

53. The longer-term use of the Division's capacity development was related to the extent to which it provided its services to the right people, as well as providing training to an adequate number of relevant officials. Some interventions required the Division's targeted involvement of multiple areas of government for the successful utilization of tools and knowledge. In addition, training an adequate number of officials proved to be a strategy that mitigated the drawbacks associated with the high turnover of government staff.

Scaling-up of funds

54. Some of the Division's capacity development interventions were initially designed as short-term. Given their nature as pilot programmes, lasting funds were an inherent limitation to sustainability. The identification of successful pilot programmes and the deployment of additional funds from other sources to scale up and continue activities proved a successful approach in many instances. For example, both the integrated planning and reporting toolkit and the macroeconomic modelling activities started as United Nations Development Account projects with a handful of pilot countries and were subsequently scaled up to other countries using other sources of funding to respond to the growing demand for these services.

E. Cross-cutting issues: the Sustainable Development Goals were explicitly linked with and integrated into the work of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division, but this was not achieved to the same extent for gender, and rarely for disability and human rights

Of the cross-cutting issues, the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals was most explicit in the work of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division

55. The integration of the Sustainable Development Goals was apparent at the project and subprogramme levels. Subprogramme planning documents and project documents revealed a concerted and systematic effort to consider how the work of the subprogramme, including its capacity development interventions, contributed to specific Goals and associated indicators, namely Goals 1 and 8 (macroeconomic analysis), 1, 8, 9 and 11 (development planning) and 16 and 17 (economic governance).⁹

56. While alignment between the activities of the subprogramme and some of the identified Goals was clear, subprogramme planning documents and project documents did not always logically link the conduct of activities with their expected contribution to the Goals and associated targets.

57. The Division successfully supported the mainstreaming of the Goals by member States, notably through the roll-out of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit. The toolkit was developed in response to the needs of African States to simultaneously adopt and integrate the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their national development plans. It addressed and supported the integration of all the Goals. A total of 23 countries received support to roll out the toolkit (see table 4). Member States interviewed indicated that this intervention in particular strengthened their awareness and ability to integrate the Goals.

⁹ 2020 annual business plan for subprogramme 1, on macroeconomic policy and governance.

Gender considerations in capacity development interventions were often limited to gender-balanced participation

58. Gender integration in the work of the subprogramme was found to be mixed. The General Assembly established in several resolutions, including resolutions [53/120](#) and [60/1](#), that gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into all United Nations policies and programmes. It was indicated in programme planning and reporting documents that the subprogramme reported systematically on gender mainstreaming efforts, but a lack of details and specificity was noted.

59. Gender was the second most commonly identified cross-cutting issue by member States, partners and staff interviewed. Interviews, training materials and project documents revealed that mainstreaming efforts were often limited to gender-balanced participation of training participants and panellists.

Considerations of human rights and disability inclusion were seldom incorporated into or reflected in the work of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division

60. Human rights and disability considerations were rarely considered when developing interventions, according to interviews and the documents reviewed. Consequently, the subprogramme did not mainstream these issues with member States. The General Assembly established in several resolutions, including resolutions [60/251](#) and [75/154](#), that human rights perspectives and disability inclusion should be mainstreamed within the United Nations system.

V. Recommendations

61. The Inspection and Evaluation Division makes four important recommendations to ECA.

Recommendation 1 (results A, B and D)

62. ECA should strengthen subprogramme-wide performance monitoring of the Division. It should aim for more effective management of requests and intervention data and encourage systematic gathering of and reporting on outcomes. The performance monitoring system should capture:

- (a) Consolidated requests by member States derived from all channels within the Commission by thematic area of work;
- (b) Completed and detailed mission reports on the implementation of capacity development activities;
- (c) Systematic assessments of the delivery of every intervention and knowledge transfer through surveys or other means aimed at participants;
- (d) Action plans developed with beneficiaries outlining strategies and steps that must be taken for interventions to succeed, including follow-up support from the Division;
- (e) Assessment of outcomes achieved, with supporting evidence (where applicable).

Indicator of achievement: strengthened performance monitoring system incorporating all the elements outlined above

Recommendation 2 (result C)

63. ECA should strengthen and formalize information-sharing and collaboration efforts between the Division and the resident coordinator system and United Nations development system. The action taken should build on the operationalization of the Africa Regional Collaborative Platform, of which the Commission is a co-chair. ECA should develop services for its operational function that can be shared with partners and member States at regular intervals. Furthermore, steps should be taken to enhance the planning and integration of activities with members of resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams to ensure the overall coherence of United Nations activities in the country and that the right stakeholders are targeted in a timely manner by the Commission's interventions.

Indicators of achievement: active dissemination of ECA services; evidence of enhanced planning and integration with United Nations country teams

Recommendation 3 (result D)

64. ECA should take steps to address the high vacancy rate in the Division. In addition, it should explore strategies, including the use of rosters, for streamlining recruitment in the future and ensuring adequate staffing levels.

Indicators of achievement: expeditious recruitment of staff; evidence of necessary measures taken to reduce vacancy rates and streamline recruitment

Recommendation 4 (result E)

65. ECA should develop, disseminate and implement guidance on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues in the areas of gender, disability inclusion and human rights.

Indicator of achievement: completed action plan with specific steps and target dates for operationalizing guidance on mainstreaming key issues

Annex***Comments received from the Economic Commission for Africa****Response to the Office of Internal Oversight Services report**

Strengthening monitoring evaluation and follow-up on Macroeconomics and Governance Division (MGD) interventions. MGD acknowledges the importance of following up on its country-level interventions particularly in the areas of the rollout of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) macro-economic model and enhancing economic governance and public finance to deliver services for sustainable development. Efforts have been made to institutionalize systems to foster country ownership and capacities. For instance, MGD has taken a robust step in institutionalizing its planning tools by establishing integrated planning and reporting toolkit (IPRT) and macroeconomic modelling Teams in each rollout country. MGD has also recruited IPRT consultants in each subregional office (SRO) and a macroeconomic modelling technical team comprising of members of staff from all the SROs to provide on the ground support to member States. In the area of economic governance and public finance, MGD continued to support the African Peer Review Mechanism and supported six countries to establish methodologies to measure magnitude of illicit financial flows from these countries. These mechanisms will be replicated for other MGD interventions. That said, the division faces a perennial challenge of reconciling, with limited human and financial resources, the competing objectives of responding to the growing requests of member states and deepening its support to a few target countries to gain traction and ensure lasting impact.

Strengthening and institutionalizing communication with Resident Coordinators

MGD is currently in communication with Resident Coordinators (RCs) to agree an annual program of support based on their needs and MGD's mandates and competencies. These discussions were triggered by the division's support to countries on development planning using the IPRT. RCs have expressed interest in incorporating the IPRT in their Common Country Analyses (CCA) to determine alignment of national planning frameworks with their continental and global commitments. They have also been using the forecasts and estimates from the ECA's macroeconomic modelling work in the CCAs. Further, Resident Coordinator Offices have closely worked with MGD in the implementation of the work on illicit financial flows and the integrated national financing frameworks.

Addressing MGD's high vacancy rates

MGD's vacancy rates have reduced considerably since end 2021 and the first quarter of 2022. At the professional category level, there is currently one staff member at the P4 level in both the Development Planning and Macroeconomic Analysis section that needs to be recruited. Pending the constitution of the interview panel the shortlisting of candidates has begun in earnest for the P4 position in both the Development Planning. Another position is still encumbered as the incumbent is still on a temporary job opening (TJO) in the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, and the Economic Governance and Public Finance Section has not been able to replace, even temporarily, the staff member services.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from the Economic Commission for Africa. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

Mainstreaming gender and disability

ECA has launched a massive gender promotion drive to improve the gender composition of its staff. Recommended male candidates for United Nations positions must undergo an extensive screening process to determine and justify the choice of the male candidate over the female candidate. ECA also has a gender marker system that evaluates the extent to which ECA/MGD deliverables take into account the gender dimension. With respect to physical infrastructure developments, ECA has invested in improving access to its premises by the persons with disabilities. However, on the substantive side the focus on disabilities has been limited due in to limited data on disabilities in Africa and the macroeconomic focus of its work which revolves around traditional indicators such as debt, interest rates, deficits and the price level. Going forward, and data permitting, macro-impact studies will explore the feasibility of incorporating disabilities in the macro analysis. Moreover, MGD intends to enhance gender and disability inclusion in meetings and workshops.

Human rights

With respect to human rights, the economic dimension of human rights is core to the division's work. Political rights on the other hand, are outside the scope of the division's mandate. In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, as well as their civil and political rights. Human rights are therefore multidimensional. They are political, social as well as economic. Within the context of its mandate, the division's activities aim to improve living standards by addressing socio-economic issues of employment, resource mobilization, improved planning and enhanced economic governance. Indeed, this report acknowledges the Division's efforts in this realm. Hence, to assert that human rights issues are not considered is not consistent with the report's own findings.
