

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**

Capacity Building for Promoting Gender Equality in African Countries

AIDE-MEMOIRE

**Workshop on
Strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of ICTs**

Windhoek, Namibia
19 – 23 April 2004

1. Introduction

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the United Nations Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force Secretariat within the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) are collaborating in the organization of a meeting-cum-training workshop for representatives from thirteen national machineries for the advancement of women from countries in the Southern African region. The meeting-cum-training workshop will identify common strategies for institutional capacity-building for promoting gender equality through the effective use of ICT, and develop an e-based network of national machineries. The five-day meeting for senior representatives of the national machineries will include a two-day training workshop for expert representatives and for information managers/specialists from national machineries on the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) for knowledge management and information sharing. Participants from the United Nations Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force are also invited.

The meeting-cum-training workshop will take place in Windhoek, Namibia, from 19 – 23 April 2004. The following countries will be invited to participate: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (13).

This meeting-cum-training workshop in Namibia is the first in the series of five such events the Division for the Advancement of Women is organizing for national machineries. The first meeting-cum-training workshop will develop the approach and methodology to be utilized in subsequent events.

II. Background

The project, entitled “Capacity-building for national machineries for the advancement of women in promoting gender equality in African countries”, has the overall objective to build institutional capacity for promoting gender equality in Africa. The meeting-cum-training workshop aims to strengthen the capacity of national machineries of participating countries to take full advantage of new information and communications technologies to strengthen networking, information sharing and knowledge management that will enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality.

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that national mechanisms for the advancement of women are intended to design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote gender equality (para 196). National machineries serve as central policy-coordinating units inside Government, and are expected to support the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all governmental policy areas, including legislation, public policies, and programmes and projects. National machineries are also expected to disseminate sex-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation purposes (para 201).

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-seventh session, considered the role of ICTs in relation to gender equality. The panel discussion on “Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”, held during the Commission, emphasized the role of ICTs and the media as tools for development and as central to the empowerment of women. These new media and ICTs were increasingly used to share knowledge, enhance participation of all members of society, increase networking, give voice to marginalized groups, organize political action, empower people, fight poverty and enhance economic development. In addition to access, the issues of women’s information needs and available content were addressed in the panel. Participants called for research on women’s information needs and the production of local content in local language.

In Agreed Conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-seven session, the Commission noted that “the media and ICTs offer tools for enhancing women’s full access to the benefits of information and new technologies and can become central tools for women’s empowerment and the promotion of gender equality” (para 2). One of the actions to be taken was to “strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women, including through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to take a lead advocacy role with respect to media and ICTs and gender equality, and support their involvement in national, regional and international processes related to media and ICTs issues, and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICTs, national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and gender advocacy NGOs within countries” (para 4 (x)).

The series of five meeting-cum-training workshops to be organized will strengthen the capacity of national machineries in participating countries to take full

advantage of new information and communications technologies to establish and/or strengthen the types of networking, information sharing and knowledge management that will enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality. The creation of an e-based network of national machineries will enhance the effectiveness of national machineries within each country. It will serve as a tool to strengthen the capacity of national machineries to implement their mandates, for example, by supporting their work as advocates and catalysts for gender mainstreaming, as well as support the design and use of an adequate information infrastructure for the achievement of gender equality. The development of a website prototype for national machineries for the advancement of women will expand opportunities for networking and information sharing on common priorities.

The project will draw on the expertise of African professionals, including from the United Nations ICT Task Force.

III. Meeting-cum-training workshop for thirteen countries in Southern Africa

A. Objectives of the meeting-cum-training workshop

The meeting-cum-training workshop aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of national machineries in selected countries to effectively use ICTs to advocate for successful gender equality policies and act as catalysts for systematic gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, nationally and regionally. It will also provide practical training to information managers and/or documentalists of national machineries to support networking and partnerships among national machineries, through effective development and maintenance of information bases, websites and related information infrastructure.

The meeting-cum-training workshop will:

- a) Enhance the capacity of national machineries to maximize the use and benefit of information, knowledge and good practices through more effective use of ICTs to promote gender equality;
- b) Develop strategies on the use of ICTs for advocacy, information sharing, and production of information for achieving the goal of gender equality, including through developing a prototype website;
- c) Develop an e-based network of national machineries from participating countries to strengthen cooperation and information sharing through regular information dissemination on women's and gender issues, including via electronic media and the internet.
- d) Train representatives from national machineries, especially information managers, in the use of ICTs to enhance cooperation, knowledge management and information sharing.

B. Expected outputs

The meeting-cum training workshop will produce the following outputs:

- a) Common strategies for institutional capacity-building in use of ICTs will have been identified.
- b) Representatives from national machineries from thirteen countries will have been trained in the substantive and institutional aspects of use of ICTs;
- c) Information specialists from thirteen countries will have been trained in the technical aspects of use of ICTs;
- d) The prototype of a website for national machineries will have been designed;
- e) A framework for an e-based network of national machineries will have been developed.

It is anticipated that, based on the experience gained during the meeting-cum-training workshop, participants will use the e-based network on a continuous basis to share experiences and exercise leadership for promoting gender equality. The results of the meeting-cum-training workshop will be used in the organization of four additional meeting-cum-training workshops for representatives of national machineries of other countries in Africa.

C. Venue and participants

The five-day event will take place at (venue to be identified) in Windhoek, Namibia. It will be conducted in English.

The number of participants will be approximately sixty. They will include:

- Three representatives from each country: two expert representatives from the national machinery and one information specialist working with national machineries;
- Two to three staff members from Division for the Advancement of Women;
- Five consultants/facilitators/trainers;
- Five resource persons;
- Representatives from regional/sub-regional institutions; and
- Representatives from Regional Commission (ECA), and UN agencies as observers.

D. Organizational and administrative matters

The meeting-cum-training workshop will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, and will be hosted by the Government of Namibia. The meeting of twenty-six representatives of national machineries will be held for 5 days. A two-day technical training workshop for thirteen to sixteen information specialists will overlap with the meeting. On the final day, the results of the discussions in the meeting, the proposed prototype website, and the proposed framework for an e-based network, will be presented in plenary.

Participants in the five-day meeting will convene in plenary as well as in working groups. Brief country presentations on current institutional set-ups, networking and use of ICTs will be made in plenary. This will be followed by interactive dialogue, facilitated by the consultants/resource persons, to identify priorities and develop a common framework for an e-based network.

A two-day training workshop will be organized, overlapping with the main meeting. Participants in the training will include one information specialist from each of the participating national machineries. The focus of the training will be on the use of ICTs for networking, knowledge management and information sharing, as well as training in website design and maintenance. Participants will develop a prototype of a website for national machineries.

E. Documentation

The documentation of the meeting-cum-training workshop will comprise relevant background papers, including United Nations documents as well as training material designed specifically for this meeting-cum-training workshop. Participants will be invited to provide relevant information in advance on the basis of a short questionnaire, and to make brief presentations on national experiences in the plenary.

F. Budget

The Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination will cover the cost of participation of representatives of the United Nations ICT Task Force. The Division for the Advancement of Women will make available funds required to cover all expenses regarding the organization of the meeting-cum-training workshop for all other participants. This will include the costs of travel and DSA for all invited participants, as well as for consultants and resource persons.

G. Passports and Visas

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements with regard to passports, visa and health certificates for travel. An information note will be sent out to participants to assist them with travel arrangement.

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