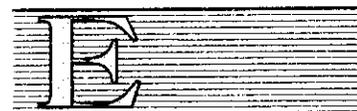




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**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SUB-REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE-WEST AFRICA FOR THE
PERIOD MAY 1999-OCTOBER 2001 AND PROGRAMME
OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2002-2003**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The programme of the Centre is consistent with the revised resolution 830 (MFCI) of 27 April 1998 adopted by the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning. In accordance with the strategic direction of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), this revision established a new sub-programme - "Supporting sub-regional activities for development". The activities involve cooperation on important development issues with the sub-regional groupings and IGOs, namely, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Mano River Union (MRU) and the Permanent Inter-State Committee On Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

2. For the greater part of 1999, 2000 and up to November 2001, activities under the sub-programme for the SRDC-WA focused on enhancing the capacity of some of the groups to provide good governance and make gender a crosscutting issue. The goal is to enhance gender mainstreaming in the sub-regional integration by providing enabling environment for the majority of the populace to share in developmental process, particularly women. In other words, the governance has concentrated on adopting measures for addressing the problems of:

- (a) disparities in the involvement of women and youth in the management of developmental programmes and projects within the communities that make the achievement of gender equality increasingly difficult;
- (b) limited gender mainstreaming policies to ensure equality in the use of national human capacity;
- (c) insufficiency of developmental prerequisites for the operationalization of gender mainstreaming.

3. ACW has requested the SRDC WA to state the gender-related activities it has undertaken in the interest of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) and the extent to which its agenda is made gender-responsive. The report is also to outline the relationship between the work of the Centre and the Regional Economic Communities (REC)

4. Before treating the request of ACW, it is essential to give a brief overview of gender mainstreaming status in the sub-region that informed some of the interventions by SRDC. Gender mainstreaming development in the subregion continues to face enormous constraints despite the attempt at installing political democratization and integration. Many factors are working against the success. For instance – misunderstanding and misinterpretation of gender concept is a big problem to social and economic planners. Conflicts and wars exacerbate poverty and burdens of the member countries and they neglect the needs of women and children both in the family and in community. In the countries faced with war and conflicts (Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone), women, youth, the poor and disabled continue to face problem of being integrated into the mainstream of the economic and social rehabilitation. Policy and decision-makers are more preoccupied with the seemingly more urgent problems of debt crisis, restoration of physical, economic and social infrastructure. The implications are that women and their children continue to move from one refugee camp to the other. Many of them are used as weapons of war while some die prematurely in great numbers through hunger and malnutrition (Sierra Leone and Guinea). This situation is expanding feminization of poverty and struggling.

5. The enrollment of boys in schools and colleges are still far higher than that of girls even with the providing of scholarships in some countries for girls' education. Guaranteed scholarship in some countries does not cover the school materials and uniforms. Many parents are too poor to afford these expensive items; hence they revert to making a choice of sending mainly boys to school.

6. Women and youth are only used for votes and but not to feature in the political arena. Women are yet to be given enough representation to make impact in decision-making positions in the sub-region. Family and community violence against women is in the increase. Human trading is rearing its head especially, marketing young girls for prostitution. This is

very rampant all over West African countries. These are but few examples to cite out of many poor gender malpractice in the sub-region that are affecting gender equality.

7. The other implication is the difficulty in getting all the member States to formulate gender equality policy in all priority areas of development. The required national gender policy plan to help in fully implementing the platforms for action is receiving limited response in Economic Communities and in the sub-regional member countries compared to other sub-regions.

8. In the light of the above and the Centre's disposal to gender issues, there has been an increased urgency on addressing gender mainstreaming as a priority in the Centre's activities. More attention is being devoted to gender networking and information exchange; building gender mainstreaming capacities in the ICE and REC; sensitization of the member States on the importance of formulating gender mainstreaming policies for development.

A. Activities To ICE:

9. The SRDC-WA has continued to promote mainstreaming gender into the agenda of REC and ICE in the West African sub-region. For this purpose, the Centre embarked on monitoring and evaluating the progress made in incorporating gender and women's concerns in the social and economic development programmes of the sub-region. The Centre has also concentrated in giving technical advice on the best approaches in meeting the needs where requested in the sub-region.

10. One of the methods employed by the Centre for monitoring, evaluating and advising on issues is by conducting studies on the status of gender mainstreaming and women. The results of the studies were produced into reports and were presented at the annual meetings of ICE. Four of such reports have been presented to ICE meetings in the past 4 years, under:

- Development Changes on Gender and Women's Issues in Sustainable Development;
- Progress Made in Promoting Gender Perspective in Planning and Management;
- Promoting Subregional Integration Through Regional and Global Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives;
- Mainstreaming Gender Concerns In Development Policies and Programmes: Policies and Strategies.

11. Each report on gender mainstreaming status serves as a benchmark for promoting the operationalization of gender equality in Member States. It sensitizes the ICE members on gender concepts. The deliberations on the progress report create awareness and the understanding of the status of gender and women in development thereby generate appropriate recommendations for promoting gender equality in the sub-region. The deliberations in the last three years had focused on gender policies and programmes in development.

I. Report to 2nd ICE Meeting, Guinea 1999

12. The report to the 2nd Intergovernmental Committee of Experts meeting held in Conakry, Guinea, 1 - 7 March 1999, looked into the progress made in promoting gender perspectives in sustainable development in the West African sub-region. The study and analysis of the situation of gender practices buttressed with facts and figures showed that the member countries were behind in promoting gender perspectives in sustainable development.

13. The report was highly commended by the Committee which, recommended that action be taken in the following areas:

- (a) Reduction of the burden of women's responsibilities at the family level, through inter-alia the introduction of appropriate technologies and adequate involvement of family assistance to women where necessary;
- (b) Creation of avenues for ensuring full participation of men in gender sensitization programmes;
- (c) Reduction of gender imbalances by ensuring equal access to education for girls and boys, and retention of female adolescents in schools;
- (d) Improvement of existing facilities and building new ones to accommodate specific educational needs of the youth;
- (e) Revision and development of appropriate gender sensitive curriculum and materials for students and teachers to respond to youth and girls needs which tally with labour market requirements;

- (f) Enforcement of laws that are responsive to the needs of youth, including their constitutional rights and responsibilities;
- (g) Provision of opportunities for youth and women participation in the policy and decision-making;
- (h) Provision of legal education and opportunities aimed at creating awareness on the right of women and vulnerable groups in the society;
- (i) Making available sexual and reproductive health information services to reduce incidence of STDs and HIV/AIDS, as well as unwanted pregnancies, and
- (j) Creation of opportunities for economic empowerment of women such as access to credit, support for income-generating activities, and agricultural inputs.

II. Report to 3rd ICE Meeting, Abuja, Nigeria 2000

14. A report on Promoting Subregional Integration through Regional and Global Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives was presented to the 3rd ICE Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria (2000). The report identified policy initiatives on gender mainstreaming that have global and regional dimensions and also fostered gender integration in national plans of action. Whether the policy has facilitated the implementation of the 12 priorities of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA). In the deliberations on this report, the Committee accepted the implementation of the BPA as a benchmark for assessing the performances of member States in mainstreaming gender issues in social and economic programmes.

15. The Committee recognized the importance of mainstreaming gender issues in the sub-regional integration processes, and of the mechanisms that would link the commitment made at the international level to national policies and programmes for the advancement of women. It was agreed that the real challenge on gender and women issues is how to empower women to move into higher socio-economic status in the society. The Committee observed that various programmes and mechanisms were already in place for gender mainstreaming but that they would be more effective if an integrated policy approach was adopted.

16. The committee expressed concern on how complex it could be to actualize gender mainstreaming integrated policy approach considering the inevitable differences in goals, resources and strategies, which exist between countries within the sub-region and between sub-regions. Similar differences might exist among donors, international organizations, IGOS and NGOs.

With a view to reconciling these differences, the Committee endorsed the following recommendations:

- Gender mainstreaming should be domesticated in all government organs;
- The technical and managerial capacities of institutions relevant to gender mainstreaming should be strengthened;
- ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS capacities in gender mainstreaming be strengthened. It was requested also that gender units be established in their secretariats to take charge of gender issues in the Secretariat and monitor effectively the implementation of gender initiatives at the sub-regional level.
- That the SRDC provides guideline document to motivate the formulation and implementation of programmes and policies on gender mainstreaming in the sub-region.
- ECOWAS should make extra effort to establish a gender unit in the secretariat and provide more substantive support to WAWA;
- ECOWAS and SRDC- WA should collaborate in preparing a study on approaches to assisting women in the rural and urban areas, focusing on identifying the areas for capacity building;
- The major IGOs and SRDC-WA should undertake research on all areas of interest to women such, as education, access to health services, land and property, credit, social protection (in particular for women who have contacted HIV/AIDS), input to agricultural production,
- Effort should be made by IGOs and Governments in elimination of violence against women in both public and private life, promotion of peace, and elimination of human trafficking particularly women and girls.

Report to 4th ICE Meeting 2001 in Dakar

17. The report on Gender Mainstreaming Policies And Strategies was and presented to the Fourth Meeting ICE, 26- 29 March 2001, Dakar, Senegal. The Committee noted the objective of the report, which is to encourage policy makers, planners and communities in the West African Sub-region to

formulate appropriate and common policies and initiate concrete strategies and actions for gender mainstreaming. It also considered the conceptual framework of gender mainstreaming with respect to the definitions of gender and gender equality.

18. The challenges that might occur when formulating gender policies were considered, so also the importance of formulating mainstreaming policies. The Committee approved that mainstreaming policy accepts that women and men are not homogenous group. Mainstreaming strategy underlines equality policy thus allowing for differences. It recognizes peculiar situations of different people and breaks the hierarchical ranking which grades people according to predefined norms. It provides openness to human involvement in development regardless of sex, race and class, thereby making good use of human potentials. The Committee recognized the prerequisites for formulating gender mainstreaming policies, the actors and their roles, the stages and follow-up activities.

19. Based on the deliberations, the Committee established the priority areas for formulating common policy on gender in the sub region. These included: women/girl education, agriculture and infrastructure, health and nutrition services, employment and poverty alleviation. The need for harmonizing gender-mainstreaming policies in the sub-region by providing networking and an information linkage to avoid duplication of efforts was stressed and recommended for future action. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the report and accepted that they should form the benchmark for the activities of the Centre, the Economic Communities and the Sub-regional countries for the year 2002/2003. The recommendations were as follows:

- That in each member state, the government, bilateral and multilateral agencies, private sector, the media and women's movements should adopt gender mainstreaming policies and strategies. There should be a meeting point for all the stakeholders to plan, monitor, discuss and adjust mainstreaming policies and strategies from time to time;
- ECA/SRDC should play the role of pulling the groups together through workshops, seminars or round table discussions;
- Planners and implementers (technocrats) who are supposed to be resources for mainstreaming gender should be sensitized on gender

mainstreaming concepts and requirements. This requires organizing training workshops and lobbying. ICE member states should collaborate with SRDC in conducting sub-regional training for the technocrats (planners, decision-makers and financing and budgetary managers) in the procedures and management of gender mainstreaming and policy formulation;

- ECOWAS should institutionalize a mechanism for gender mainstreaming with adequate financial and human resources and a clear policy guidelines to ensure successful programme implementation on gender equality;
- Each ICE member country should conduct studies to identify the preferential treatment of men and women or other vulnerable groups in developmental programmes, identify the areas that are devoid of gender equality policies and initiate appropriate policies for mainstreaming gender to correct the anomalies;
- The member States should present findings of the studies and the activities initiated for promoting gender policies and equality at the next ICE meeting 2002/2003.

Some Member States Innovative Actions on The Recommendations

20. Since after the last three ICE meetings, some countries, governments and IGOs have taken into consideration most of the recommendations of the meetings in their action plans. They have started to show interest on gender mainstreaming and have requested some assistance in formulating gender policies and incorporating gender into their development programmes. Few countries have also established stronger machinery and mechanisms to implement the recommendations. What follows below are some of such initiatives.

21. The Nigerian Government hosted a tripartite meeting with SRDC-WA and ECOWAS, in Abuja, Nigeria (15-17 February 2000). The meeting focused on the issue of promoting collaboration between ECOWAS and SRDC-WA. The Federal Republic of Nigeria initiated and hosted the meeting in support of integration activities.

22. The objective of the meeting was to bring ECOWAS and SRDC-WA together to promote the development of gender mechanisms and policy framework in the sub-region. This is very important because ECOWAS and SRDC are the leading institutions in the sub-region through which gender mainstreaming policy and strategies could be conceived and propagated. The achievement of the meeting underscored collaboration between ECOWAS and SRDC-WA in gender mainstreaming activities.

23. The Liberian Ministry of Planning inquired on how to incorporate gender concerns in the rehabilitation process of the country, particularly, the involvement of women, youth and the disabled group in lumber production projects. The SRDC West Africa and UNDP Monrovia were in the group that advised the Ministry of Planning, Monrovia on the issue. It is important to note that Liberia is one of the countries in the sub-region that has created a gender unit in all its ministries. This is the result of determined effort by Mrs. Amelia Ward who has been a woman Minister in the Ministry of Planning and the mission of Commerce. Coupled to this the collaboration between the country, UNDP, UNIFEM, SRDC-WA and groups of hardworking women and gender advocates in Monrovia. The Liberian Government has also established a Ministry of Gender/Women Affairs to take charge of gender mainstreaming issues.

24. The Monrovia Women in collaboration with Guinean and Sierra Leonean women are making every effort to establish peace between the three countries, including arranging for the three presidents of the countries to meet and discuss.

25. The Ministry of Education in Monrovia has made arrangements for scholarships, to be made available for young ladies affected by war so that they can go back to secondary schools and universities to finish their education. Women are also given first preference in the award of scholarships for medical schools.

26. The Ministry of Commerce in Niger requested the SRDC-WA to serve as one of the resource persons in the workshop on "Rural Women, Democratization and Decentralization in Niger: Implications and Perspectives" held on 20-22nd May, 1999 in Niger, Niamey. The workshop took census of women NGOs, their activities and their outreach to women at the grassroot levels. The role of the government in promoting NGOs was discussed. Procedures for registering women NGOs locally and

internationally were addressed. The workshop also addressed the proper methods for networking, dissemination of information and formulation of an umbrella for women NGOs. The workshop stressed that all women in Niger should have one voice and solidarity in pursuing equality and equity in development. SRDC was nominated as member of the Steering Committee to draw guidelines for establishing women NGOs' umbrella.

27. Many countries such as Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo have improved the conditions for school enrollment for girls by giving them scholarships and reflecting gender concerns in the school curriculum.

28. In other areas like improving women's human rights, legal rights and prevention of violence, some positive responses have come from some countries such as Benin, Ghana, Mali and Togo through the establishment of legal centres for women and training volunteer parajuridists to assist poor and illiterate women in police and court cases.

29. Some countries such as Gambia, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria that are yet to formulate their National Gender Policy are requesting for more sensitization on gender mainstreaming concepts in sustainable development particularly for their government high-ranking officers and policy makers.

30. On the responsibilities assigned to ECOWAS by the recommendations, the ECOWAS' requested the SRDC's technical support in capacity building on promoting gender mainstreaming and Women in Development Strategies. The Centre since then has been collaborating with the ECOWAS Secretariat. The activities centred on establishing the framework and mechanisms within which gender mainstreaming, as a strategy for addressing gender and women's issues, could be undertaken within ECOWAS and its member States.

B. SRDC Response to RECs

Collaboration with ECOWAS

31. The SRDC's activities are geared towards discovering suitable institutional mechanisms for ECOWAS to initiate, design and implement gender responsive programmes within its integration agenda. Consequently, after sustained consultations between the two organizations, it was agreed that the ECOWAS Secretariat needed assistance in developing capacity for

gender programme development and management. Such assistance from ECA/ SRDC would be mainly directed at determining suitable gender policy and institutional mechanisms for designing and implementing gender responsive programmes within the integration agenda of the Community.

32. A three-pronged approach has been adopted in assisting ECOWAS:

- i. Jointly with the African Centre for Women (ACW), a review of the West African Women's Association (WAWA), the specialized agency of ECOWAS on gender matters, was undertaken. It assessed how best the Association's capacity could be strengthened and transformed into an effective institution that could best serve the advancement of women in the sub-region. A report has been produced on the review and submitted to the ECOWAS Secretariat for processing and dissemination.
- ii. To guide ECOWAS in its approach to the subject of gender mainstreaming, a study has been undertaken by the Centre on the experiences of other Subregional Economic Communities and IGOs in the area of gender capacity building. The report on this study has been sent to ECOWAS to form part of the working documents for the technical meeting to be organized by ECOWAS on gender mainstreaming.
- iii. In collaboration with ECA/SRDC-WA, a study was conducted to highlight the framework and mechanisms within which a gender mainstreaming strategy for addressing gender and women's issues could be implemented within ECOWAS. The study analyzed the readiness (in terms of institutional mechanisms) of the Community to initiate, design and implement gender-responsive programmes within its integration agenda. A comprehensive report of the study has been produced and sent to ECOWAS for processing and dissemination.

33. The reports of the three studies strongly recommended that the information derived from the studies be used to define a proposal on how ECOWAS Secretariat should organize itself to implement the recommendation of the Community Treaty regarding the advancement of women. The result of the studies also demanded the formulation of a

women/gender and development policy to direct ECOWAS in gender mainstreaming.

34. Accordingly, a technical meeting of Experts is being scheduled to analyze the findings of the studies, formulate policies and establish strategies and mechanisms for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming within ECOWAS integration programmes.

C. Other SRDC-WA Outputs

35. The SRDC-WA accomplished other assigned outputs, which focused on formulation of policies and programmes for the implementation of gender mainstreaming and the reduction of women's poverty in the sub-region. The Centre undertook the following activities:

- (a) Organization of an Ad-Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Measures for Improving Networking and Information Exchange for Gender Mainstreaming in the Sub-Region.
- (b) Organization of a Workshop on Training of Trainers on the Formulation and Implementation of Income-Generating Self-Help Projects for Women in the War-Affected Countries in the Subregion
- (c) Collaboration with other UN Agencies in promoting gender mainstreaming in development

(a) Ad-Hoc Expert Group Meeting

36. The Centre organized an Ad- Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Measures for Enhancing Networking and Information Exchange on Gender Mainstreaming in the West African Subregion. The meeting was held in Accra, Ghana from 30 to 31 July 2001.

37. The objective of the meeting was to bring together some experts in gender, women and development, selected IGOs, relevant UN organizations, Economic Communities, Government organs and NGOs in the Subregion to consider ways and means of establishing networking and information exchange in mainstreaming gender.

38. In the interest of meaningful and participatory discussion, the SRDC-WA, commissioned a guideline paper on "Networking and Information Exchange on Mainstreaming Gender in the Subregion". The Ad-Hoc Expert

Group meeting reviewed the Guideline paper and adopted it for publication entitled **“Guideline Document on Networking and Information Exchange For Gender Mainstreaming in the West African Sub-Region”**.

39. The meeting expressed the need for establishing and maintaining gender networking and information exchange as a prerequisite in the process of social and economic development and integration, particularly in the area of gathering disaggregated data required for planning gender programmes; providing medium through which Member States could share experience; encouraging the formulation of national policies and strategies for enforcing gender equality; pulling all actors in development activities together to take stock of the status of gender mainstreaming; reducing duplication of efforts and waste of manpower and resources. Stakeholders’ solidarity could be achieved through networking and information exchange.

40. The meeting came up with the following recommendations on the way forward:

- The Guideline document be fully disseminated after incorporating the comments and adjustments made by the experts;
- The 17 experts who attended the meeting should constitute the core focal points for promoting Gender Mainstreaming and Information Exchange (GNIE) in the subregion
- There should be a follow-up to the expert group meeting. The same meeting (technical meeting) to be organized at the national level for institutionalizing GNIE by national focal points.
- Design of a project document to mobilize funds for the implementation of GNIE activities in the subregion including establishment of a GNIE clearing house.
- Every effort to be made to encourage ECOWAS and ADB to sequence the meeting of experts so that such a meeting is conducted at the national level.
- ADB to hold the next meeting of GNIE as soon as possible at the subregional level
- “A GNIE House” should be established in the subregion as a clearing house and a database centre for gender development.

(b) Training of Trainers Activities

41 The Centre has developed a manual for the training of trainers on the revitalization of income-generating self-help/economic activities for women

affected by war in the West African subregion. A project document has also been produced for soliciting funds for conducting the training both for the trainers and women at the national level and for securing seed money for women to start economic ventures.

c) Collaborating with Other UN Agencies

42. The Centre has been highly involved in advising and participating in other activities pertaining to mainstreaming gender in collaboration with other UN Agencies particularly those operating in Niamey, Niger. Some of the areas covered include:

- Sensitizing planners, policy and decision-makers on mainstreaming gender and women issues in development programmes,
- Training in human rights and women's legal rights,
- Assisting in developing gender mainstreaming indicators,
- Facilitating the process of reflecting gender in the national census, etc

D. Proposed Programmes For 2002-2003

43. During this period, the main areas of focus for the Centre will be to promote the harmonization of national policies in various sectors in support of integration and gender mainstreaming at the sub-regional level; to facilitate the adoption and implementation of integration of gender in national economy; and to provide support to the member states in their effort to incorporate gender in their interventions in order to foster growth and development. The following areas are to be covered.

Supporting Sub-regional Activities In West Africa:

A. Servicing Intergovernmental and Expert Bodies

1. Substantive servicing of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of SRDC-WA
2. Producing a report on mainstreaming gender perspectives in national policies and programmes in West Africa.

C. International Cooperation and Inter- Agency Coordination and Liaison

1. In collaboration with ECA /ACW, provide support services on capacity building for gender mainstreaming to Member States, ECOWAS and other intergovernmental organizations;