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**Regional cooperation framework for the Arab States  
(2002-2005)**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The Arab States are committed to human development as the overall framework for growth and development. This commitment has been confirmed at the United Nations global summits and conferences held during the 1990s and in the related regional preparatory and review meetings. The development principles and targets set at these forums were reaffirmed and consolidated in the goals of the Millennium Declaration, which underpin the second regional cooperation framework (RCF) for the Arab States.

2. The second RCF aims to support the commitment of the Arab States to human development and to halving poverty by the year 2015. Poor people are the ultimate beneficiaries. In response to the Millennium Declaration, the RCF will support poverty reduction, through three interrelated strategic support areas: globalization, governance and knowledge.

3. The RCF has been designed to secure complementarity and synergy with UNDP global and national programmes in the Arab States. It is intended to add value to national programmes. Without ignoring national specificity, UNDP regional activities will address only those priorities shared by several Arab States where a multinational approach is beneficial. In a globalizing world, addressing common challenges often requires analyses and efforts that are multi-country in reach and impact. In applying the UNDP mandate at the regional level, the RCF will help to provide regional public goods, secure positive intercountry spillovers and learning, harness common interests and capitalize on the economies of scale inherent in concerted efforts to address shared problems.

## **II. Development situation from a sustainable human development perspective**

4. The region has made substantial progress in human development during the past three decades. Life expectancy increased by about 15 years; the mortality rates for children under five fell by about two thirds; adult literacy rates nearly doubled; combined school gross enrolments rose from 47 per cent in 1980 to 66.4 per cent; daily caloric intake and access to safe water and sanitation are higher than in any other developing region; and compared to other regions, the Arab States made the fastest progress in women's education by raising women's literacy rates threefold since 1970 and by more than doubling female primary and secondary enrolment rates.

5. Regional aggregates should not obscure the wide variations among, and within, Arab States in terms of levels and rates of human development. Uneven progress and very low starting levels undermined the ability to overcome the backlog of deprivation. By the end of the millennium, nearly one eighth of the population were not expected to survive to age 40; 65 million adults were illiterate, of which two thirds were women; 54 million lacked access to safe water; and 29 million lacked access to health services; and about 10 million children between 6 and 15 years of age are out of school. Population growth remains among the highest in the world (2.8 per cent).

6. One out of every five people lives in poverty, on less than \$2 per day, according to the World Bank estimates for the Middle East and North Africa. Human poverty throughout the Arab States is much more prevalent than income poverty. Poverty and inequality of capabilities and opportunities are even more pronounced than income poverty and economic inequality.

7. More than half the women are illiterate. The maternal mortality rate is double the rate in Latin America and the Caribbean and four times the rate in East Asia. While the formation of women's capabilities has expanded significantly, although far from adequately, the utilization of these capabilities through economic and political participation remains the lowest in the world.

8. The carrying capacity of the natural environment seems to be stretched to the limit. The per capita share of annual renewable water resources is less than one tenth of the world's average. Desertification threatens livelihoods. Roughly half of the population breathe dangerously polluted air.

9. Despite largely successful stabilization in the 1990s evident in the now modest inflation and budget deficits, growth continues to stagnate and to be overly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices. In the 1990s, per capita income grew at an annual rate of 0.7 per cent compared to 3.2 per cent for developing countries. Critical macro variables are still underperforming, including employment, savings, productivity and non-oil exports.

10. At about 15 per cent, unemployment is among the highest in the developing world. The economies in the region would have to grow at a minimum annual rate of 5 per cent to absorb the current and future unemployed.

11. Trade performance has remained sluggish and the region is still relatively closed. In some countries, tariffs are high and non-tariff barriers remain important. Throughout the 1990s, export from the region (over 70 per cent of oil and oil-related products) has been growing at 1.5 per cent per year, much below the global rate of 6 per cent. Manufacturing exports have remained stagnant and private capital flows lagged behind other regions. The creation of the Arab Free Trade Area, expanding accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and association with the European Union constitute the formal expressions of policies aiming at tapping globalization.

12. Technology development, adoption and access are far from adequate. While diffusion of decades-old technology such as electricity, telecommunications and agricultural mechanization and genetic engineering has been moderate, utilization of modern technology and research and development has been very limited. Only 0.6 per cent of the population use the Internet and the penetration rate of the personal computer is only 1.2 per cent. Investment in research and development does not exceed 0.2 per cent of gross national product compared to a world average that is more than seven times higher. While the production of scientific papers in the Arab region is within the range of that of leading third world countries, the utilization of national scientific expertise is at much lower levels.

13. Governance structures and mechanisms are pressured to adapt to the demands of a better-informed and more knowledgeable public as well as globalization and rapid technological progress. This has changed the role of the State and its relationship with markets and civil society. The governance pattern is sometimes characterized by a powerful executive branch that can exert significant control over

all other branches of the State, being in some cases free from institutional checks and balances. State-civil society relationships are often managed as a zero-sum game. De jure acceptance of democracy and human rights is more advanced than their de facto operationalization.

14. As globalization changes the key factors of production and growth, it places more emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and its application to social and developmental goals. At a time when the development prospects of Arab countries are increasingly linked to the capabilities of their work forces and the quality of their intellectual capital, the knowledge gap is a critical constraint.

15. The second RCF will be implemented at a time of great change against a backdrop of increased globalization. A major challenge will be to adapt to the demands of the new economics and the new politics. Services, knowledge, skills, well-functioning institutions and small enterprises are the cornerstones of this adaptation. Knowledge and creativity are its most valuable assets.

### **III. Results and lessons of past cooperation**

16. The first RCF produced diverse results, including firming up the position of UNDP in the region as an advocate of a human development framework; producing an understanding of effective ways to promote the complex issues of governance and human rights; testing participatory approaches to protection and regeneration of the natural environment; promoting effective, sustainable methods in micro-finance; supporting dialogue for crisis prevention; providing effective, demand-driven assistance to countries negotiating accession to interregional and global trade and investment frameworks; and helping to define the regional dimensions of the development challenge that globalization has brought to the region.

17. The report of the first RCF mid-term review (DP/RRR/RAS/1) and results of monitoring visits and evaluations point to the following major lessons learned in the course of the implementation of the first RCF:

(a) The new regional programme should concentrate on issues arising from globalization, especially on the social aspects and social costs of globalization;

(b) The scope of the programme should always correspond with a realistic assessment of the resource situation and with the imperative to achieve measurable results;

(c) Links with related initiatives of different partners in the region and symbiosis with global and country programmes are instrumental in increasing impact;

(d) Access to knowledge emerges as a new important motivation for partnership building. Region-wide and South-South knowledge sharing and learning must constitute part of every regional initiative;

(e) The right balance must be preserved in regional programme management, particularly with respect to adequate staffing and tracking of results.

18. The RCF has built on the above results and lessons as well as on careful analysis of the development situation in the region and the value-added that UNDP can bring to bear. It has benefited from discussions about the main programmatic

directions of UNDP activities in the Arab States with the Resident Representatives of the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) and the RBAS Advisory Board, which comprises prominent development experts and practitioners from the region. The draft RCF has been presented by UNDP Resident Representatives in the Arab States to government counterparts and, as appropriate to business and civil society organizations. Moreover, the RCF has been presented to regional intergovernmental organizations, relevant United Nations regional commissions and the main United Nations agencies. These discussions have both oriented and enriched the RCF.

#### **IV. Objectives, strategic areas of support and expected results**

19. The RCF aims to help to reduce poverty, in its various dimensions, by focusing on three strategic support areas: globalization, governance and knowledge. Coordination among programme areas will be stressed to capitalize on potential synergy.

20. Rather than encompassing the gamut of regional development concerns, the strategic support areas, or pillars, were identified through a consultative discussion of national priorities where UNDP can offer value added through a regional approach. Significant similarities and differences among the Arab States pose both opportunities and challenges. Strategic selectivity aims to secure a critical mass of support to the identified foci rather than scattering scarce resources thinly over a large spectrum of activities.

21. Equity, social inclusion and knowledge are threaded through the RCF as cross-cutting values. A major dimension of efforts to secure equity and social inclusion will be the emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment and participation of women. Renewed support to the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), including assistance in producing the annual multi-sponsored Arab Women Development Report, will constitute an important part of efforts in the gender area. Collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will be critical in this context.

22. A seamless link joins human development and human security. The RCF emphasis on building capabilities and promoting pro-poor growth and equitable globalization has a considerable bearing on human security. Moreover, activities will also be harnessed to directly promote crisis prevention and recovery in countries where this is applicable.

23. The RCF pillars mirror three out of the four areas of concentration of the GCF. Implementation of the RCF will rely on close cooperation and synergy with the global programme and will capitalize on it to meet regional needs. Also, knowledge developed by, and acquired through, the RCF will feed into the UNDP global learning framework.

24. The RCF will draw on the wealth of intellectual and technical resources in the region. Partners in the implementation of the RCF will include a host of Arab governmental, civil society, academic and policy institutions. Cross-thematic strategic partnerships will be established to coincide with the multisectoral approach. The objective will be to create synergy by capitalizing on the efforts and resources that UNDP and other organizations can bring to bear on regional development problems. Key in this context will be partnerships with regional

organizations, particularly the Arab League and its affiliated institutions and associations; regional development banks such as the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank; the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development; and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations. Partnerships will also be critical with other United Nations organizations, including the relevant regional commissions, the European Union and the World Bank.

25. A results-based approach has been used in developing the RCF. Under the three RCF pillars, results will be sought through the provision of a range of services, including: (a) stocktaking, policy analysis and development; (b) advocacy, policy dialogue and debate to build partnerships and momentum for positive change; (c) policy advice to provide well-informed options in follow-up to advocacy and dialogue; (d) capacity-building for policy formulation and implementation and to stimulate the policy debate; (e) innovative pilot activities with the potential for replicability on a wider scale; (f) knowledge generation, dissemination and sharing; and (g) strategic partnerships.

26. Some RCF products will combine several of the above services. For example, the Regional Arab Human Development Report will contribute to advocacy, policy dialogue and debate. Regularly published during the RCF period, it will also undertake stocktaking and situational analyses and provide policy advice through examination of best practices and options of direct relevance to policy formulation.

27. Projects under the RCF will have to learn from past results and lessons, demonstrate a contribution to poverty reduction and bring to bear a critical mass of resources (knowledge, partnerships, financial, etc.) commensurate with a critical mass of results.

28. While projects under the RCF will be open to all programme countries that the RBAS is mandated to serve, only interested countries will avail themselves of services offered, as under the previous RCF. Projects will be designed to cater especially to the needs of the region's least developed countries (LDCs) given the higher incidence of poverty in these countries.

29. In the implementation of the RCF, 5 per cent of its financial resources will be devoted to small initiatives in strategic areas such as water, dry land management, microfinance or HIV/AIDS prevention. Some provision may be made to fund global policy support work based in the region.

## **A. Strategic area of support 1: Globalization**

30. Globalization and liberalization risk failing the poor and are yet to secure prosperity. However, they still carry the potential of enabling Arab States to leapfrog decades, to recapture lost ground and to redeem long-standing promises of human development. This potential can be met by maximizing the benefits, and minimizing the costs, to people of freer flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge and ideas. Through capacity-building, advocacy, policy advice and development, the RCF will help to harness global markets and international flows for poverty reduction. Priority support areas under this pillar include the following.

31. *Coherence between liberalization and poverty reduction.* Activities under the RCF will aim at building national capacity to enhance coherence and consistency

between liberalization and poverty reduction. Dislocations associated with liberalization and greater proneness of national settings to external factors warrant stronger linkages between poverty reduction and trade and foreign investment policies. Advocacy for a human development framework for the globalization debate and related policy formulation will be a priority support area.

32. Expected aggregate results include: poverty reduction emphasized among the primary objectives of trade and foreign investment strategies; national plans and policies demonstrate national readiness and ability to manage globalization in a manner supportive of human development; analysis produced of the prospects for export-led poverty reduction; and assessment prepared of the impact of foreign trade and investment policies, not only on countries, but on people.

33. *National and regional capacity for shaping and engaging in multilateral trade regimes.* UNDP efforts will continue to help to strengthen the capacity of Arab countries to shape the governance and management structures of international trade regimes and influence the outputs of such structures and mechanisms. Efforts will aim to facilitate concerted action to advocate collectively for global public goods such as equitable and transparent trade regimes at the global and interregional levels.

34. The relationships between Arab States and the WTO constitute a priority area requiring support in the form of training, advisory services, capacity-building, including in commercial diplomacy and negotiations skills. The implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements and the full participation of the 11 Arab member countries in a forthcoming cycle of negotiations is of utmost importance. Also important is the accession of other Arab States preparing to become members of the WTO.

35. In the context of regional and interregional trade regimes, support is envisaged at the regional and national levels to implement and reinforce the Pan-Arab Free Trade Agreement and to help countries individually and collectively to shape and engage in interregional trade agreements, e.g., with the European Union and African countries.

36. Critical to the success of efforts in this theme will be the continued and strengthened partnerships with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, WTO, the International Trade Centre, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Economic Commission for Africa, civil society organizations, academia and economic policy and research institutions as well as bilateral and multilateral donors keen on harnessing globalization for poverty reduction.

37. Expected aggregate results: new trade obligations (WTO, European Union, the Arab Free Trade Area (AFTA)) met as a result of a strengthened institutional environment and the development and use of relevant tools; synthesis produced and disseminated of relevant knowledge on international trade negotiations and regional trade agreements in support of AFTA; and strengthened policy-analysis capacities within regional and national governmental and civil society institutions to articulate individual and collective positions on global, regional and interregional trade agreements (e.g. with the European Union).

38. *Promoting small and micro-enterprises.* Small and micro-enterprises occupy a strategic position at the confluence of competitiveness and poverty reduction. Their

role is critical in any export-oriented poverty-reduction strategy. The RCF will support the strengthening of policy and legal frameworks for affordable, broad-based market access, especially to small and micro-enterprises. Expected results will include: principles, guidelines and approaches established and applied for fast-track facilities for low-cost business start-ups at micro, small and medium levels, with emphasis on knowledge-based applications; and training for trainers provided to 40 women entrepreneurs from five countries on identifying and exploiting market opportunities.

## **B. Strategic area of support 2: Governance**

39. Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development, as the Secretary-General noted in his report on the work of the Organization (A/53/1). As such, it needs to move from nominal acceptance to actual practice. The need is most urgent in areas of direct impact on the disenfranchised segments of the population that suffer exclusion. Efficiency, effectiveness as well as transparency and accountability come to the forefront as benchmarks for measuring the necessary change. Globalization poses additional challenges as it places a premium on good governance as a prerequisite for attracting expertise and capital.

40. *Governing institutions and system.* RCF programmes will enhance knowledge management for more efficient operation of parliaments and for improved administration and financing of elections. Activities in this support area will capitalize on partnerships with the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU), the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the International Institution for Election Systems (IFES) and the Parliamentary Centre in Canada. Expected results will include: assessment of needs of parliaments in five Arab countries conducted; voter registration automated on a pilot basis in three countries; support to women parliamentarians in seven countries; legal database for Arab parliaments established; knowledge about governance-related issues available through a trilingual web site on the Internet and on CD-ROMs; administration and cost of elections guidelines available in Arabic; and forums created for legislators to share best practices in legislative functioning.

41. *Public administration organizations.* Institutional development is needed to transform bureaucracies into active agents of development. Under this support area, technical advisory services on the modernization of State institutions will continue to be provided. Expected results include: civil servants from five countries trained on best practices for effectively delivering public services to poor people and women; information on best practices in e-government disseminated; advice provided on the promotion of information and communication technology to enhance effectiveness, openness and accessibility of public sector services.

42. *Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).* Support will focus on developing the internal governance of NGOs and advancing the freedom of association. Expected results include good practice guidelines and internal governance manual produced and cross-fertilization of experiences through a regional network of NGOs.

43. *Administration of justice.* Activities under the RCF will aim at advancing the independence of the judiciary; promoting legal literacy; advancing access to and



administration of justice; and use of ICT to enhance access to and effectiveness of judiciary systems. Partners include the Arab Lawyers Union, the Arab Centre for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Association of Arab Judicial Training Centre as well as the Legal Department of the Arab League. Among the intended results: good practice guidelines available to law-makers; model pilot courts in five countries succeed in reducing caseload delays by 40 per cent; judges and court administrative staff trained in five countries; and legal information systems developed in five countries.

44. *Financial transparency and accountability.* Support will be provided to the establishment of transparency and accountability frameworks in public and business activities. Key partners include the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, the Union of Arab Banks, the United Nations Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention and Transparency International. Intended results include good practice guidelines on financial transparency and accountability available via a regional integrity framework; policy options for establishing national integrity systems tested on a pilot basis in three countries; and a source book on anti-corruption measures regionally adapted.

45. *Human rights and freedoms.* Activities will aim at raising awareness about economic and social human rights and enhancing capacity of Governments, business communities and civil society to implement provisions of ratified human rights conventions. Activities will be undertaken in full partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and in collaboration with the Arab Organization of Human Rights.

### **C. Strategic area of support 3: Knowledge**

46. Knowledge is a cross-cutting value that pervades the first two pillars of this RCF given the critical role foreseen for knowledge generation and utilization in the human development of Arab States. The region also requires specific support to the acquisition and use of knowledge as critical determinants of growth and of capacity to harness globalization for human development and poverty reduction. Emphasis on this area also emanates from the recognition that the expansion of people's knowledge capabilities has an intrinsic value in itself in addition to its instrumental significance. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and concerned civil society and regional institutions will be among the partners under this programme area. Priority support areas will include the following.

47. *Intellectual capital development.* The starting point will be an assessment of what is and what isn't being done in the educational and macroeconomic sectors to address the technological, economic and pedagogical changes demanded by the knowledge-driven economy. Analysis will identify a range of potential reform options likely to yield the highest return in terms of building human capital needed for growth and human development. Activities will aim at encouraging Governments to seize opportunities for developing and utilizing intellectual capital resources. Expected results include: identification of key gaps in the utilization of intellectual capital resources and obstacles to their full exploitation; relevant information on comparative experiences compiled and disseminated; a common understanding advanced among Arab Governments, academia and civil society on

the challenges of intellectual capital development; and approaches devised for intellectual capital development that are culturally appropriate for Arab States.

48. A regional project on the quality assessment of basic education in mathematics and science will aim at tackling an important obstacle to improving education quality, namely lack of information on the effectiveness of education in terms of national learning objectives or international standards. The produced data and analysis covering about 150 schools will be useful in developing strategies for harmonizing educational systems in support of regional intellectual capital development.

49. *Higher education.* The focus here will be on quality assessment of university programmes and systems to enhance responsiveness to the changing needs of economic development, labour markets and global challenges. Intended results include: quality assessment of the computer and business administration programmes of 40 universities and a regional network created of university databases covering all main aspects of the management of universities.

50. *ICT for development.* ICT is a means to generate, disseminate, share and utilize knowledge and information. Upstream support will include assistance to securing the enabling environment for ICT utilization (e.g. legal frameworks and institutional capacities) and the preparation of e-strategies. Pilot activities will aim to facilitate broader access to ICT and a wider spread of benefits through, for example, technology access centres in rural areas. Expected results include: dissemination of regional and global best practices; mechanisms established for the exchange of information among national and donor-supported projects; information on available ICT market niches disseminated; and specific applications developed for the delivery of information contributing to poverty reduction (e.g., price information to farmers and micro-entrepreneurs).

## **V. Management arrangements**

### **A. Management, execution and implementation**

51. Governments will continue to be consulted during the RCF implementation, including through the Executive Board at the mid-term review.

52. A mix of management and execution modalities will be applied to optimize the use of regional resources, enhance efficiency and increase accountability. Partnerships with other United Nations organizations and regional institutions can play a critical role in this regard. Hosting of programmes by regional institutions will be given primary consideration.

53. In general, the modality of Principal Project Representative (PPR) will continue to be used for the management of project implementation in cases of proven country office capacity. PPRs are expected to strengthen links among activities under the UNDP-supported country cooperation frameworks (CCFs), United Nations-system programmes and the RCF. Use of direct execution and national execution, supported by select UNDP country offices, will be considered in cases where there is a clear advantage.

54. A two-tiered advisory structure for the RCF has been established to tap into top regional expertise. The first tier involves the Advisory Board for the RCF at large, composed of prominent development experts and practitioners from the region to help anchor operations in regional contexts through building ownership of various innovative approaches. Under the second tier, experts and pioneers in individual programme areas provide a close regional perspective. The advisory system will constitute a catalyst for, and a significant part of, partnerships to help in the development and implementation of projects by, for example, facilitating access to wider constituencies, knowledge and financial resources. Electronic communication will be the preferred modality of interaction for these partnerships.

55. The support of the global and regional knowledge management structures and mechanisms of the Bureau of Development Policy will be sought for technical backstopping, cross-fertilization of comparative experiences, promotion of communities of practice, access to regional and global expertise, etc.

## **B. Monitoring, review and reporting**

56. Implementation of the RCF will apply results-based management. By outlining and monitoring expected outcomes, outputs and related indicators, programme design and reporting will be consistent with the strategic results framework (SRF) and the results oriented annual report (ROAR).

57. The Regional Programme Division will develop and implement annual monitoring, review and reporting plans that follow relevant UNDP guidelines and best practices. There will be an independent mid-term evaluation of the RCF managed by the Evaluation Office. Involvement of regional partners and direct beneficiaries in these activities will be encouraged.

## **C. Resource mobilization**

58. To provide adequate support to efforts that address the regional development challenges of the second RCF, total financial resources of \$33 million are required. Based on an estimated assignment of core resources of \$23 million, non-core funds of \$10 million will have to be mobilized in order to meet objectives.

59. The projected financial resource allocation for each programme area is as follows: (a) globalization: an estimated 27 per cent of core resources will be allocated to this programme area, comprising about \$6.4 million — additional non-core funding of \$5 million will be sought; (b) governance: an estimated 28 per cent of core resources will be allocated equal to about \$6.5 million — additional non-core funding of \$2 million will be sought; (c) knowledge: a projected 45 per cent of core resources will be allotted, representing \$9.5 million — additional non-core resources of \$3 million will be needed.

60. A portion of the core RCF resources, \$1 million, is set aside to fund the cost of programme development and monitoring as well as small, ad hoc regional initiatives. The creation of this fund results from a recommendation of the June 2000 audit of global and regional projects that UNDP improve its monitoring and accountability over the use of RCF resources. Accordingly, UNDP management endorsed the earmarking of a small portion of RCF resources (up to \$1 million or

3 per cent of core resources for each RCF, whichever is greater) to fund ad hoc activities intended to respond to opportunities for advocacy and policy dialogue and new programming, as well as regional programme formulation and monitoring. The Director, RBAS, will manage the fund and report on the use of resources, and the Office of Audit and Performance Review will audit the use of resources.

61. Key elements of a mobilization strategy for non-core resources include: use of core resources as seed money to leverage non-core resources; contributions from the above-mentioned partners, theme-focused cost-sharing with bilateral or multilateral donors; utilization of the regional windows of the UNDP thematic trust funds for concerted global-regional-national activities; contributions from Arab private foundations and individuals.

## Annex

**Resource mobilization target table for the Arab States (2002-2005)**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Amount</i> <i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>
<b>UNDP regular resources</b>	
Estimated carry-over	6 368
TRAC line 1.2	16 704
SPPD/STS	390
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>23 462</b>
<b>UNDP other resources</b>	
Government cost-sharing	4 000
Third-party cost-sharing	4 000
Funds, trust funds and other	2 000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>10 000</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>33 462</b>

Abbreviations: SPPD = support for policy and programme development; STS = support for technical services; TRAC = target for resource assignment from the core.

