



**Economic Commission for Africa
African Centre for Gender and Social Development**

SETTING UP A UN GENDER CLUSTER IN SUPPORT OF NEPAD

CONCEPT NOTE

March 2007

I. Background

The mandate of ECA to promote the economic and social development of African countries through international cooperation must be continuously shaped by continental priorities, especially AU orientations and the articulation of the NEPAD framework. The AU aims, among other things, to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, promote and defend African common positions and establish the necessary conditions to enable the continent play its rightful role in the global economy. In addition, the main objectives of NEPAD are to eradicate poverty; place African countries on the path of growth and sustainable development; halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process; enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; and accelerate the empowerment of women.

ECA's dual role as a regional arm of the UN, and a part of the regional institutional landscape in Africa, endows it with unique comparative advantages that enable it to make unique contributions to member States' efforts to address these challenges. Its strength derives from its role as the only UN agency mandated to operate at the regional and subregional levels to harness resources and bring them to bear on Africa's priorities. This is particularly important because the perspectives of the AU and NEPAD are primarily regional and subregional. This comparative advantage is also reflected in ECA's leadership role in coordinating UN inter-agency support to NEPAD.

The ECA and the NEPAD Secretariat have agreed on a broad framework to guide future collaboration between the two organizations in a more structured and systematic manner. For both organizations, the framework would be guided by the pursuit of a common African vision through the implementation of the NEPAD agenda; the pursuit of the African agenda on the basis of complementarity and the recognition of each organization's comparative advantage in advancing the NEPAD agenda.

At the sixth Regional Consultations Meeting held in 2004 the UN agencies re-endorsed the cluster system as the best approach for coordinating UN system wide support to the implementation of NEPAD. They agreed to coordinate action for Africa's development, in accordance with a "cluster system" grouping specialized agencies together. The cluster system means that development programming for Africa can be better streamlined in accordance with AU/NEPAD priorities.

This was also reiterated during the 7th Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM) held in Addis Ababa on November 2006. UN agencies formulated ways of working jointly in a bid to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The meeting also included representatives of the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat.

The RCM stressed the importance of strengthening coordination at the regional level by revitalizing the cluster system and recommended that ECA should move from a mere convener of the Regional Consultation Meetings (RCM) to a Strategic Coordinator of UN support to AU and NEPAD. In this regard, ECA will provide secretariat function to coordinate the activities of all clusters, with human and financial assistance from other UN agencies and organizations.

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So, to saddle with both AU and NEPAD slant, the UN support should encompass a gender cluster to complement existing ones for a more comprehensive package.

III. Mandate of the Gender Cluster

The mandate of the Gender Cluster is mainly:

- ☞ To provide technical support on gender issues to NEPAD Secretariat;
- ☞ To comprehensively address the gender requirements across all UN support clusters to NEPAD.

The Gender Cluster will spearhead gender mainstreaming into the institutional mechanism and processes of the UN support to NEPAD and ensure on-site engendering of NEPAD policies, programmes, and structure on demand basis. The Gender Cluster will ensure that there is a systematic and programmatic gender response to the challenges at hand such as engendering UN responses to NEPAD requests such as the APRM support as well as other initiatives.

The gender Cluster will also build other clusters capacity on mainstreaming gender in performing their duties.

IV. Partnership Arrangements

ECA will assume the Convener task and will facilitate the initial cluster meetings that will further review the cluster objectives, refine the activities, and agree on timetables for benchmarks and indicators as well as other meetings. Consensus will be sought on the structure of the Cluster, Sub-Clusters arrangements and designation of a Vice-Convener.

The Cluster will also define what should be done to make it effective and draft a work plan for 2007 onward. Members include: UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, OHCHR, FAO, WHO, UNAIDS and UNHCR. It could be expanded to other agencies as needed.

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The meeting recommended that efforts should be made by all to improve inter-agency collaboration through the revitalization of the cluster system for greater efficiency and effectiveness. This might require a review of the cluster mechanism, which could be done by ECA in collaboration with UNDP and any other UN agency or organization. It was, therefore, agreed that the existing clusters should be refined to have sub-clusters and there should be rules and procedures for the functioning of the clusters.

It was also stressed that clusters should undertake a clear and traceable alignment of programmes and resources with AU and NEPAD priorities. In so doing, they should implement specific jointly planned programmes/projects based on the NEPAD action plan as well as supporting priorities emerging from governments that may not be related to NEPAD.

So far, the establishment of nine UN thematic clusters around key priority areas identified in NEPAD Action Plans provides the necessary leverage and entry point for the UN system to support NEPAD in the elaboration and implementation of programmes in a coordinated and coherent manner. The 9 clusters identified are:

- i) Infrastructure development: water and sanitation, energy, transport and ICTs
- ii) Governance
- iii) Peace and security
- iv) Environment, population and urbanization
- v) Human resources development, employment and HIV/AIDS
- vi) Agriculture, food security and rural development
- vii) Industry, Trade and market access
- viii) Science and technology
- ix) Advocacy and communications

II. Apology for a Gender Cluster

The NEPAD foundation document highlighted the importance of the advancement of women. In particular, it constitutes one of the two Goals and Long-term Objectives of NEPAD and therefore demonstrates the central role women are expected to play in the implementation of NEPAD.

For NEPAD achieve its broad as well as gender specific goals and objectives, it not only has to facilitate the involvement, effective participation of women in the implementation process but also ensure that economic empowerment of women is one of the priorities of NEPAD's socio economic agenda. Furthermore, new programmes emanating from the NEPAD implementation process should not add on to the existing gender disparities and create new ones while at the same time ensuring that they empower women.

In addition, with the adoption of Protocol to the Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in the AU Head of States Summit in Maputo in 2003 and the Heads of States Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (SDGE) in Addis Ababa in July 2004, there is more evidence to emphasize on gender issues.