

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT ECA : REVIEW OF THE PAST,
PRESENT AND FUTURE**

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GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT ECA : A REVIEW OF THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The ECA's Strategic Vision: Serving Africa Better, was unanimously endorsed by the ECA Conference of Ministers in May, 1996.
2. The Vision statement provides the framework for the development of the 1998 - 2001 Medium-Term Plan, designed to increase the impact of the organization's work priorities by sharpening the focus of its programmes. In this connection five programme directions have been offered as the foci of ECA's work over the next six years (1996 - 2001). These are:
 - a) Facilitating economic and social policy analysis and implementation.
 - b) Ensuring food security and sustainable development.
 - c) Strengthening development management.
 - d) Harnessing information for development, and
 - e) Promoting regional cooperation.
3. One of the cross-cutting programme considerations that will influence the five new programme areas is the promotion of women in Africa's development by mainstreaming gender considerations throughout these programmes. It is to be the cross-cutting theme of all ECA programme strategies. Thus, by internalizing gender considerations in ECA programmes and among the staff, the Commission will be translating the United Nation's commitment to the advancement of women into concrete action.
4. The main focus of ECA's gender initiatives for the next five years is :
 - a) Assisting Member States in the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
 - b) Empowerment of Women ;
 - c) Promoting women's human and legal rights, and
 - d) Women's participation in the decision-making process, politics and the peace process.
5. In the light of the above, this paper will review the current ECA programme of work and assess the extent to which it is gender-responsive and the degree of gender-sensitivity among the different categories of ECA staff (managers, professional and support staff etc.), with a view to identifying training needs for gender mainstreaming at ECA as well as incorporating gender-responsiveness in the organizational culture to be reflected in the day to day management of staff and the running of the Commission.

6. Following from this review, a manual/handbook for gender mainstreaming will be prepared to assist and enable ECA staff to adopt a gender perspective in the development and implementation of their various programmes. The handbook will also be a complement to gender training activities of the Commission.

II. GENDER SENSITIVITY /RESPONSIVENESS IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

7. Addressing gender issues/concerns, adopting a gender perspective, or integrating gender issues/concerns into the mainstream of development, involves the understanding of the roles, responsibilities, needs and production capacity of both women and men and making these visible and supported with resources. This is a development approach that recognises the different gender roles and stresses the need for both women and men to have access to and control over resources and decision-making processes. Its purpose is to integrate gender awareness and competence into "mainstream" development in order to account for the different life courses and impact of development policies on women and men. It seeks to address practical gender needs (immediate material needs resulting from gender roles) of both women and men by focusing on their different concerns and priorities; and it seeks to address their strategic gender needs (issues of status and inequality) by focusing on the inequalities that arise from those differences.

8. The need for gender mainstreaming has been succinctly put by Eleni Stamiris, Director, Gender and Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, in the publication " Link in to gender and development" when she writes,

"Post Beijing, we are entering a new phase of gender integration where women's issues will no longer be addressed in isolation of mainstream development activity, but where women and men will contribute equally to shaping future society from their unique perspective."

9. A systematic integration of gender concerns into the mainstream activities of development will lead to more equitable distribution of resources and sharing of power between women and men. This approach in development is referred to as a Gender responsive approach.

III. GENDER-AWARENESS/-SENSITIVITY AT THE ECA

A. Within Past and present ECA Programmes

10. The objectives and thrust of most ECA programmes are similar as is clearly demonstrated from the following examples:

1. PROGRAMME: Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development

Sub Programme: Human Resources Development and Social Transformation

11. "The overall objective and thrust of the sub-programme is to place emphasis on enhancing and strengthening the human and social dimension of development, the promotion of human-and social-centred development policies and strategies consistent with human resource and social issues in Africa. This is to be realized through developing policies and strategies for building and strengthening critical capacities by providing assistance to member States in the planning, development and utilization of human resources and human and social development; preparing policy documents and technical publications; and putting emphasis on operational activities such as training at various levels, advisory services, workshops, seminars and field projects."

2. PROGRAMME : Regional Cooperation for Economic and Social Development

Sub Programme: "Poverty Alleviation through sustainable Development

12. The implementation of national settlement policies aimed at a spatial distribution of population; supporting measures for strengthening capacity building for improved agricultural planning and policy-making; exploitation of fisheries and non-conventional food resources, improvement of support services like marketing, research, credit and extension, and post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction."

3. PROGRAMME : Regional Cooperation for Development in Africa

Sub Programme: Natural Resources and Energy Development

13. "Activities under this sub-programme will focus on the enhancement of capacities and capabilities for exploration, exploitation, development and management of natural resources and energy for increasing their contribution to socio-economic development. Emphasis will be placed in this regard on deregulation and privatization of state-owned and parastatal enterprises dealing with natural resources and energy sectors. Relevant activities in the water sector, marine affairs and cartography and remote sensing are also envisaged in the programme.

14. "The formulation of national, subregional and regional policies and strategies leading to the implementation of programmes for the sustainable development of natural resources (water, minerals, and non-living resources) and energy in Africa will be undertaken. Regional and sub-regional cooperation will be promoted to enhance capacities and capabilities for rational development and management of natural resources and energy in Africa. This will be achieved through cooperation with subregional institutions and economic groupings in the sustainable development of natural resources and energy."

4. Sub Programme : Regional Cooperation for Development in Africa:
Infrastructure and Structural Transformation.

15. "The subprogramme will focus on the expansion and efficient utilization of physical and industrial infrastructure essential for sustained economic growth and transformation. Special emphasis will continue to be placed on assisting member States in the implementation of programmes of the Second Transport and Communications Decade for Africa and the Second Development Decade for Africa. An important feature of the activities of this subprogramme will be active support and encouragement for increased private sector involvement in the development of infrastructure and the human and technological capacity to operate and maintain economic infrastructure.

16. "Much effort will also be devoted to implementing policies that are supportive of capacity building in science and technology and formulation of appropriate legislation to implement these policies. Many African States have generally established national science and technology policy institutions for coordinating activities in this field. However, very few have shifted from the old concept of considering science and technology as being merely research and man power training. The link between science and technology policy and the social and economic policies has yet to be fully grasped. The involvement of national stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of policies still needs to be strengthened.

17. "Hence in the 1996-1997 biennium efforts will be intensified at giving practical expression to the recommendations made in the earlier bienniums, especially in the areas of linking science and technology to the social and economic imperatives in the member States. Special emphasis will be on formulating and implementing social and economic policies that are more supportive of capacity building in science and technology, and the formulation of appropriate legislation to implement these policies, the training of entrepreneurs who can avail themselves of science and technology developed."

5. Sub Programme : Regional Cooperation Development in Africa: Women in Development

18. "This subprogramme will respond to the need to facilitate the implementation of the commitments in the regionally and internationally agreed plans and strategies for the advancement of women. At the regional level, these are the Abuja Declaration and the Africa Platform for Action. At the international level, these will include the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies as well as the document that has emerged from the Fourth World Conference on Women. In the preceding biennium, several activities were devoted to assisting member States to prepare for these conferences.

19. "In the 1996/97 biennium emphasis will be put on the continued empowerment of women in the economic and legal sectors. This will be carried out through the strengthening and utilization of existing relevant institutions; broad sensitization of targeted groups via workshops, seminars and media campaigns; and appropriate mechanisms to enhance the participation of women in the peace process."
20. With the exception of the last subprogramme, the preceding subprogrammes are all issue- rather than people-centred. They are mainly concerned with issues such as capacity/ capability building particularly of institutions; the strengthening of policies or legislation; assisting member States in the formulation and implementation of programmes, economic and social policies; the preparation of policy documents and technical publications etc. The outputs have mainly been publications, studies, advisory services, expert group meetings, ad hoc expert group meetings, workshops and some field projects. With the exception of very few instances, no specific consideration has been given to women's concerns in the Programme and Sub Programme documents. The exceptions have been where such phrases as "with special emphasis on women" appear in a programme activity because certain United Nations General Assembly resolution or ECA Conference of Ministers resolution/recommendation on women are being implemented by a particular Division.
21. The conclusion to be drawn in this regard is that nearly all ECA programmes are **gender-neutral** which will lead one to rightly assume that ECA programme managers and programme officers share the general belief that within society women and men benefit equally from development and that within households also the impacts of development are distributed equally regardless of gender. They appear to completely fail to see that development benefits do not necessarily "trickle down" nor "trickle across." The gender-neutral nature of programmes hardly give adequate information in respect of gender-specific programme activities and this could result in the exclusion of women's concerns and needs, in this case, when choices have to be made particularly regarding technical, scientific and political issues. Development strategies which are gender-neutral reinforce gender bias by ignoring it.
22. The thrust and focus of the Women in Development Programme, is on women. This is important because, while women almost everywhere in Africa comprise fifty per cent or more of the population, and programmes are therefore intended to benefit them, this is impossible to verify without close monitoring of these programmes and resources. The point is that women are not used to seeing themselves as beneficiaries of macro-programmes and therefore do not take advantage of the services rendered. Also, managers and designers of programmes (usually men) are not in the habit of ensuring that women participate and benefit from these programmes. Women-specific programmes are therefore important in the light of this.
23. The Women in Development (WID) approach adopted by the Women's Programme seeks to integrate women into development by making more resources available to them in an effort to increase their efficiency in their existing roles. Assuming that women are outside the mainstream of development, the approach attempts to bring women in to be able to participate in mainstream development. This women-specific approach focuses mainly on women's strategic gender needs and advocates changing prejudicial economic, legal, social and ideological realities of the situation of women as a stop gap measure for disparity reduction. Projects developed by the Women's Centre have included access to credit, women's legal rights, leadership training, income-generating, entrepreneurship etc.

24. Women-targeted programmes, subprogrammes or components should thus be seen as bridging mechanisms necessary for bringing women to participate effectively in mainstream development be it political, social, economic or cultural. The special resources targeted for their implementation means that women will receive relatively more attention and more resources; it will also be easier, at a later date, to evaluate the impact of these activities on them.
25. However, this approach, has its drawbacks. For example, targeting women as a separate category means that women will never be seen as part of the mainstream. In many cases, experience has shown that separate development for women, through women's components in projects or special women's projects, allows development planners and policy makers to give women token assistance for projects that are too small for too many and which therefore will continue to marginalize them. Furthermore, most of the National Reports on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, submitted for the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women (1994), preparatory to the Fourth World Conference on women, indicated that not much progress had been made in advancing the status of women. This would prove, to some extent, that the WID approach to development can not have been very effective.
26. While the ECA Women's Programme is laudable in its efforts to raise awareness to women's issues and concerns with a view to improving their status continent-wide, it could also have been a contributing factor to the marginalization of women's issues and concerns within other programmes. The knowledge that there is a Women's Programme, the contents of which are readily available to other programme managers, makes it easy for the concerned programme managers to be complacent about the necessity of including women's issues and concerns in their programmes.
27. Nevertheless, during the past eighteen years of the existence of the African Regional Coordinating Committee on the integration of Women in Development (ARCC) (a subsidiary body of the ECA and its political arm speaking on behalf of Women in Development), the African Centre for Women (ACW) has exerted efforts to include women-specific activities into other programmes of ECA. This has been facilitated by the obligation of the Commission to implement United Nations and ECA Conference of Ministers resolutions on improving the status of women and their integration in Development.
28. Each year, therefore, based on these resolutions, the Women's Programme includes certain issues or themes for special focus within the work of the Commission. Divisions affected by these issues or themes are requested, later in the year, to submit a report on their activities, within the period, in this respect to " enable the members of the ARCC to evaluate the work done in respect of the integration of women in development and to prepare guidelines for future programmes."
29. For example, in the 1991/92 period, stemming from ECA Conference of Ministers resolutions on the Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development: The Role of Women in the 1990s; Women and Apartheid; Women in Global and Regional Strategies; the Improvement of the Role of Women in Informal Sector Production and Management; the activities of the Women's Programme and those of relevant substantive Divisions centred around three issues:

- a) Participation of Women in Development;

- b) Improvement of the skills and opportunities of women; and
- c) Dissemination of information on Women and Development.

30. Under participation of women in development, as a result of consultations, it was agreed to include a women's component in the work programme of the Institute for Economic and Development Planning (IDEP), a bilingual institution set up by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1963 to develop Africa's manpower potential in order to address the need of member States for skilled manpower.

31. In collaboration with the African Centre for Women, IDEP formulated a project which addressed the needs of member States in terms of training women leaders and officials in development planning. The project was aimed at encouraging African Women to participate more and more in the regular programme of IDEP. Emphasis was also placed on direct IDEP assistance to member States in accordance with their needs.

32. Under Improvement of women's skills and opportunities, the ECA/FAO Agriculture Division addressed question of rural women in development. The Division undertook a study entitled, Women in rural areas: rhetoric versus reality. The study was conducted with a view to demonstrating the extent to which the interest expressed in strategies and resolutions were reflected in the actual implementation of those resolutions and whether they had achieved any real impact. The study highlighted, in its analysis, the gap between making and honouring commitments .

33. In addition to the above, the Niamey-based Multinational Programming and Operational Centre (MULPOC) prepared a report on proposals for improving the role of women in the production, processing packaging and marketing of food products in West Africa. Its main purpose was to stimulate discussion of measures likely to improve the participation of women in the efforts to increase agricultural production and productivity in the region. The document underscored the dominant role of women in food production in the subregion and their capital role in desertification control and soil conservation. It was hoped that the recommendations from the Conference of Ministers stemming from this report would be used for preparing a programme designed to strengthen the role of women in the agricultural sector of the subregion.

34. The International Trade and Development Finance Division prepared a study on the integration of women in formal and informal business sectors; the study was intended to provide African Ministers of Trade with information for working out a policy for the promotion of African Women in the trading sector. The study identified areas in which women were predominant and the reasons that motivated them; it also highlighted the constraints women face, and formulated recommendations for enhancing their contributions to trade.

35. The Industry and Human Settlements Division organized a seminar on the development of the capabilities of businessmen in cottage and small-scale industries with particular emphasis on the role of women in industrial development. The seminar provided participants with a forum for discussing:

- a) Small cottage industries in developing countries and their role in industrial development; and
- b) Project ideas, resource availability and advisory services for small scale cottage industries.

36. In the 1992/93 period, activities related to the integration of women in development process were focused on the same issues except that Dissemination of information on women and development was replaced by Development of the information network on women in development.

37. With respect to enhancing women's participation in development, emphasis was on the formulation of strategies, and assistance in this regard was provided to member States through seminars. The Niamey-based MULPOC organized in two seminars (7 to 8 and 9 to 11 September 1992 respectively) on the promotion of women in the Niger at which clearly defined goals and strategies and a plan of action covering all social and economic sectors were developed. The MULPOC office also took part in a seminar on the preparation of a Plan of Action in favour of rural women, organized by the Ministry of Development, Population and Promotion of Niger, from 19 to 17 June 1992.

38. Efforts at enhancing the skills and opportunities of women were concentrated on the promotion of women's entrepreneurial capabilities and economic integration. In this regard, the Niamey-based MULPOC, in collaboration with regional and subregional institutions organized a subregional seminar on financing small- and medium -scale enterprises. The seminar provided an opportunity to review national policies promoting and financing small- and medium- scale enterprises and the experiences of subregional and regional funding institutions in the field. Recommendations include, inter alia, the expansion of the current means of funding of small scale enterprises (SMEs), setting up of guarantee schemes towards SMEs, the reinforcement of promotion services and improvement of the performance of enterprises.

39. Activities for the advancement of women in the field of Agriculture, by the Agriculture Division, were focused on efforts to increase the number of women extensionists in Africa. In this respect two curricula/training manuals were produced, namely :

- a) Introduction to agricultural marketing with special emphasis on women, and.
- b) Basic principles of agricultural marketing extension with emphasis on women extensionists.

40. A project on the development of food processing aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship was submitted to UNIFEM for funding by the Lusaka-based MULPOC .

41. A number of technical publications were prepared by some divisions in respect of development of information network on women and development as seen below :

(a) A study on Technologies in the small-scale food industries in rural zones of the countries of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes countries, was prepared by the Gisenyi-based MULPOC. The study pays particular attention to major factors which will facilitate women's access to and utilization of identified technologies.

(b) Three studies prepared by the Trade and Development Finance Division as follows:

- (i) The situation of women in trade in both the formal and informal sectors: the case of Malawi;
- (ii) The integration of women in the modern commercial sector in Mauritania;
- (iii) Traditional trade financing mechanisms, their structures, role and possible linkages with the modern financial sector.

(c) Two publications produced by the Population Division as follows:

(i) Strategies to improve contraceptive use to influence demographic trends in African countries, December, 1992. The publication discusses knowledge on contraception, levels and trends in contraceptive use, and impact of contraceptive use on demographic trends. It presents strategies to improve contraceptive use, including women as a key factor.

(ii) Assessment of mortality levels , trends and differentials in relation to the goal of "Health for All" by the year 2000 in some ECA member States, November, 1992. The study was an attempt at assessing efforts being made by the governments of Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Swaziland and the United Republic of Tanzania, towards the achievement of the goal of Health for All by the year 2000.

42. As in the cases of the regular programmes, these women-specific activities of the Divisions have comprised mainly seminars, workshops, meetings, and publications. There appear to have been no follow up either by the ARCC through the Women's Centre nor has there been any evaluation of impact or relevance of these activities on advancing the status of African women. Furthermore, there is no information as to whether, as one was made to expect, recommendations from the ECA Conference of Ministers resulting from the Niamey-based MULPOC proposals for "improving the role of women in the production, processing, packaging and marketing of food products in West Africa" were used for preparing a programme "designed to strengthen the role of women in the agricultural sector of the subregion." It is also not known what activities were initiated as a result of studies either by member States, or the ECA.

43. It would appear that, on the whole, **outputs** are considered the most important achievement of ECA programmes or a sign of the success of these programmes. Once an output is obtained, not much else appears to be done to assess effectiveness, impact or relevance, at least in the cases quoted above.

44. There are therefore serious limitations to this exercise. Firstly, the fact that women-specific activities by divisions stem from the obligation to implement resolutions of United Nations or /and ECA Conference of Ministers, means that only a few divisions are affected, where only a few themes are handled at a time as has been illustrated; in addition, these activities are carried on biennially leaving many programmes gender-neutral.

45. Furthermore, as has been pointed out, there has been no follow up or feed back on information supplied by divisions in respect of activities on behalf of women. This has led to missed opportunities for assisting Divisions to improve activities on behalf of women to respond better to their needs.

B. Within Future ECA Programmes

46. The new focus of future ECA programmes is quite different from former ones in that there is much emphasis on gender considerations.

47. In the **Strategic Directions**, contained in document E/ECA/CM 22/2, March 1996, chapter IV outlines the main thrusts of the five programme directions over the next six years. There is a forceful and clear statement on the Commission's stand with respect to the question of women and gender issues. In this connection, it is pertinent to quote in full paragraph 44 and part of paragraph 45 of the document.

48. (Para.44) "Gender is a cross-cutting theme in all ECA's programme strategies. This is a matter of justice, and of choosing to ensure more effective development strategies. The feminization of poverty, and the recognition of women as a major force for sustainable development, offer but two of many compelling grounds for action. There are renewed mandates from Beijing to add to regional mandates including relatively new ones such as the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace."

49. (Para 45)....."In this context, the African Centre for Women (ACW) at ECA will play two main roles: as a catalyst, promoting the mainstreaming of women in the programmes of the Commission, and as an implementer, monitoring the regionally agreed plans and strategies for advancement of women in Africa. Four priority areas will be addressed in the next five years: assisting member States in effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; poverty eradication; promoting women's human and legal rights; and women's participation in decision-making, politics and the peace process. These will form the main focus of ECA gender initiatives to be addressed as an integral part of various ECA programmes."

50. In the general outline of most of the five programmes, in addition to the general reference to assistance to member states, seminars, publications, capacity building, specific reference is made to women/gender issues, giving the assurance that the detailed programme formulations will contain even more gender-responsive activities. This can be seen in the programme outlines as seen below.

51. **A. FACILITATING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS:** Under the subprogramme on Social Development, it is stated that the Commission can "monitor and report on social development, advocate educational and other social reforms, help assure women's full participation in social development planning etc." The three issues for focus will be improving the social situation of women, furthering higher education, and monitoring and analysis of poverty in Africa. On higher education, Training for women in science and technology will be emphasised. Some of the areas with gaps for policy analysis which the Commission hopes to fill will be "integrating cross-cutting themes of gender, poverty and human development."
52. **B. ENSURING FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** This is referred to as the "NEXUS"; here, it is stated that one of the six issues that the ECA "can best concentrate on" will be furthering the advancement of women and, in this connection, because "African women play a critical role in the nexus issues of food security, population and environmental sustainability," the ECA can strengthen their contribution to addressing the issues by helping member States to design measures to increase educational opportunities for women and enhance their property rights and by advising on ways to give women access to credit service."
53. **C STRENGTHENING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT:** With reference to promoting private sector development, in particular, enhancing an enabling environment for private sector development, the ECA hopes that the African Federation of Women Entrepreneurs (AFWE) which it helped to establish, would play an important role in reflecting women's concerns in policy dialogue.
54. **D HARNESSING INFORMATION FOR DEVELOPMENT .** Here, among other things, great emphasis is put on **statistical development**. It is anticipated that particular attention will be given to sex desegregated data which is an important tool for gender mainstreaming.
55. One of the issues included in this programme outline is the question of popular participation. Participation in the development process is an important empowerment strategy which enables people to develop skills and abilities and accumulate experience to manage their own lives better, to plan and to have a say in development fora. Of particular interest in this respect is the anticipated establishment by the ECA of a Centre on NGOs/CSOs (Civil society Organization) in which women generally predominate in Africa.
56. Other issues are the question of enhancing dialogue between Governments and Civil Society as well as strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations; these are relatively new additions to ECA's work. Without being gender-specific, it is certain that women will be participants and beneficiaries of these new and exciting initiatives.
57. The references to women/gender issues in the programme outline point to the gender-sensitivity-/responsiveness of future programmes of the Commission. It is expected that the planned gender sensitization/training programmes will equip programme managers, programme officers, and the entire ECA family to commit themselves to creating a gender-conscious environment for the better working of the Commission to "serve Africa better".

C. Among ECA Programme Staff

58. Interviews and discussions with more than 12 programme managers and programme officers (excluding the Women's Programme) indicate that most of them are aware and even appreciative of the role of women in the various aspects of development addressed by ECA programmes: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Population, Economic Cooperation or Human Resources Development. This may stem partly from the yearly exercise of preparing reports of activities on behalf of women for the ACW in conformity with United Nations or ECA Conference of Ministers resolutions on improving the status of women. According to the interview information, these reports have often been submitted without supporting documents and all managers and programme officers interviewed report that they receive no feed back from the the Women's Centre in respect of the quality of the report, its relevance or on ways these activities could be improved.

59. A glaring fact was the absence or low percentage of professional women in the Divisions. The reason given was that women do not apply for vacant posts. The question is how the vacancy announcements are made and whether Women's Ministries, Machineries, Associations, or Groups are aware of such vacancies or whether the advertisements are worded in such a way as to indicate that women will be welcome to apply. Within ECA, female officers complain that vacancy announcements reach their desks long after deadline dates or very close to the deadline dates. It is important to observe here nearly ten women in various Divisions now between P2 to D1 levels started their careers either as recruited officers for the Women's Centre, as project personnel of the Women's Centre or as Consultants for the Women's Centre. Most of them later got absorbed into the ECA staff. Many of these women have proved themselves quite capable, thanks to the Women's Centre!

60. In addition to the general absence of female professionals it was also surprising to learn that female consultants are never hired nor are many women participants at seminars, workshops or expert Group meetings of most of the Divisions. The reason in this instance was the lack of profiles on women.

61. In this respect one wonders how much collaboration exists between the ACW and the various Divisions in respect of possible female consultants. The ACW had developed a roster of consultants, though one should add that information in the roster was very limited indeed and that such an important document needs a thorough revision and updating. In addition to this, information on consultants could be obtained from other members of the United Nations system such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the WORLD BANK as well as subregional Inter Governmental Organizations (IGOS) and Institutions and some Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Many of these institutions and agencies deal with issues covered by the ECA programmes and are conversant with local consultants in their areas of

operation. Interestingly, many of the Divisions collaborate with the above organisations and institutions particularly for joint operational activities. It is therefore surprising that exchange of information in respect of possible female consultants appears never to have been sought.

62. With regard to collaboration, many programme officers complained that efforts to involve the Women's Centre to collaborate in respect of seminars, workshops or expert group meetings in particular, were mostly unsuccessful, partly because Women's Centre officers were never available. This problem is to be blamed on the fact that the Women's Centre, like most other Women's Bureaux, Units or Desks world-wide, suffers from being understaffed and over worked. With the volume of work involved in the programmes the Women's Centre has to implement and the various subregional, regional and international involving governments, institutions and NGO activities (sometimes ad hoc), in which its staff are frequently called upon to participate, they should be hardly expected to actively participate in seminars etc. of other Divisions, necessary as this may be. Such meetings could otherwise have provided an opportunity for significant inputs in respect of the contents of such meetings as well as a forum for the articulation of women's issues and concerns by the women's Centre. This way there would be real collaboration, not just participation by the staff of the Centre, if they were available to participate.

63. Ideally, though, it should not take an ACW staff to address gender issues adequately in other Divisions. All professional staff should be sufficiently gender-sensitive to reflect this sensitivity in their programmes of activities. It is therefore to be hoped that the new emphasis on gender in the programmes of ECA and the expected Gender Training activities will provide the necessary climate for gender sensitivity both within the house and in programmes.

64. Asked whether any conscious efforts are made to have women included among participants at seminars, workshops and expert group meetings, not more than two of the programme officers replied that they do indicate that a certain percentage of participants should be women. Others felt that the choice of participants should be left to member States and that no pressure was to be used for making such choices. One female programme officer felt that by indicating the need for participation of women, say, in an expert group meeting, competent men could be excluded. [The need here is really for qualified women participants not just female participants].

65. The importance of women's participation in various development activities has been called for in many United Nations resolutions as well as resolutions of Conference of Ministers for which member States have voted; a large number of member States are also signatory to the United Nations Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As a member of the United Nations system, the Commission is under obligation to implement these relevant provisions of these resolutions and conventions. Programme officers must therefore draw the attention of member States to this when hinting at the need for inclusion of women in participating delegations.

66. From these interviews, the conclusion is that ECA programme managers and officers do not understand women's issues and concerns sufficiently to make them an integral part of programme plans. They certainly are aware that women play an important role in society, they are equally aware of the inequality between men and women from personal experiences and the many references to this in reports, studies etc. but do not realize that development programmes could be used to reduce such

inequalities and that these gender-responsive programmes could also be used as an important vehicle to harness women's potential for bringing about change in society.

67. One other fact that emerged from the interviews was the limited number of projects with women's components or gender issues submitted for donor funding, exclusive of those presented by the Women's Centre. In this respect one must hasten to add that projects at the Women's Centre cannot be described as gender sensitive or responsive. The issues they address are mainly from a women's rather than a gender perspective. They have nevertheless helped to give visibility to women's issues.

68. It would appear that the Technical Assistance Cooperation Coordination Office (TACCO) makes available to programme managers donor profiles. These profiles spell out the policies, priorities, areas of interest, guiding principles, level of funding, deadlines etc. of donors. Some donors require that gender issues be taken into consideration in project proposals, others require that a certain percentage of participants at workshops, seminars or other meetings should be women, and while others stipulate that 25 per cent of the membership of the Boards of organizations set up in a project should be women. Other donors give advice on the format but not the substance of project proposals.

69. The failure of Divisions to develop projects that would meet donors' criteria in respect of women's/gender issues may be due to one or more of the following reasons : Firstly, there is the general assumption (erroneous of course!) that programmes and projects are supposed to benefit the whole society, that women and men would benefit equally from them. Secondly, close collaboration between Divisions and the Women's Centre could have led to the Centre providing project ideas to assist divisions in the formulation of projects that would qualify for relevant donor funding. Thirdly, the presence of women in the Divisions could also have provided a women's, if not gender, perspective that may enhance the relevant formulation of projects for donor funding. Fourthly, the lack of gender awareness, lack of gender training and mainstreaming could also lead to the failure to develop appropriate projects .

D. Within the ECA Secretariat in General

70. At the ECA secretariat itself there have been long standing gender disparities among the staff and, inspite of United Nations resolutions setting targets and time frames for closing the gender gaps within United Nations organizations, ECA has been one of those that have not been able to achieve this.

71. As a result of emphasis by the leadership of the Commission on gender issues in the work of the Commission and the need for the Commission itself to take the lead in rectifying the gender disparity situation "within the house", some action is already under way in this respect. A project document proposal entitled, " Improving the Status of Women in the ECA secretariat" has been prepared for immediate implementation. The long-term objective of the project is to enhance the Status of Women at ECA through the adoption and implementation of measures for reaching overall gender parity within a realistic time frame.

72. The present situation of gender relations within ECA is best described in the project document, part of which is quoted below:

" ECA is still far from attaining the targets set by the General Assembly which are, 35 per cent of female staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, and 25 per cent posts at managerial and decision-making levels. As at 30 October 1995, women professionals represented only 19.7 per cent of the total ECA staff in the posts subject to geographical distribution and 7.7 per cent of posts at DI level (i.e one person). As at 31 March 1996, ECA counted a total of 226 posts in the professional category, including the language staff, out of which 40 were encumbered by female staff (20.4 per cent) and 156 by male staff (79.6 per cent) and 30 posts were vacant. Among 40 female staff 21 are on regular or permanent posts while 19 are on fixed- or short- term appointments. At DI level, the situation has not changed. ECA has 1 female out of 12 staff at DI level.

" Furthermore, personnel records indicate that the majority of women professionals are concentrated at P2-P3 categories and women predominate in the low categories in both regular and non-regular appointments.

"With regard to the staff in General Services Category with regular or permanent appointments, the situation is relatively better since they represent 46 per cent of the total staff in that category. However, the majority of the women are concentrated in positions which have fewer opportunities for advancement."

73. Among the various reasons advanced for this situation of women at the ECA are:

- a) lack of serious commitment from the management;
- b) lack of accountability both at divisional and management levels (for failure to meet targets for women at established posts);
- c) The predominance of men occupying general service posts which are technical in nature and which increase opportunities for career development in the professional category such as statistical assistants, draughtsmen, programme assistants, documentalists;
- d) The tendency for supervisors (mainly men) to show lack of confidence in female professional capabilities resulting in women being assigned lower level responsibilities and job challenges;
- e) Lack of adequate representation of women in high profile activities and decision-making structures such as special committees, task forces, high level missions etc. as well as the lack of opportunities for enhancing their effective participation; and
- f) Little or no availability of assistance to women in respect of their reproductive roles, e.g. allocation of parking spaces during advanced pregnancy.

74. The situation of women within the ECA secretariat and the contributing factors to this situation is a mirror image of that of women in most African countries and institutions. In these cases women are concentrated at the bottom rungs of the employment ladder making the prospects of promotion and career development more remote; they are absent in high profile activities and decision-making structures, and are often not well represented in structures where decisions regarding the welfare of all are made; no specific consideration is given to their reproductive roles in the work place and men take over most activities which are of a technical nature; lack of confidence by male supervisors often leading to lack of self esteem on the part of women with a resulting non-realization of their potential.

75. It is therefore gratifying to note that, at last, steps are being taken to correct and improve women's condition and situation within the ECA Secretariat.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

76. The conclusion to be drawn from the review of ECA programmes, and interviews with various programme managers and officers in respect of gender awareness is that this is absent. This is why programmes are **gender-neutral** or **gender blind**.

77. Because of the emphasis on the need for the integration of gender in all ECA programmes there is need for the following:

a) An articulated Gender Policy

There has been an enunciated gender policy from the United Nations Secretariat. This, however, has been mainly in relation to staff and administrative matters within the organization. ECA is a separate entity with specific programmes. At this particular period when these programmes are being reorganized and there is much emphasis on gender issues, there is need for direction reflecting commitment both on the part of the leadership and the staff in respect of programmes and the well being of all members of the secretariat.

b) Gender awareness training for all ECA staff.

c) Training in Gender skills particularly for programme officers.

Planners and implementers of programmes can only make meaningful use of guidelines and recommendations on gender issues if they are gender-aware and trained in gender skills. Planners should be able to develop a minimum understanding of gender issues and become aware of the specific ways in which women's lives differ from men's. This will lay the foundation for finding solutions to the common problems which women face such as poverty and unequal access to development programmes.

d) Guidelines for Gender and Mainstreaming.

e) Training in Gender Mainstreaming particularly for programme officers and managers.

V.DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

1. Gender and Development : A FEMNET Manual for Trainers, FEMNET, Nairobi, Kenya, 1993.
- 2. Approved Programme for the biennium 1996/97.
- 3. Serving Africa Better : Strategic Directions for the Economic Commission for Africa E/ECA/CM.22/2, March, 1996.
4. Report on ECA Activities for the Integration of Women in Development over the period April 1990 to April 1991.
5. Report on the Activities of the ECA Women in Development Programme During the period April;1992 to April 1993 E/ECA/ARCC.XIV/ 93/3, 2 April, 1993.